

kbarta@seattleu.edu

OFFICE: Casey 226

OFFICE HOURS: The hour before class; also by appointment.

OFFICE TELEPHONE: 206-296-5862 (messages)

Course Description: This course will draw on some of the most promising work of biblical scholarship today, especially in critical reflection on the process of interpreting the New Testament. It will seek to develop in students better habits on ways of attending, understanding, evaluating and responding creatively to God's word within the Christian scriptures and within life itself. An emphasis on method will help each student prepare an eleven-part exegetical study of a gospel passage based on exercises in class.

Required Texts:

The Peoples' Bible. New Revised Standard Version. Curtiss De Young, et al. eds. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009. **PB**

Duling, Dennis C. *The New Testament. History, Literature, and Social Context.* Canada: Wadsworth, 2003. **DD**

Patte, Daniel, J. Severino Croatto, Nicole Wilkinson Duran, Teresa Okure, and Archie Chi Chung Lee, eds. *Global Bible Commentary.* Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2004. **GBC**

Saramago, José. *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ.* A Harvest Book; Harcourt, Inc. 1991 **JS**

A Word about each of the Textbooks:

Dennis Duling's *The New Testament. History, Literature, and Social Context* favors the historical critical approach, bringing the best of this approach to the reader. The text is eminently readable yet scholarly in both range and depth. And the updated bibliographies in each chapter are a good place to begin further research.

The Peoples' Bible is unique in providing introductory commentary from a wide range of different cultures and ethnicities. As noted by Daniel Patte, this bible "should be in the hands of all who want to read the Bible as the Scripture of God's people in their great diversity." By representing views from people across the political, social and cultural spectrum, it invites your own thoughtful response and personal engagement.

The *Global Bible Commentary* fits well with *The Peoples' Bible* by offering reflections on biblical passages and concepts from the perspective of those who are rendered voiceless by oppressive economic and social systems.

Jose Saramago's *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ* is a beautifully written and intentionally provocative reading of the Jesus story by a Portuguese Nobel winner for literature. We are all part of our interpretations of who Jesus is, including Saramago.

Objectives *This course seeks to help students be able to:*

- 1) **identify** the influence and place of **social location** in their practices and processes of biblical interpretation
- 2) **articulate** their own image of Jesus in relation to current historical Jesus research, biblical texts and traditions, and religious, institutional and life experience;
- 3) **explore** the metaphorical character of key terms as “Word of God,” “revelation,” and “Son of God;”
- 4) **recognize and name** in their own work the steps involved in the hermeneutical process of interpreting NT texts, including one’s own hidden assumptions;

- 5) **develop** a method for approaching biblical texts in terms of 3 worlds: the world behind the text, of the text, and before the text;
- 6) **distinguish and value** the various NT writings by their individual theologies, governing images and myths, literary forms, special interests, peculiar language, etc.
- 7) **discern** the general lines of Pauline theology, its later transformation in deutero-Pauline writings, and the trajectories of its development within history and tradition;
 - 8) **appreciate** the four unique portraits of Jesus found within the canonical gospels;
 - 9) **recognize and appreciate** both the strengths and shortcomings of each of the writings we consider;
 - 10) **draw** more readily and fruitfully upon the riches of the New Testament to develop and nurture their own spirituality and sense of ministry.

List here the 3 most important objectives for you personally:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Course Requirements:

- 50% Attendance and participation. The final class requires a **5-minute sharing** of your paper and listening to others’ presentations. Students are expected to complete all required readings, exercises and one-page written assignments.
- 50% Write a 12-page interpretative study of a Gospel passage due **March 16th, 2009** that integrates good methodology, scholarly research and ministerial “ownership” of course content.

Assignments are posted on the day they are due.

January 6

.....*Introductions*

Class 1

- Overview of course: syllabus, textbooks, assigned readings, small group workgroup exercises
 - **Hermeneutics** as the science of interpretation (explanation + appropriation)
 - A new focus on the role of *the reader*
- Keeping the focus on Jesus and his meaning for today
 - Chris Hedges, *Losing Moses on the Freeway* (Free Press: 2005)
 - Movie: *Smart People*
 - “Free write” on Jesus
- Two basic approaches to biblical interpretation:
 - historical critical method
 - literary approaches
- VIDEO: “Family Matters” (Modern Middle East)

January

13.....*Images of Jesus*

- Class 2** *For class:*
- 1) Read Duling, Chapter 14: Jesus
 - 2) Read GBC: 329-349 on various images of Jesus (African, Asian, Latin American, Orthodox, Western)
 - 3) Read Duling, Chapters 1 & 2 on NT background and Sources (history, culture, society)
 - 4) **Write** a 2-page introduction of yourself to me that includes your goals for this course and responses to readings.

- VIDEO: *Jesus at 2000* on “historical Jesus”
- VIDEO: David Rhoads’ Dramatic Presentation of Mark
- Methods of biblical criticism: source, form, redaction, composition, literary, reader-response, etc.

January 20.....*Mark’s Story of Jesus*

- Class 3** *For class:*
- 1) Read Duling, Chapter 2 and 3
 - 2) Read Duling, Chapter 8: A Mysterious Apocalyptic Drama
 - 3) Read the Gospel of Mark (in one sitting) in *Peoples’ Bible*
 - 4) Read *Global Bible Commentary* on Mark (367-384)
 - 5) Begin reading the novel, *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ* and finish at your own pace
 - 6) **Write:** one page response to the readings (what struck you?)

- Mark as Story (on gospel genre)
- The Markan Jesus
- VIDEO excerpt on Mark: *From Jesus to Christ*
- Mark 14:3-9 The Anointing of Jesus

January

27.....Matthew's "Good News"

- Class 4** *For class:*
- 1) Read the Gospel of Matthew (before reading Duling)
 - 2) Read Duling, Chapter 9: on Matthew's Gospel
 - 3) Read GBC: 350-366 on the Magi and Sermon on the Mount
 - *4) **Write** a one-page comparison between your image of Jesus and the images of Jesus in Matthew and Mark

- Discussion of Matthew's Gospel as Story: the narrative plotline as theology
- VIDEO: Pasolini's "The Gospel According to Saint Matthew" and Matt 1:18-25 (birth of Jesus)
 1. historical critical
 2. social scientific
 3. feminist
 4. cross cultural
- Issues in Matthean studies; contribution of Matthew to imaging of Sophia/God/Jesus

February 3.....Luke's Gospel & Sequel

- Class 5** *For class:*
- 1) Read Duling, chapter 10, on Gospel of Luke & Acts of Apostles
 - 2) Read the Gospel of Luke and Acts of Apostles
 - 3) Read GBC: 385-400; 419-427
 - 4) **Write** a one-page response to Luke's Jesus as he appears in the gospel and later in Acts

- Discussion of Luke as a gospel and Acts as theology and history
- Lk 4:14-30 "Rejection at Nazareth" as gospel in a nutshell
 - Special to Luke: many beloved stories and events

February 10.....John: One of a Kind

- Class 6** *For class:*
- 1) Read Duling, chapter 11 on John
 - 2) Read the Gospel of John and the letters of 1,2,3 John
 - 3) Read GBC: 401-418
 - 4) **Write:** a page identifying 2 or 3 passages you would like to research in more detail, and why

- The Johannine Jesus and theology
- John 4: “The Woman at the Well”
- LIBRARY TOUR: list of resources for doing an interpretive study of a biblical passage
- Use of the Guidesheet for Paper

February 17 *The Gospel according to Paul*

- Class 7 *For class:*
- 1) Read Duling, chapters 4, 5 & 6
 - 2) Read 1 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Corinthians; Philippians; Philemon;
 - 3) Read Galatians and Romans
 - 4) Read GBC on the above writings

- Reading Paul as an early Christian; Paul’s pastoral theology
- Assessing his contribution to Christianity
- The Law-Gospel Dialectic as a key to Pauline thought
- Recent studies of the historical Paul

February 24..... *Paul’s Disputed Letters*

- Class 8 *For class:*
- 1) Read Duling, chapter 7
 - 2) Read 2 Thessalonians, Colossians and Ephesians
 - 3) Read 1, 2 Timothy and Titus (“The Pastoral Epistles”)
 - 4) Read GBC on these writings
 - 4) **Work** on your exegetical study

- Discussion of trajectories of Paul’s influence in early Christianity and beyond
- A re-patriarchization of the Jesus tradition in the Churches?
- Introduction to the Apocalypse, and apocalyptic thinking and writing

March 3..... *The Apocalypse*

- Class 9 *For class:*
- 1) Read Duling, chapter 12 , on the Book of Revelation;
 - 2) Read the Book of Revelation
 - 3) Read GBC on Apocalypse
 - 4) **Work** at your final project

- Apocalypticism: Patterns of Thought
 - As literature
 - Intended audience
 - Not predicting our future
- Rev 5: as key to the whole book
- Critique of apocalypticism in the New Testament
- Examples in USA modern culture: the LeHaye “Left Behind” novels and its avoidance of the social justice perspectives that permeate the biblical book of Revelation

March 10

.....The
Finale

- Class 10 *For class:*
- 1) Prepare a timed-sharing of **5 minutes** of some part of your research paper;
 - 2) Please remember: **Everyone is required** to be at this class to make a presentation and hear others' work.
 - 3) The class will be held at my home near Green Lake (I'll email directions). Let's have a potluck lunch or supper to celebrate our work together!