**Syllabus**

**Upper New York Annual Conference**

**COS---Bible III: The Gospels**

**August11-12 and September 15-16, 2017**

Instructor: The Reverend Dr. John W. Fulton

Phone: 315-445-1939

Email: [jfulton2@twcny.rr.com](mailto:jfulton2@twcny.rr.com)

**Course Description**

This course focuses on the content and message of all four Gospels, as well as the theological perspectives of the Gospel authors. How to bring the message of the Gospels to congregations in a preaching environment will be highlighted.

**Objectives**

Students will be enabled to: (1) understand the origin, message, and purpose of each Gospel, (2) to interpret the messages of the Gospels to their congregations, and (3) apply this knowledge to preaching, teaching, and issues of the present day.

**Required Texts**

Powell, Mark Allen. *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey.* Baker Academic, 2009.

Murphy, Frederick J. *An Introduction to Jesus and the Gospels.* Abingdon, 2005.

**Supplementary Texts**

Aland, Kurt, ed. *Synopsis of the Four Gospels.* United Bible Societies, 1985.

Smith, Dennis E. and Williams, Michael E. editors. *The Storyteller's Companion to the Bible*. “John”. Vol. X. Abingdon, 1996.

**Notes on Assignments**

1. All written assignments must be submitted in twelve-point font, double-spaced, with one-inch margin.

2. Grammar counts. Your paper is a reflection of your communication skills. In this course you are learning not simply how to read the Gospels critically and spiritually, but to communicate your ideas to others in a clear and coherent manner.

3. Use gender-inclusive language.

4. Support any position you take with specific references to the text on which you are writing and to other texts that support your argument.

5. Produce your own original work. Properly acknowledging your sources is important. But if the bulk of your paper consists of quoted material, this is not your own original work. What I want is your understanding of the ideas discussed in both the texts and lectures.

6. Proofread! Typos and grammatical errors make it appear as though you have put very little effort into it. Further, such lack of attention potentially impacts one's grade.

7. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Period! You cannot use someone else's ideas without acknowledging that you have done so. You must always reference your sources, whether a direct quote or not.

**Grading**

There are 11 written assignments, plus class participation, that will constitute your final grade. Each has the same value toward your grade.

-2-

**SESSION I**

**AUGUST 11-12**

Introductions

Course Description

Objectives and Expectations

Assignments and Grades

Rudyard Kipling Quote

**Topics Highlighted:**

A Birdseye View of the Bible

The First Century World

Good News from Prejudiced Reporters

Key Religious Groups

A Gospel Overview

Josephus

Infancy Narratives

Hidden Years at Nazareth

John the Baptist

Ministry in Galilee

Conflict in Jesus' Ministry

Jesus' Method of Teaching

Jesus and His Family

Jesus and Women

Miracles and Parables

Those Enigmatic Disciples

**Reading assignment prior to class on August 11th:**

Powell, pp. 15-45, 63-10, 81-101,103-123, 125-145

Murphy, pp. 1-85, 89-137, 139-188, 317-372

**Written assignment due by August 11th:**

One biblical scholar described the four Gospels as “Good News from Prejudiced

Reporters”. Do you agree or disagree? Support your position with specific arguments.

(3 pages)

-3-

**THE GOSPEL OF MARK**

**Topics Highlighted:**

Language and Location

To Whom?

Source(s)

What's Missing?

Jesus Portrayed by Mark as Who?

Call of Disciples

Parable of the Sower

Storm at Sea

Woman and Flow of Blood

The Transfiguration

Entry into Jerusalem

Signs of the Apocalypse

The Passion Narrative

Mark's Abbreviated Ending

Post-Easter?

**E-mail your written assignments to John by August 18th:**

Provide an exegesis of Mark 4:35-41. Highlight Mark's perception of Jesus. Bearing in mind his specific audience, what is Mark's point to his readership? How would you approach this narrative in a preaching opportunity? (4 pages)

Also, Jesus was in conflict with a number of powerful groups throughout his ministry. Cite some of these groups with a description of what they believed and why they sought to challenge Jesus. (3 pages)

-4-

**THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW**

**Topics Highlighted:**

Author, Audience, and Location

Genealogy

Infancy Narrative

King Herod

The Teaching Gospel

The Beatitudes

The Lord's Prayer

“Kingdom of Heaven”

The Canaanite Woman

Parable of the Talents

The Passion Narrative

The Resurrection

**Email your written assignment to John by August 25th:**

Why is Matthew considered by many as “the teaching Gospel”? In your answer, be reminded of his audience and the first century world. (3 pages)

Construct an exegesis of the Canaanite woman's encounter with Jesus in Matthew 15:21-30. Was her confrontation with Jesus inappropriate? What are your thoughts in this perplexing narrative? Would you be comfortable preaching on this passage? (4 pages)

-5-

**SESSION II**

**SEPTEMBER 15-16**

**THE GOSPEL OF LUKE**

**Topics Highlighted:**

Written by Whom to Whom?

Common Authorship with Acts

Luke's Sources and Style

Geographical References

Prologue as Summary

Major and Minor Themes

Elizabeth and Zechariah

Infancy Narrative

Jesus in Nazareth

Beatitudes and Lord's Prayer

Mary and Martha

Parables of the “Lost”

The Two greatest Parables

Healing of the Ten Lepers

The Passion Narrative

The Resurrection

Post-Easter

**Reading assignment prior to class on September 15th:**

Powell, pp. 47-61, 147-167

Murphy, pp. 191-228, 249-286, 291-314, 375-378

**Email your written assignment to John by September 1st:**

How were the Beatitudes in Matthew (5:1-11) and Luke (6:12-26) compiled? Indicate possible sources used by both Gospel writers. What differences and similarities, in both construction and meaning, do you discern? (3 pages)

Write a sermon on Jesus' Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). Give your sermon a title. Provide detailed background information to the parable itself, to whom it is addressed, etc. What is Luke's intended meaning? Be certain that your sermon relates this parable to your own congregation. (5 pages)

-6-

**THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

**Topics Highlighted:**

Authorship and Location

Into the Gentile World

Rise of the Heresies

Relationship to Letters

The Prologue

What's Missing?

Dialogue versus Action

Woman at the Well

“I Am” Sayings

Role of Mary, Jesus' Mother

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus

Is Jesus “in Control”?

The Passion Narrative

The Resurrection

Appendix

**Email your written assignment to John by September 8th:**

Describe the relationship between Jesus on the one hand; and on the other, his close friends: Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Consider Jesus' delay to their request, the raising of Lazarus, and what this incident actually meant to Jesus' greater ministry. (4 pages)

Also, what about women in John's Passion Narrative? What significance might there be regarding the presence of the women and the absence of men in Jesus' final hours? (3 pages)

-7-

**Topics Highlighted:**

Revisiting the Passion Narratives

Roles of Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate

The Making of the New Testament Canon

Non-Canonical Gospels

Preaching from the Gospels:

Advent and Christmas

Lent and Easter

Family Days

National Holidays

Thanksgiving

The Parables

**Email your written assignment to John by September 15th:**

How did John's Gospel differ from the Synoptic Gospels? What was happening in the theological world when John was penned as opposed to the earlier Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke? (3 pages)

Also, provide an overview of how the New Testament Canon came into being. What were the criteria for inclusion? And why are they in their final order in the New Testament? (3 pages)