

RTS

O R L A N D O



Th.M. COURSE SYLLABUS

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NT7100-Current Issues in Gospels Studies

Professor Jonathan T. Pennington

Summer 2026

## **PROFESSOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION**

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## **COURSE DATES**

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**IN CLASS DATES:** July 13-17, 2026

**COURSE COMPLETION DATE:** Aug 17, 2026

## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

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### **DESCRIPTION:**

Catalog description

### **GOALS:**

This course is designed to expose students to foundational issues for the interpretation of the Gospels at a level deeper than the Master of Divinity. At the end of this course students will have a better understanding of the Gospels as history, as literature, and as theology.

## **COURSE DETAILS**

### **1. GRADING SCHEDULE.**

Late work will be penalized 1 letter grade per day, unless prior permission for late submission was granted.

The published RTS grading scale is used in this course. See the latest Catalog.

### **2. ATTENDANCE AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS.**

Attendance and prepared participation is required. If class is not attended, the student's final grade will be affected.

### **3. SPECIAL NEEDS.**

In order to ensure full class participation, any student with a disabling condition requiring special accommodations (e.g. tape recorders, special adaptive equipment) is strongly encouraged to contact the instructor before the beginning of the course.

#### **4. ACADEMIC HONESTY (QUOTED AND ADAPTED FROM DR. TIMOTHY PHILLIPS OF WHEATON COLLEGE).**

The assignments are designed to extend and deepen your comprehension and appreciation of Christian theology and to increase your facility with theological method. The processes of defining a topic, researching the results of others' studies, critiquing those studies, and organizing your conclusions in a clear and cogent presentation provides valuable skills for your various leadership ministries. The use of sources is an essential step in appropriating the learning of the Church's tradition in its relationship to cultures to help us understand and faithfully practice Scripture.

Using information obtained from a source without indicating it (whether by footnote, parentheses, or bibliography or some other appropriate reference, depending on the type of assignment) is plagiarism (intellectual thievery and lying). This applies to any information that you gain from someone that is not "common knowledge." It does not apply only to exact quotations or precise verbal allusions. Altering the wording does not remove the obligation to acknowledge the source.

Cheating is the presentation of someone else's work, which the student ought to have done personally. This includes submitting answers to test questions derived by some means other than that intended by the instructor. It also includes turning in written assignments composed in whole or in part by someone else or by use of AI-powered programs (such as ChatGPT).

See also pertinent discussion of plagiarism in the latest RTS Catalog.

#### **5. DISCLAIMER.**

This syllabus is intended to reflect accurately the learning objectives, instructional format and other information necessary for students to appraise the course. However, the instructor reserves the right to modify any portion of this syllabus as may become necessary.

#### **6. SUPPORT:**

Canvas allows you to interact with the Professor or his teaching assistant via the Inbox function.

Canvas also allows for interaction with classmates. You can interact with classmates via the Student-to-Student forum or Conferences.

See FAQ on the Home Page or at Modules > Course Resources for instructions on various Canvas features.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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### READING

The following books are required:

- Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* (Baker Academic, 2015)
- Michael Bird, *The Gospel of the Lord: How the Early Church Wrote the Story of Jesus* (Eerdmans, 2014)
- Helen Bond, *The First Biography of Jesus: Genre and Meaning in Mark's Gospel* (Eerdmans, 2020)
- Jeannine Brown, *The Gospels as Stories: A Narrative Approach to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John* (Baker Academic, 2020)
- Mark Goodacre, *The Fourth Synoptic Gospel: John's Knowledge of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Eerdmans, 2025)
- Derek Olsen, *Reading Matthew with Monks: Liturgical Interpretation in Anglo-Saxon England* (Liturgical Press, 2015).
- Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper* (Eerdmans, 2015)

The following essays are required (pdfs provided on Canvas):

- Richard Hays, "The Canonical Matrix of the Gospels" in Barton, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Gospels* (2006)
- Mark Allan Powell, "Narrative Criticism: The Emergence of a Prominent Reading Strategy" in Iverson and Skinner, *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect* (SBL, 2011)

Suggested Reading Order: Bird, Goodacre, Olsen, Powell, Brown, Bond, Pitre, Bauckham, Hays

### ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS

For each of the assigned readings students will be required to produce and turn in a 3-paragraph summary of what they have read.

This assignment is for your (forgetful) future self and to develop the skill of succinct summary, all the while encouraging active reading. This is not meant to be busy-work or overly labor-intensive. The point is to produce a simple, brief document for each item you read. This should be in the following format:

- Bibliographic Info (author, date, edition, publication, etc.)
- Paragraph 1 = Overview/abstract of main idea(s) – beefy and longest paragraph
- Paragraph 2 = Insights, strengths, “a-ha” moments, curious new thoughts
- Paragraph 3 = Your general reaction; concerns or disagreements; remaining questions to be further explored

Total length for each of these summaries should be approximately 1 page.

**DUE: THESE SUMMARIES SHOULD BE COMPLETED AND UPLOADED THROUGH CANVAS BY *JULY 11, 2026*.**

## RESEARCH PAPERS

Students will write a research paper on any aspect of the academic study of the Gospels as historical literature and/or canonical documents. This paper should be written at a level and in a style suitable for publication in an academic journal. Paper length should be between 5,000-6,000 words.

These papers are *not* exegetical papers on a particular passage but rather, they will discuss and make an argument about the nature, function, historical interpretation, or beneficial methodologies for interpreting the Gospels. This may include topics such as how the Gospels have been read and interpreted at different times in history, an evaluation of assorted methodologies or approaches, or hermeneutical issues related to the Gospels.

**Please Note:** All paper topics must be discussed with the professor and approved beforehand. During our on-campus meeting sessions we will set aside time in class to discuss your potential paper topics. Therefore, *all students should come prepared with some idea of what you might want to research.*

## COURSE WEEK SCHEDULE

Class meets July 13-17, 2026.

### *Monday, July 13*

Topic: Orientation to the Fourfold Gospel Book

- Discussion of Bird
- What are the Gospels and Why do we Need Them?
- Hermeneutics for the Gospels
- Overview of the Gospels

### *Tuesday, July 14*

Topic: The Gospels as and in History

- Discussion of Goodacre
- Discussion of Olsen
- The Relationship of the Gospels to Each Other
- A Brief History of the Interpretation of the Gospels

### *Wednesday, July 15*

Topic: The Gospels as Literature

- Discussion of Powell
- Discussion of Brown
- Discussion of Bond
- The Genre of the Gospels
- Interpreting Gospel Narratives

### *Thursday, July 16*

Topic: The Gospels as Literature

- Discussion of Powell
- Discussion of Brown
- Discussion of Bond
- Literary Techniques in the Gospels

### *Friday, July 17*

Topic: The Gospels as Theology

- Discussion of Pitre
- Discussion of Bauckham
- Discussion of Hays
- The Gospels in the Canon

- The Gospels and Spiritual Formation
- Preaching and Teaching the Gospels

## CONCLUDING ONLINE SCHEDULE

- Final Research Paper is DUE Aug 17, 2026.

## FURTHER READING (NOT REQUIRED)

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- Dale Allison, Jr., *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* (Baker, 2013)
- Stephen Barton, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Gospels* (CUP, 2006)
- Bauckham, Richard. *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Baker Academic, 2007)
- Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospel as Eyewitness Testimony* (Eerdmans, 2008)
- Cornelis Bennema, *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John* 2d ed. (Fortress, 2014)
- Markus Bockmuehl and Donald Hagner, eds., *The Written Gospel* (CUP, 2005)
- Richard Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ed (Eerdmans, 2020)
- James Dunn, *The Oral Gospel Tradition* (Eerdmans, 2013)
- Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Baylor, 2016)
- Charles Hill, *Who Chose the Gospels? Probing the Great Gospel Conspiracy* (OUP, 2012)
- Martin Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ* (Trinity Press Int., 2000)
- Kelly Iverson and Christopher Skinner, *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect* (SBL, 2011)
- Chris Keith and Anthony Le Donne, eds., *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity* (T&T Clark, 2012)
- Werner Kelber and Samuel Byrskog, eds., *Jesus in Memory: Traditions in Oral and Scribal Perspectives* (Baylor, 2009)
- Jonathan Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction*. (Baker, 2012)
- Stanley Porter and Bryan Dyer, eds., *The Synoptic Problem: Four Views* (Baker, 2016)
- Francis Watson, *The Fourfold Gospel: A Theological Reading of the New Testament Portraits of Jesus* (Baker Academic, 2017)

**Course Objectives Related to ThM\* Student Learning Outcomes**

Course: Current Issues in Gospels Studies

Professor: Jonathan T. Pennington

Campus: Orlando

Date: July 13-17, 2026

<b><u>ThM Student Learning Outcomes</u></b> <i>In order to measure the success of the ThM curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the ThM outcomes.</i>		<b><u>Rubric</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong</li> <li>• Moderate</li> <li>• Minimal</li> <li>• None</li> </ul>	<b><u>Mini-Justification</u></b>
<b>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</b>	Articulates knowledge, both oral and written, regarding advanced biblical, theological, and historical scholarship, demonstrating attention to details, concepts, methods, and frameworks.	Strong	We will be reading and discuss a wide range of contemporary academic works on the Gospels.
<b>Primary Texts</b>	Significant knowledge of, and skills to engage, primary texts within the student's chosen track (Bible or theology). This includes a demonstrated expertise in interpreting primary languages as appropriate (Bible = Greek and/or Hebrew; Theology = optional proficiency in a theological language)	Moderate	While we will be looking at the texts of the Gospels and discussing their interpretation, we will not be focusing on Greek.
<b>Secondary Literature</b>	Demonstrates a breadth of knowledge of and skill to research and engage critically with secondary literature related to the appropriate discipline.	Strong	The focus of this course is on engagement with secondary academic literature on the Gospels.
<b>Winsomely Reformed</b>	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes a charitable engagement with a wide variety of views, of those both inside and outside the Evangelical and Reformed perspectives)	Moderate	The readings will come from a range of academic perspectives and will be evaluated charitably.