

Course Syllabus - DRAFT
KNB2921HF
The Gospel according to Mark
Knox College
Fall 2025

1. Instructor Information

Instructor: Bradley McLean, PhD, Full Professor
Office Location: Knox College
E-mail: bhm.mclean@utoronto.ca
Office Hours: By appointment

2. Course Identification

Course Number: KNB2921HF
Course Format: Classroom Meeting, Knox College
Course Name: Gospel of Mark
Class Times: Tuesdays, 11:10 a.m. – 1:00 (beginning 9 September)

3. Course Description

This course will facilitate an understanding of the Gospel of Mark with reference to five, overarching themes: 1) the text's implied socio-cultural context; 2) narrative structure; 3) the 'distanciation' of the reader from the text; 4) its implied symbolic (structural) world; 5) the intended (and unintended) effects of the text upon the reader; and 6) changes in the reader's self-understanding.

Prerequisite: KNB1501H.

This year, we will focus on understanding of the message of the Gospel of Mark, considered *as a narrative*. Attention will be focused on a variety of narrative features including the role of the narrator, settings, plot, characters, and the audience.

4. Course Learning Objectives/Outcomes

In this course students are expected to demonstrate the following:

BASIC DEGREE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS	CORRESPONDING COURSE GOALS AND OUTCOMES	CORRESPONDING COURSE ELEMENTS / ASSIGNMENTS
1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge is defined as a set of increasing levels of understanding within an area of methodologies, and primary and secondary sources.	Participants in this course will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employ the principles of narrative analysis to analyze the particular message and theology of the Gospel of Mark.	Class participation Weekly question and observation papers
2. Research and Scholarship is defined as the ability to identify new question and unresolved questions within scholarly literature, to critically assess the relevant literature, and to formulate a thesis and reasoned arguments based on the basis of evidence.	Participants in this course will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relate new knowledge to the previously studied ideas and concepts of an introductory New Testament course;• Speculate about implications of such theories to the interpretation of the Gospel of Mark.	Class participation Weekly question and observation papers Annotated bibliography
3. Level of Application of Knowledge is defined as the ability to engage in self-directed research, and to produce a textual analysis.	Participants in this course will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• interpret passages in the Gospel of Mark, including evaluating relevant its narrative structure.• Accurately explain key ideas in the secondary literature.	Annotated bibliography
4. Level of Communication Skills is defined as clear and effective communication in both oral and written forms; the construction of logical arguments; making informed judgments; and facility with standard conventions of style for scholarly writing.	Participants in this course will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate the ability to represent accurately the ideas of scholars in the secondary literature, in an approved academic style.• Demonstrate the ability to participate in the seminar discussion of assigned readings.	Class participation Weekly question and observation papers Annotated bibliography

5. Trigger Warning

You are preparing for vocations (congregational ministry, spiritual care, psychotherapy, teaching, research, etc.) that, by their nature, present you with stimulating situations, including domestic violence, child sexual abuse, effects of addiction, and other very traumatic events. Your vocational preparation anticipates that you will meet such situations in the real world, that you will not be warned about the nature of the stimulus, and that you have to protect a person from your own reaction to situations that may “trigger” a response in you. Your faculty advisor, the registrar’s staff, and the Ecumenical Chaplains can direct you to resources for you to engage in care for your own self. In your studies you will likely not be warned about the kind of “triggering” event that you may encounter. If you or your colleague are concerned that you cannot regain control or are unduly distressed, you and your colleague should seek assistance from the Knox Registrar’s office. Staff there have access to immediate assistance. In the end, your emotional safety is your own responsibility.

Religious Trauma Syndrome

Try to aware of *your own* ability to be triggered by the course material. Religious Trauma Syndrome (RTS) is a term used to describe the negative mental health effects of unhealthy or harmful past religious experiences. The symptoms of religious-based trauma include anxiety, depression, panic, and feelings of anger towards whatever causes feelings of cognitive dissonance. Other symptoms of religious trauma are strategies of avoidance, reactivity symptoms such as anger and defensiveness, and intense mood swings.

Religious Trauma Syndrome and Gender Diversity

Symptoms of religious-based trauma are sometimes triggered by the discussion of gender, when this topic arises in some NT texts. Knox College promotes a learning environment that affirms the intrinsic value of all people, regardless of their gender identity, sexual orientation, or intersecting identities. As this course progresses, try to aware of *your own* reactions to the course material including the discussion of gender.

6. Evaluation

The final grade for the course will be based on evaluations in four areas:

- | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 20% | Informed class participation: active participation requires that each student be ready to articulate and support his or her own ideas and to respectfully engage the ideas of others. |
| 50% | Weekly Question and Observation Papers (presented every week <i>in class</i>) (§ 7) |
| 30% | Annotated Bibliography Project (§ 8) |

7. Course Schedule

Assigned readings may be changed at the discretion of the instructor.

Iverson/Skinner Kelly Iverson and Christopher Skinner (eds), *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*, Atlanta: SBL Press, 2011.

Kelber Werner H. Kelber, *Mark's Story of Jesus*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979.

Malbon Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Mark's Jesus: Characterization as Narrative Christology*, Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009.

Rhoads/Dewey David Rhoads and Joanna Dewey, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012.

Unit 1 (9 September)

The beginning of Mark's story of the life of Jesus: Mark 1:1
Gospel of Mark as a 'palimpsest'

Unit 2 (16 September)

God sends Jesus into the world, John's preaching, baptism of Jesus, temptation in the wilderness
The Narrator of the Gospel of Mark

- Question & Observation 1 (submit by 15 Sept., 9:00 a.m. via Quercus)

Assigned Readings

- Mark 1:1-13
- Rhoads/Dewey: 39-62 (the Narrator)
- Dale B. Martin, *New Testament History and Literature*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 79-92.

Unit 3 (23 September)

Entering Galilee: proclaiming the rule of God, the first healings
Narrative settings

- Question & Observation 2 (submit by 22 Sept., 9:00 a.m. via Quercus)
- Introduction to the annotated bibliography project (Laura Alary)

Assigned Readings

- Mark 1:14-45

- Kelber: 15-29
- Rhoads/Dewey: 63-72 (Settings)
- Iverson, Kelly, "Wherever the Gospel is Preached" (Iverson/Skinner, 181-209)

Unit 4 (30 September)

Debating with Jewish authorities, appointing of the Twelve, Beelzebul and Satan
Son of God, Son of humanity, the plot

- Question & Observation 3 (submit by 29 Sept., 9:00 a.m. via Quercus)

Assigned Readings

- Daniel 7, Mark 2:1-3:35
- Rhoads/Dewey: 73-98 (the Plot)
- Malbon: 199-210

Unit 5 (7 October)

Teaching in parables and the in-breaking of the rule of God, stilling of the storm, Gerasene demoniac, raising of Jairus' daughter, hemorrhagic woman

- Question & Observation 4 (submit by 6 Oct., 9:00 a.m. via Quercus)

Assigned Readings

- Mark 4:1-5:43
- Kelber: 30-42
- Greg Fay, "Introduction to Incomprehension: The Literary Structure of Mark 4:1-34," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 51 (1989), 65-81.

Unit 6 (14 October)

Jesus' rejection in his hometown, beheading of John, feeding of 5000, walking on water, Syrophenician woman, the Pharisees request a sign

- Question & Observation 5 (submit by 13 Sept., 9:00 a.m. via Quercus)

Assigned Readings

- Mark 6:1-8:21
- Rhoads/Dewey: 99-116 (Characters: Jesus)
- Morna Hooker, "Good News about Jesus Christ" (Iverson/Skinner, 165-80)

Unit 7 (21 October)

Jesus and his disciples 'on the way' to establishing a new community

Peter's confession and the first, passion prediction, Transfiguration, second and third passion predictions, healing of blind Bartimaeus

- Question & Observation 6 (submit by 20 Oct., 9:00 a.m. via Quercus)

Assigned Readings

- Mark 8:22-10:52
- Kelber: 43-56
- Rhoads/Dewey: 117-136 (Characters: Authorities, Disciples, Minor Characters)
- Malbon: 37-39, 174-76, 222-25 (enacted Christology)

Recommended

- Robbins, Vernon, "The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus (10:46-52) in Marcan Theology," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92 (1973), 224-43.

[October 27- 31 – Reading Week]

Unit 8 (4 November)

Jesus and the established Jewish community

Entry of Son of David into Jerusalem, cursing of a fig tree, prophetic judgment against Temple, debates with authorities

Audience

- Question & Observation 7 (submit 3 Nov., by 9:00 a.m. via Quercus)

Assigned Readings

- Zechariah 9-11, 12-14
- Mark 11:1-12:44
- Kelber: 57-70
- Rhoads/Dewey: 137-52 (The Audience)
- Malbon: 159-69

Recommended

- Brown, Scott G. "Mark 11:1-12:12: A Triple Intercalation?," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (2002): 78-89.

- Daniel Kirk, "Time for Figs, Temple Destruction, and Houses of Prayer in Mark 11:12-25," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (2012), 509–27.

Unit 9 (11 November)

Mark's 'little apocalypse' (Mark 13), Jesus' anointing and prediction of betrayal, Last Supper, Jesus prays in Gethsemane, arrest of Jesus and trial before the Sanhedrin

- Question & Observation 8 (submit by 10 Nov. 9:00 a.m. via Quercus)

Assigned Readings

- Mark 13:1-14:72
- Kelber: 71-87
- Malbon: 169-172

Unit 10 (18 November)

Pilate condemns Jesus, crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea and burial

- Question & Observation 9 (submit by 17 Nov., 9:00 a.m. via Quercus)

Assigned Readings

- Psalm 22, Isaiah 52:13-53:12, 2 Maccabees 6:1-23, Mark 15:1-47
- Malbon: 97-101, 186-90, 227-30
- Sharyn Dowd and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "The Significance of Jesus' Death in Mark: Narrative Context and Authorial Audience," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125/2 (2006), 271–97.

Recommended

- Shiner, Whitney Taylor, "The Ambiguous Pronouncement of the Centurion and the Shrouding of Meaning in Mark," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 78 (2000): 3-22. (Mark 15:33-47)

Unit 11 (25 November)

The (shorter) ending of the story of Mark: empty tomb and Jesus' return to Galilee (cf. Mark 1:14-45)

- Question & Observation 10 (submit by 24 Nov. 9:00 a.m. via Quercus)

Assigned Readings

- Mark 16:1-8
- Kelber: 88-96
- Kelly R. Iverson, "A Postmodern Riddle? Gaps, Inferences and Mark's Abrupt Ending," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 44/3 (2022): 337–67.

Unit 12 (2 December)

Imagining ourselves in Mark's story

- Question & Observation 11 (submit by 1 Dec., 9:00 a.m. via Quercus)

Assigned Readings

- Robert Fowler, "In the Boat with Jesus" (Iverson/Skinner, 233-58)

8. Policies

Attendance policy. Attendance is mandatory. Students who register and miss three (3) classes or more will be automatically withdrawn from the course. As a matter of courtesy, students should contact one or both of the instructors prior to class if they will be absent.

Use of Generative AI, e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, Claude. You may use generative artificial intelligence tools for learning and practicing the concepts in this course, but these tools may **not** be used for completing assignments in this course. That is, you may use these tools in the same ways you might discuss course content and assignments with your peers, but just as you may not collaborate with your peers to complete assignments, you may not use these tools to complete any assignment or exercise. If you use a GenAI tool, you should use the version of Microsoft Copilot licensed to the University of Toronto, which doesn't retain data for training purposes. Other tools may and do use data entered by users to train the AI, and unless you hold the rights to the prompts you use, you may be entering copyrighted material without the rights-holder's permission.

All of this said, I encourage you to think about the moral, ethical, and pedagogical implications of using GenAI. A first step is to complete the University of Toronto's "[Coursework and GenAI: A Practical Guide for Students](#)" in Quercus. Another step is to read the University of Alberta Library's "[Ethical Considerations for Using Generative AI](#)." You might also read this research paper, "[Your Brain on ChatGPT: Accumulation of Cognitive Debt when Using an AI Assistant for Essay Writing Task](#)," which reports on experiments showing that using GenAI literally makes students stupider.

This is a graduate-level research course. Any responses by a GenAI tool to questions you may pose are unlikely to be sufficiently complex or nuanced to meet the outcomes of the course; they may not even be factually correct. Reading sophisticated prose, writing, translating, and presenting are how we learn and how we learn to think creatively. There's no short-cut.

Inclusive Language Policy. Following the principles of respect above, it is the policy of Knox College that inclusive language is to be used in teaching, public worship, class presentations, written assignments, and official communications: <https://knox.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Knox-College-Policy-Use-of-Language-Policy-and-Glossary-221003.pdf>

Quercus: If you are not familiar with the Quercus platform, please take some time to learn about its various functions, especially the assignment submission features. Using the links found under course materials on the course website to submit written assignments facilitates receiving graded work in a helpful and timely manner.

Accessibility. Students with a disability or health consideration are entitled to accommodation. Students must register at the University of Toronto's Accessibility Services offices; information is available at <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/>. The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker they can obtain assistance.

Maintaining Course Enrolment. To complete registration, a student enrolls in course(s) and pay fees. Courses of students who have not paid fees will be automatically removed (FINCA – financially cancelled) on a specific date each term (see the College website for Dates to Note). If a student's enrolment record is financially cancelled, he or she is no longer entitled to attend classes.

Library Resources. Please be good stewards of shared library resources. Do not mark, underline, highlight or otherwise alter print materials found in the Regis Library and other libraries in the UT Library system. Students damaging library materials will be accountable for replacement and processing costs and other disciplinary measures, including suspension of library privileges and other sanctions. For more information, see <https://onesearch.library.utoronto.ca/conduct-regulations>.

Plagiarism. Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and religious ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to his or her head of college or delegate according to the *Graduate Conjoint Degree Handbook* (<https://www.tst.edu/academic/resources-forms/handbooks>) and the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (available at link below).

Students will be assumed to have read the document "Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing" published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges and available at the

following link: <https://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/library/research/theology/avoiding-plagiarism-in-theological-writing>

Original Plagiarism Detection Tool.

Students may be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

Cell Phones. Cell phones can be disruptive to the classroom experience. Students, therefore, should turn off or set their phones to silent and refrain from using them while in class. Cell phone use is permitted only for medical professionals who are on call and for students who need to be in constant contact with ill family members or minors. Students who meet either of these requirements should inform the professor prior to class.

Use of Technology. Laptops and other computing devices may be used in the classroom for note taking purposes only. The use of the internet is not permitted while class is in session unless it is part of a specific class activity. Students wishing to text message, search for images, fact check etc. should do so during the break or outside of class. Much of the learning that goes on in the classroom is founded upon mutual disclosure that takes place between the instructor and the student and between students. Parties outside of that learning community have not committed themselves to this relationship of trust. For this and other reasons, permission to record lectures in audio format is granted for use by registered students only. Video recording is not permitted without the written permission of the instructor. Recordings and notes of class lectures may not be electronically reproduced, posted or distributed without the written permission of the instructor.

Late work. Students are expected to meet the course deadlines of the instructor offering the course and are advised to plan their research projects accordingly. Students who find themselves unable to meet deadlines for completing coursework can, under certain conditions, receive extensions for completing the work after the dates set by the college in which the course is offered. The authority to grant an extension for the completion of work in a course beyond the original TST or college deadline (whichever is earlier) for that course rests with the student's college Graduate Degree (GD) Director, not the instructor of the course. The instructor's signature is required for course extension requests to be processed. Students will petition their college GD Director for extensions, using a standard form provided by TST at: www.tst.edu. The deadline for requesting an initial extension is the college deadline for completion of course work and grade submission for courses offered in the relevant session. For more details, see the relevant section of the Conjoint PhD program handbook.

Course grades. Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by the instructor's college before being posted. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University of Toronto grading

policy:<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/grading-practices-policy-university-assessment-and-january-1-2020> .

Email communication with the course instructor. The instructors aim to respond to email communications from students in a timely manner. *All email communications from students in conjoint programs must be sent from a utoronto email address.* Email communications from other email addresses are not secure, and also the instructors cannot readily identify them as being legitimate emails from students. The instructors are not obliged to respond to email from non-utoronto addresses for students in conjoint programs.

Other academic offences. TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters
<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>

Basic Degree Grading System

1000, 2000 and 3000 level courses use the following numerical grading scale (see section 11.2 of the BD Handbook):

90-100	(A+)	Exceptional
85-89	(A)	Outstanding
80-84	(A-)	Excellent
77-79	(B+)	Very Good
73-76	(B)	Good
70-72	(B-)	Acceptable
0-69	(FZ)	Failure

Please see the appropriate handbook for more details about the grading scale and non-numerical grades (e.g. SDF, INC, etc).

10. Course Resources

New Commentaries (available in Knox's Caven Library)

Beaver, Laurie. *Mark: A Twice-Told Tale*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009.

Byrne, Brendan. *A Costly Freedom: A Theological Reading of Mark's Gospel*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2008.

Horsley, Richard A. *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001.

Placher, William. *Mark. Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.

St. Clair, Raquel A. *Call and Consequences. A Womanist Reading of Mark*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.

Witherington, Ben. *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.

Select Bibliography: Monographs and Commentaries

Beech, Amanda, and Robin Mackay and James Wiltgen, ed. *Language and Possible Worlds*. Urbanomic, 2019.

Cahill, Michael. *The First Commentary on Mark: An Annotated Translation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Dewey, Joanna. "The Gospel of Mark," in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary*, 470-509, ed. Elisabeth Schlüssler Fiorenza, Vol. 2, New York: Crossroad, 1994.

Donahue, John R., and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*. Sacra Pagina 2. Collegeville: Liturgical Press/Michael Glazier, 2002.

Dowd, Sharyn E. *Reading Mark: A Literary and Theological Commentary*. Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys, 2000.

Evans, Craig. *Mark 8:27-16:20*. WBC 34b. Dallas: Word, 2001.

Hare, Douglas. *Mark*. Westminster Bible Companion. Louisville: Westminster, 1996.

Iersel, Bas M. F. van. *Mark: A Reader-Response Commentary*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.

Iverson, Kelly R., and Christopher W. Skinner, eds. *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011.

Mack, Burton L. *A Myth of Innocence: The Gospel of Mark and Christian Origins*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988.

Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. *Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986.

Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. *Mark's Jesus: Characterization as Narrative Christology*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009.

Malina, Bruce, and Richard L. Rohrbaugh. *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1992, 171-278.

Marcus, Joel. *Mark 1-8*. AB, 27A. New York: Doubleday, 2000.

McLean, B. H. *Biblical Interpretation and Philosophical Hermeneutics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

McLean, B. H. (2015), 'The Rationality of Early Christian Discourse,' *Toronto Journal of Theology*, Supplement 31:43-65.

Oden, Thomas C. and Christopher A. Hall, eds. *Mark*. Ancient Commentary on Scripture: New

Testament, 2. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1998.

Painter, John. *Mark's Gospel: Worlds in Conflict*. NT Readings. London and New York: Routledge, 1997.

Witherington, Ben. *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.

Anchor Bible Commentaries

UTL has purchased the Anchor Bible Commentaries series online for those of you who may be interested. As yet, they are not catalogued and listed in LibrarySearch but you can use direct link below:

<https://www-theologyandreligiononline-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/anchor-yale-bible-commentaries>

Click on "Browse Full Title List" or Expand +Old Testament or + New Testament

DRAFT