

The Synoptic Gospels (NT1)

[Mercer School for Ministry](#)
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Rev. Dr. Michael Hull
hull.michael@icloud.com

Course Description

The course introduces the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—including a survey of their outlooks, ideologies, and theologies. The course pays close attention to their literary traditions, historical and cultural contexts, and thematic structures. Selected passages are exegeted in detail.

Intended Learning Outcome and Objective

The intended learning outcome of this course is that students will broaden their understanding of the Synoptic Gospels by reading them closely (in a number of translations with reference to the original languages) and by reading salient commentary upon them.

The course's objective is for students to become familiar with the Synoptic Gospels so as to strengthen their theological reflection, spirituality, preaching, and pastoral ministry.

The means of instruction is the Socratic method. The course outline (below) indicates both the topics covered and the required reading necessary for active participation in each seminar. Active participation, facilitated by the required reading, is mandatory. The course takes a flipped-classroom approach to seminars, namely, students are expected to come to the seminars having completed the required reading in order to discuss it.

Texts and Study Aids

The principal text is the Holy Bible. The preferred translations are the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (1989) and the New International Version of the Bible (2011). There is one required commentary: Mark Allan Powell, *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary and Theological Survey* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich. Baker Academic, 2018). Online resources or “esources” are available at www.introducingnt.com.

Course Outline and Evaluation

The course meets for five seminars: February 15, March 21, April 18, May 9, and June 20, 2020 via [Skype](#). Evaluation is measured by writing five short essays of 500 to 750 words and emailing them to the instructor a week after each seminar, but no later than February 23, March 29, April 26, May, and June 28, respectively. A letter grade, following [Mercer's Academic Policies and Procedures](#) will be allotted for each essay, and an average of the five will constitute the final grade.

1. The New Testament Backgrounds and Their Writings (February 15)

Reading: Powell, 1–76.

Writing: The background to the Synoptic Gospels is both Greco-Roman and Jewish. Discuss one salient feature from each of these two worlds. Feel free to reference features in the process. Explain how these two features are present in the Church today.

2. Jesus and the Gospels (March 21)

Reading: Powell, 77–118.

Writing: Although the Synoptics see Jesus with the same eye, as it were, there are differences in their approaches. Discuss one difference. Feel free to reference others in the process.

3. Matthew (April 18)

Reading: Powell, 119–40.

Writing: Why do many scholars think that Matthew wrote for a Jewish, rather than a Gentile, audience?

4. Mark (May 9)

Reading: Powell, 141–60.

Writing: Some ancient manuscripts of Mark end with Mark 16:8; other have verses 9 through 20 in chapter 16. Which do you think is original? Why?

5. Luke and Acts (June 20)

Reading: Powell, 161–82, and 205–30.

Writing: Unlike Matthew and Mark, Luke gives us a “part one” in his Gospel and a “part two” in his Acts. Please explain how Luke links both parts.