

## STMM 527-01 Christian Scriptures

### DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

This 28 hour-intensive course is designed to equip students with a fundamental understanding of the Christian Scriptures. We will study the New Testament-texts

- Historically, as ancient record-s that reflect their socio-cultural context of production – as a cultural artifact.
- Rhetorically, as literary documents that respond to the conventions of their time, addressed to particular audience for a purpose – as an ideological construct.
- Theologically-Hermeneutically as authoritative discourses of faith, foundational for Christianity – as Christian Scriptures.

This course will also survey some of the major interpretive methods in biblical criticism to provide both a framework for the study of the NT and some hermeneutical tools for preaching and teaching its messages.

This course operates under a policy of inclusiveness and diversity. From a postmodern perspective, all interpretations of the New Testament, whether historical, theological, literary or of any other sort -presented by the facilitator or the students-- are partial, non-universal interpretations. All readers, including ourselves, read subjectively.

Our approach to the NT will be both academic and ministerial. Overall, from the academic standpoint, we will privilege the use of a feminist-postcolonial perspective in the analysis of biblical texts. From the ministerial standpoint, we will read the NT with an emphatic interest on the inclusiveness of the Christian Word.

### REQUIREMENTS

**1. One final paper of 3800-4200 words, around 12 pp d/s (50%),** on the representation of Jesus according to Mark, John and you. Compare and contrast Mark 14:32—16:20 vs. John 18—20:18 and discuss the image of Jesus that emerges from each gospel, concluding with your own representation of Jesus. You should write your paper in conversation with the articles on Jesus from the *Global Bible Commentary* and Saramago's novel *The Gospel according to Jesus Christ*. As you develop your paper keep in mind the following questions: How do you see Jesus in Mark and John? How do secondary characters relate to him? Why do you think the evangelists present such different images of Jesus? How are they similar and how are they different? What are they trying to accomplish? How would you define their Christology? How do you describe your own representation of Jesus in relation to Mark and John? What are the key elements used by the GBC writers when speaking of their own representation of Jesus? Which Jesus (from Mk, Jn and the others) is closer to yours and how? Follow the rubric on this syllabus to write your paper. This paper requires mainly the development of your own interpretation of Jesus, therefore, besides the above mentioned materials and the required bibliography, do not use other sources. Further information on format will follow. The paper is due on **March 16**

**2. Two short papers, one on Paul and one on the Gospels - 20% (2 x 10% - 550-750 words each). Deadlines vary with each selected topic.**

**a) A postcolonial reading** of slavery: How can we read Paul's letter to Philemon in light of Galatians 3.28. If we consider the pseudonymous letters, Ephesians 6.5-9 and Colossians 3.22-4.1, what conclusions can be made about early church views of slavery? How are these views relevant to contemporary Christians? How can they be read today in a postcolonial world? Do these passages create an ethical problem of interpretation? Due on **Jan 26**

**b) A feminist reading** of the following statements on women from the Pauline tradition: the greetings in Roman 16 (to Prisca, Mary, Junia, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, the mother of Rufus, Julia and the sister of Nereus), which presume women were active in ministry; the declaration from Galatians 3:28 which seems inclusive and liberating; the hierarchical advice from Ephesians 5:22-24; and the rules for women from 1 Timothy 2:9-15. Can these statements be reconciled? Should they be? What conclusions can be drawn about women in ministry in the early church? What are the implications, if any, for women in ministry in our contemporary setting? Due on **February 2**

**c) An ideological/theological reading** of Mark 12:13-17. Read this story from the PB, engaging the text box on Mk 12:17 included in this passage. Read this text from the perspective of those oppressed under the Roman Empire. Ask yourself questions like: What kind of response were the Pharisees and Herodians expecting from Jesus in order to trap him? Was it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? What was the meaning of the story? What could be the meaning of the story today? Be ready to question the traditional interpretations that we have “inherited” through culture, family, and church, as well as the story itself, its content, its possible purpose, concepts, symbolism, ideology, structure, the place it has in the Gospel, etc. Due on **February 9**

**d) A critical review/scholarly conversation** on Matthew 8:5-13. Compare, contrast, highlight and evaluate the views of two scholars on Matthew’s text. This is not a summary of the articles; it is a conversation between you and two scholars about Mt’s story. Three short articles will be provided for this assignment, or you may use your own. Due on **February 13**

**e) A creative re-construction** of Luke 15:11-32. Re-write Luke’s parable from the point of view of the mother. Let the mother be the narrator of the story. How did everything happen? Where was she when the incidents occurred? Would things have happened differently with her as the head of the household? Re-tell the story in a creative way, within the parameters of its cultural context, to show the role of women hidden by the androcentric view of the text. Due on **February 23**

**f) A literary analysis** of John 3:1-21 vs. 4:1-42. Compare and contrast the literary features used by the narrator to describe the secondary characters of the stories: Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman. What are the differences and similarities; how is the interaction of Jesus with them; what can you conclude about the gospel of John from this comparison; is there a character-pattern in John; what can you teach about these stories? Due on **March 2**

**3. A 5 minute-presentation** on an article from the *Global Bible Commentary*. **(10%)**

**4. Committed attendance and active participation in class** are essential; please come prepared to share your views on the study questions and the assigned readings. Your active presence is vital for the group’s learning process. As a courtesy, if you cannot attend class, please notify the facilitator ahead of time. **(20%)**

#### **BIBLIOGRAPHY (required)**

1. *The Peoples’ Bible*. New Revised Standard Version. Curtiss De Young, et al. eds. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009. **PB**
2. Duling, Dennis C. *The New Testament. History, Literature, and Social Context*. Canada: Wadsworth, 2003. **DD**
3. Patte, Daniel, J. Severino Croatto, Nicole Wilkinson Duran, Teresa Okure, and Archie Chi Chung Lee, eds. *Global Bible Commentary*. Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2004. **GBC**
4. Saramago, José. *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ*. **JS**

## STMM 527-01: Christian Scriptures

Winter 2009

Seattle University / School of Theology and Ministry  
Seattle, WA 98122

### Student evaluation form

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Final grade:</b>
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Course Requirements:	value	student obtained
Final paper	50%	
Attendance and Participation	20%	
Short paper on Paul	10%	
Short paper on Gospels	10%	
GBC presentation	10%	
Final grade	100%	

vg = very good    g = good    s = satisfactory    un = unsatisfactory

Grading rubric for final paper:	vg	g	s	us	Comments
<b>Programmatic introduction:</b> start your paper with a brief and well organized introduction. Set up a clear course of action for the development of your paper.					<p><b>Grading Scale</b></p> <p><b>Superior performance:</b></p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>A</b>                    96.36 – 109</p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>A-</b>                    92.72 – 96.35</p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>B+</b>                    89.08 – 92.71</p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>Good performance:</b></p> <p><b>B</b>                      85.44 – 89.07</p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>B-</b>                      81.80 – 85.43</p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>C+</b>                    78.16 – 81.79</p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>Minimal performance:</b></p> <p><b>C</b>                      74.52 – 78.15</p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>C-</b>                      70.88 – 74.51</p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>D+</b>                    67.24 – 70.87</p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>Poor performance:</b></p> <p><b>D</b>                      63.60 – 67.23</p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>D-</b>                      60.00 – 63.59</p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>Failing:</b></p> <p><b>F</b>                      00.00 – 59.99</p> <p>-----</p>
As part of the <b>PI</b> , clearly establish the <b>thesis, purpose, or aim</b> that you will be pursuing in your final paper.					
1. <b>Develop your ideas</b> in full: make sure you say what you want to say. Do not assume the reader will fill the gaps.					
2. <b>Sequence of topics:</b> clearly follow the line of thought you have established for your paper.					
3. <b>Structure of paper:</b> organize the content of the paper in a logical way (parts, sections, steps, topics, authors, etc.)					
Evaluation of content of paper:					
1. Understanding of the topic					
2. Clear voice of the author (you)					
3. Interaction with the biblical texts					
4. Dialogue with other views					
Political ramifications and /or Ministerial implications of your representation of Jesus					
Conclusion or summary of major findings					
Use of quotes, sources, footnotes (*)					
Bibliography – content and format (*)					
General format & style					

Leticia Guardiola-Sáenz  
Facilitator

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**STMM 527-01 Christian Scriptures**  
**CALENDAR OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

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**CLASS SESSION # 1**

January 5

**Introduction**

**The New Testament: Context of production and ways of reading it**

- Presentation of syllabus: Course description, purpose, requirements and presuppositions

READINGS:

**DD** - Chapter 1: *Historical, Cultural, and Social Contexts of the New Testament*

Study questions:

What was the significance of the Babylonian Exile? Why were there resistance, reform, and terrorist movements during the period of Herod the Great? What was the significance of Jamnia? Why were the mystery religions so popular? What was the political significance of the Emperor Cult? How did Gnostics look at the world, the self, and salvation? What is the difference between the temple and the synagogue? What do the modern terms apocalypticism and millennialism signify, and what is their significance for the study of this period? What were some of the major groups in Greco-Roman Israel, and what did they believe?

**DD** - Chapter 2: *Interpreting the New Testament – Contemporary Biblical Criticism*

Study questions:

What are the “synoptic gospels”? Why is there a “Synoptic Problem”? What is the usual solution to this problem? How was oral tradition passed on in the Jesus Movement, and what happened to it?

**DD** – Chapter 3: *The Earliest Non-Pauline Groups and Their Beliefs and Practices*

Study questions:

What are the four main genres of the New Testament? What are some of the earliest written sources and oral traditions? What are some of the key social factors in the history of the early Jesus Movement? What is the Johannine “Signs Source”? What is the “Little Apocalypse,” and what appears to be the context of the people to whom it gives hope and encouragement? What are the Christological hymns, and what image of Jesus do they seem to stress?

**PB** – Culture and Identity – The Bible and Empire

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**CLASS SESSION # 2**

January 12

**Paul and his early letters**

READINGS:

**DD** – Chapter 4: *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles*

Study questions:

What are the undisputed Pauline letters? What was Paul’s ethnic and religious background, and why was it well suited for his role as “apostle to the Gentiles”? What was his trade and its significance for his social status and mission? Where were the key cities of Paul’s mission? What were house-churches?

**DD** – Chapter 5: *The Letter and Paul's Early Letters*

Study questions:

What are the central themes of 1 Thessalonians? In what ways is unity in the Corinthian congregation the overarching theme in 1 & 2 Corinthians? What are the key problems that Paul addresses and what are his recommended solutions? Who are the “super-apostles” in 2 Cor. 10-13? What is the historical and social context for Philippians? What is the major teaching of the “Philippians hymn”? What is the historical and social context for Philemon? How would you describe the ancient institution of slavery? What are Paul's intentions in the letter?

**PB** – Intro to the Pauline Letters – 1 Thessalonians – 1 Corinthians – Philemon

**GBC** – presentations: 1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, Philippians, Philemon

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**FREE MONDAY # 1**

January 19 – NO CLASS

Suggested READINGS:

**GBC** – Jesus articles (329-349)

**JS** – *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ*

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**CLASS SESSION # 3**

January 26

**The gospel according to Paul**

READINGS:

**DD** – Chapter 6: *Galatians and Romans*

Study questions:

Who are the so-called Judaizers and what is the main issue at stake in Galatians? Why is Paul so angry in this letter and how does he solve the crisis with the Galatians? What is “Justification by faith”? What are Paul's views about sin and salvation; Adam and Christ; Justification by faith; and Women's roles in the church in the letter to the Romans?

**PB** – Women, Culture, and the Bible – Galatians – Romans

**GBC** – presentations: Galatians, Romans

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**CLASS SESSION # 4**

February 2

**Standing on Paul's shoulders**

READINGS:

**DD** – Chapter 7: *Deutero-Pauline Letters and the Letter to the Hebrews*

Study questions:

What is the major problem in 2 Thessalonians and what is the author's advice about it? Who are the opponents in Colossians? Why Colossians is not considered a Pauline letter? What are the similarities between Colossians and Ephesians? What is the core message of Hebrews? How is Jesus portrayed in Hebrews?

**PB** – The Bible as a Text of Cultures – 2 Thessalonians – Colossians – Hebrews

**GBC** – presentations: 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, Hebrews, Hebrews: Sacrifice in an African Perspective

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**CLASS SESSION # 5**

February 9

**Mark – a Jesus to go!**

READINGS:

**DD** – Chapter 8: *The Gospel of Mark: A Mysterious Apocalyptic Drama*

Study questions:

What is the gospel's social context? How did Mark compose his story? What are summaries and “Sandwiches”? What is the role of geography and topography in Mark? What are some of the important Christological titles and their significance? What is the role of miracles?

**JS** - *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ – 1-93*

**PB** – Jesus and Cultures, the Gospels Introduction, the Gospel of Mark

**GBC** – presentations: Mark; Mark's Healing Stories in an AIDS Context; Jesus: African

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**CLASS SESSION # 6**

February 13 - FRIDAY

**Matthew – a Jesus for the church!**

READINGS:

**DD** – Chapter 9: *The Gospel of Matthew: Obedience to the New Revelation*

Study questions:

What is the importance and use of Torah and scripture in Matthew? What are some of the literary characteristics of Matthew? What is the importance of Moses and the “Son of God” title for this gospel? What is Matthew's view of “Salvation History”? How do the disciples from Matthew compare to the ones in Mark? How is the church portrayed in Matthew?

**JS** - *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ – 94-181*

**PB** – the Gospel of Matthew

**GBC** – presentations: Matthew; Mt 5-7: the Sermon on the Mount and India; Jesus: Asian

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**FREE MONDAY # 2**

February 16 – NO CLASS

Suggested READINGS:

***Peoples' Bible articles*** – The Bible as a Text in Cultures (23-63)

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## CLASS SESSION # 7

February 23

# Luke / Acts – a Jesus for the marginalized!

### READINGS:

**DD** – Chapter 10: *The Gospel of Luke and Acts: The Idea and Ethics of Salvation History*

Study questions:

What is the Lukan portrait of Jesus, and how does it differ from that of Mark and Matthew? What are some of Luke's social interests and concerns? How does Luke use scripture? Why does the author of Luke-Acts stress the delay of the parousia? What is the Luke-Acts view of "salvation history"? How does Acts view the church, the Kingdom of God, ethics and Israelites/Gentiles?

**JS** - *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ – 182-292*

**PB** – the Gospel of Luke

**GBC** – presentations: Luke; Luke's God and Mammon; Jesus: Latin American

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## CLASS SESSION # 8

March 2

# John – a Jesus for here!

### READINGS:

**DD** – Chapter 11: *The Gospel and Letters of John: The Literature of the Johannine School*

Study questions:

What is the Johannine literature? What seems to be the relation between the Gospel of John and the synoptic gospels? What do some scholars see as the distinctive history of the Johannine community? What are some major ideas of the Gospel of John? What kind of Jesus is portrayed in the Prologue of John? What are some of the main literary techniques used by the evangelist? What are some of the key symbolic themes in the discourse? How are the Johannine letters related to the Gospel of John? What is "docetism," and what does the author say about it?

**JS** – *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ – 292-377*

**PB** – the Gospel of John

**GBC** – presentations: John; John in Orthodox Perspective; Letters of John; Jesus: Orthodox

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## CLASS SESSION # 9

March 9

# Revelation and the beginning of the end

### READINGS:

**DD** – Chapter 12: *Revelation*

Study questions:

What is the social-historical context of Revelation? In what sense is Revelation prophecy or apocalyptic? What are the beast and the whore of Babylon symbols? What is the millennium in Revelation? Is the Book of Revelation a book of hope? How?

**DD** – Chapter 13: *Beginnings of Institutionalism: 1 Peter, James, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Jude, 2 Peter*

Study questions:

What can you say about Peter and Babylon? What is the significance of the "house-church" for the

interpretation of I Peter? How is I Peter related to the practice of baptism? What is the main content of James? How would you compare the Book of James to the writings of Paul? What is Jewish about James? Who are the opponents in Timothy and Titus? What does I Timothy say about worship? How do these letters demonstrate growing institutionalization in the Jesus Movement?

**PB** – Revelation, 1 Peter, James, 1 Timothy

**GBC** – presentations: Revelation; 1-2 Peter & Jude; James; 1 Tim; 2 Tim & Titus

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## CLASS SESSION # 10

March 16

## Jesus: conclusions about the beginning

### READINGS:

**DD** – Chapter 14: *The Presupposition of the New Testament: Jesus*

#### Study questions:

How does the variety of images in the NT contribute to the problem of the historical Jesus? What are some of the main issues that have arisen in the quest of the historical Jesus during the last two centuries? What was the cultural and social-historical context of the life of Jesus? How would you describe Jesus' teachings about the Kingdom? How does the Lord's Prayer fit the overall impression of Jesus' message? What is Jesus' teaching about the future? Why do you think Jesus went to Jerusalem? Did he know he was a messiah? Who was really responsible for Jesus' death?

**PB** – Jesus and Cultures

**JS** – *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ*

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### Global Bible Commentary – presentations:

1 Thessalonians -	Heb: Sacrifice AP -	John -
1 Corinthians -	Mark -	John Orthodox -
Philippians -	Mk Healing AIDS -	Letters of John -
Philemon -	Jesus: African -	Jesus: Orthodox -
Galatians -	Matthew -	Revelation -
Romans -	Mt 5-7: India -	1-2 Peter & Jude -
2 Thessalonians -	Jesus: Asian -	James -
Colossians -	Luke -	1 Tim -
Ephesians -	Lk God and Mammon -	2 Tim & Titus -
Hebrews -	Jesus: Latin American -	