

Reformed Theological Seminary
Gospels
NT5200 (3 Credit Hours)
Fall 2026
Thursdays 1:00-3:55 pm

Dr. Chris S. Stevens
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TA:

1. Course Objectives:

To orient students to the major themes, content, and scholarship of the Gospels.

Know (Head):

- Date, Authorship, Socio-Religious setting of the individual accounts.
- Major Content and Themes of the individual and canonical section.
- Major Gospel Scholarship, a general awareness of challenges.
- How to process and respond to hyper-critical work.

Be (Heart):

- Understanding the significance of the individual accounts for theology (BT & ST), daily life, and ecclesiastical form and function.
- Become a critical inquirer of the individual pericope and canonical section.
- Reflect upon the author as people and instruments in redemptive history.

Do (Hands):

- Learn to delve deeply into the biblical text.
- Recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of secondary literature and that there is no replacement for thoughtful personal interaction with the text.
- Begin notes for later preaching, teaching, and further studies.

2. Course Description from the RTS Catalogue (p. 69)

Attention is given to each writer's literary art, theological teaching, pastoral purpose, and message for today's church and world

Assignments:**Required Material**

- English Bible with cross references (CSB, ESV, NAS, etc.)
- Hand edition of the Greek New Testament (NA28, UBS4, etc., with apparatus)
- Means for taking notes, which is strongly recommended not to be electronic.

Recommended Materials

- Bible Software (Accordance, Logos, etc. There are many free resources available too.)

Required Reading:

- a) Two personal selections: 1) a critical commentary of at least 250 pages. on one of the Gospels;¹ 2) roughly 200 pgs. of personal choice of top-quality works (academic journals or monographs, examples in bibliography). Submit the reported reading prior to the final exam.
 - b) Read the four Gospels (any language) prior to mid-term, and you will be asked.
 - c) Read works below.
 - Roughly 2000 pg. total.
- 1) Strauss, Mark L. *Four Portraits, One Jesus: A Survey of Jesus and the Gospels*. Second edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020. Pgs. 650
 - 2) Strimple, Robert B., *The Modern Search for the Real Jesus: An Introductory Survey of the Historical Roots of Gospels Criticism*. Phillipsburg: P&R, 1995. Pgs. 150
 - 3) Carson, D. A. and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005. (Sections on the Four Gospels) For course purposes, the 1st edition is not acceptable. Pgs. 200
 Alternatives:
 - a) *Kruger, Michael J. ed. *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospel Realized*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2016.
 - b) Hagner, Donald Alfred. *The New Testament: A Historical and Theological Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012.
 - 4) Linnemann, Eta. "The Lost Gospel of Q: Fact or Fantasy?" *Trinity Journal* 17 (1996): 3–18.
 Alternatives:
 - a) *Linnemann, Eta. *Is There a Synoptic Problem? Rethinking the Literary Dependence of the First Three Gospels*. Translated by Robert W. Yarbrough. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992. Pgs. 200
 - b) Goodacre, Mark S. *The Case against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem*. Harrisburg: Trinity, 2002.

¹ An expository work is not a critical commentary. Consult the bibliography given in class, but generally think more NIGTC, Pillar, Calvin, ICC, etc. and not REC by P&R.

- c) Goodacre, Mark S. *The Synoptic Problem: A Way through the Maze*, The Biblical Seminar 80. New York: Sheffield Academic, 2001.
- 5) Porter, Stanley E. and Brook W.R. Pearson. "The Genres of the New Testament," Pages 131–166 in *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament*. Edited by Stanley E. Porter. Leiden: Brill, 2002. Pgs. 35 (pdf via Canvas)
- 6) Porter, Stanley E. and Bryan R. Dyer eds., *The Synoptic Problem: Four Views*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016). Pgs. 190
- 7) Schweitzer, Albert, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001. (Assigned sections in class) Pgs. 150
- 8) Westcott, Brooke Foss. *An Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*. 6th ed. Cambridge: Macmillan, 1881, 165–212. (Ch. 3) Pgs. 47
 - a) <https://archive.org/details/introductiontostoowestuoft/page/n5/mode/2up>
 - b) [http://www.westcotthort.com/books/Westcott_-_Introduction_to_the_Study_of_the_Gospels_\(6th_1881\).pdf](http://www.westcotthort.com/books/Westcott_-_Introduction_to_the_Study_of_the_Gospels_(6th_1881).pdf)
- 9) Additional Readings provided via Canvas.

1. Papers

Advice: Use your seminary assignments to prepare for lifelong service to the King. I warn that no one in your church wants to hear a 17-part lecture on why Bultmann's form criticism failed—and frankly, neither do I.

Instead, use your assignments to build skills, deepen knowledge, and lay foundations for future labors. For example, choose key figures for your short papers who can also feature in your major papers (friend or foe). Then use those same figures in future NT classes. By the end of seminary, you will have a strong grasp of ten major NT scholars. If planned well, your papers might grow into a thesis, the background for a sermon series, or the foundation of a Sunday School curriculum.

a) Short: 5%

A 1000-word summary of 10 **significant figures** in Gospel scholarship and their contribution. Giving roughly 100 words per person, this can be done in list form with a paragraph for each figure. It is an opportunity for reflection and assessment, so biblical dictionaries should not simply be copied. Using AI is subject to the school policy on academic honesty.

b) Major: 25%

A 3000-word biblical exegetical paper. Besides the features requisite in a quality paper (clear thesis, logical argumentation, appropriate conclusion, etc.), it should include some comment on the following features: textual criticism, lexical analysis, syntactical discussion, structural analysis, location within book, biblical theological significance, covenantal insights and ramifications, and etc. (remember the layers of **cotext, context, and canon**).

The paper will be 3000 words *excluding* footnotes and bibliography. It should demonstrate interaction with the text and secondary literature: journal articles, commentaries, monographs,

biblical theologies, systematics, etc. While I do not want a summary of commentators' opinions, the goal is not to be groundbreaking or novel. You are not measured by finding something new or novel. The assignment aims to practice engaging with the biblical text and using tools for productive learning and articulation. I want to see you learn and grow in thinking as Christian scholars. One or two exceptional papers per semester will be selected for praise and reward.

Format: Text Body: left justified, Font Times New Roman (or Brill, Helvetica Neue), 12 pt., 1-inch margins, indent ½ inch, and double-spaced. **Footnotes:** left justified, 10 pt., first line ½ inch indent. Pagination is on the top right. I am dyslexic, so I am sympathetic to typos, spelling errors, and grammatical abominations. However, you are in a master's program, so labor well in proofreading and make the paper easier for me to read, or such errors will lower your grade.

The topics below are suggestions that should cover most papers. If you have something outside of these suggestions, meet me with a written, prepared thesis and three points to prove your thesis.

Paper Topics:

1. How does a Gospel present Jesus as the climactic revealer of the kingdom of God, especially through parables, signs, or messianic identity?
2. How does a Gospel portray Jesus' fulfillment and authoritative rereading of the Old Testament, especially in relation to Torah and either the Sermon on the Mount or his counter-cultural actions?

Paper Policy:

The style and form of papers should be conducted according to the school policy. Footnotes and bibliography are SBL Style (5th), use inclusive and appropriate language, and be consistent: *behaviour* or *behavior*. The style and tone of papers should conform to theological journals (see, for instance, *JBL*, *JETS*, *JTS*).

Exams:

Midterm Exam (20%) to be taken after reading week, covering lectures, assigned readings, and Bible reading up to that point. The Final Exam (25%) will focus on the remaining lectures and readings but include anything from the semester.

Grading Policy:

All assignments must receive a passing grade to pass the class. There is no mathematical passing without a valid attempt at every assignment. The grading scale for this course is the seminary's grading scale on *RTS Catalog*, pg.48. Also, the professor reserves the right to grade papers, final exams, and other assignments on a comparative scale. In exams and papers, students are not required to agree with the professor or RTS. They are measured by their merit, method, and execution.

Grading:

- 1) Final Exam 25%
- 2) Mid-term Exam 20%
- 3) Paper Major 25%
- 4) Weekly Quizzes/Assignments 5%
- 5) Reading 10%
- 6) In-class participation 10%
- 7) Paper Short 5%

Due Dates:

- 1) Final Exam second week of December
- 2) Mid-term Exam after reading week
- 3) Final Paper Nov. 26 by 11 pm

Late Assignments:

Late assignments lose one letter grade per day, excluding Sundays. A 'day' is any time after the beginning of class. So, if you are going to be one hour late, you might as well use the rest of the day to ensure everything is perfect. Must be either time-stamped at the front desk or prior to 11 pm on Canvas.

Attendance:

While attendance and participation in the classroom only count for 5% of your grade, I pray you would consider the actual value. All absences will be handled according to school policies. Two tardies (arriving after the beginning of class) constitute an hour of absence. Students missing more than two sessions (for any reason) may **either** submit an additional, compensatory assignment [determined by the instructor] **or** choose to receive a full letter grade reduction in their final grade.

Class Participation:

Class participation requires: preparation, reading of assignments, active listening, and discussion in class. Classroom disrespect will not be tolerated, including verbal interaction, and all devices must be used solely for classroom participation. **I do not want to see any cellphones.** Any student doing other activities will be dismissed and counted absent.

Plagiarism: In accordance with school policy, any cheating (quiz, paper, exam, etc.) will be submitted to the Academic Dean for resolution. Furthermore, the use and abuse of AI tools are explained in the Artificial Intelligence Policies for Use in Coursework. If there is evidence of widespread abuses, the Professor reserves the right to change how assignments are handled.



 REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

SYSTEM

Course Objectives Related to M.Div. Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Gospels (NT5200)

Professor: Chris Stevens

Campus: Jackson

Date: Fall 2026

<u>MDiv Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Strong	Course basic exegetical principles for interpreting Scripture
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Strong	See course title and description
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Reformed distinctives on Scripture and its interpretation are carefully considered
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	Scripture is the primary means of grace, its study ought to be an act of love toward God
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Minimal	Focused on interpreting Word of God rightly

Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Minimal	Though we hope the professors and students exemplify this spirit
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Moderate	Must understand what the text means to preach it rightly
Worship	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	Minimal	Course is relevant to worship but is not centered on worship, as such
Shepherd	Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.	Moderate	Using Scripture rightly is central to good shepherding
Church/World	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Minimal	Though alternative approaches to Scripture will be considered and application of original meaning to contemporary contexts

Additional Bibliography

Gospels 5200

(All books on this list are to be read critically for learning, not simply to adopt the thinking of the author.)

Exegesis:

Beale, G. K. *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012.

Bultmann, Rudolf Karl. "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?" *Encounter* 21.2 (1960): 194–200.

Casurella, Anthony. *The Johannine Paraclete in the Church Fathers: A Study in the History of Exegesis*. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese. 25. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1983.

Conzelmann, Hans, and Andreas Lindemann. *Interpreting the New Testament: An Introduction to the Principles and Methods of New Testament Exegesis*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988.

Longenecker, Richard N. "Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament." *Tyndale Bulletin* 21, (1970): 3–38.

Porter, Stanley E. and Kent D. Clarke. "What is Exegesis? An Analysis of Various Definitions," Pages 3–21 in *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament*. Edited by Stanley E. Porter. Leiden: Brill, 1997.

*Steinmetz, David C. "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis." *Theology Today* 37 (1980): 27–38.

Major Figures:

Baird, William. *History of the New Testament Research, Vol. One: From Deism to Tübingen*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.

———. *History of New Testament Research, Vol. Two: From Jonathan Edwards to Rudolf Bultmann*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003.

———. *History of New Testament Research, Vol. Three: From C. H. Dodd to Hans Dieter Betz*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013.

Green, Joel B., Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992.

Porter, Stanley E. *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Soulen, Richard N., and R. Kendall Soulen. *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*. 3rd ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001.

Backgrounds:

Charlesworth, James H. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 2 vols. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1983.

Collins, John J. *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature*. The Anchor Bible Reference Library. New York: Doubleday, 1995.

*Ferguson, Everett. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

- *Hengel, Martin. *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977.
- . *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period*. Translated by John Bowden. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981.
- . *Studies in Early Christology*. New York: T&T Clark, 1995.
- . *The Septuagint as Christian Scripture: Its Prehistory and the Problem of Its Canon*. Translated by Mark E. Biddle. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002.
- . *The Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 A.D.* Translated by David Smith. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989.
- Jellicoe, Sidney. "Septuagint Studies in the Current Century." *JBL* 88.2 (1968): 191–199.
- Lindars, Barnabas. "The Image of Moses in the Synoptic Gospels." *Theology* 58 (1955): 128–132.
- Müller, Mogens. "The Septuagint as the Bible of the New Testament Church." *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 7.2 (1993): 194–207.
- Neusner, Jacob. *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011.
- . *The Jerusalem Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008.

General Works:

- *Beale, G. K. *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012.
- *———. *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994.
- . "Did Jesus and the Apostles Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Revisiting the Debate Seventeen Years Later in the Light of Peter Enns' Book, Inspiration and Incarnation." *Themelios* 32, no. 1 (2006): 18–43.
- . "Myth, History, and Inspiration: A Review Article of Inspiration and Incarnation by Peter Enns." *JETS* 49, 2 (2006): 287–312.
- Bird, Michael F. "Unity of Luke-Acts in Recent Discussion." *JSNT* 29, no. 4 (2007): 425–448.
- Bultmann, Rudolf Karl. *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*. Translated by John Marsh. 5th ed. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1963.
- Blomberg, Craig L. *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey*. 2nd Edition. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2009.
- Hengel, Martin. *The four Gospels and the one Gospel of Jesus Christ: an investigation of the collection and origin of the Canonical Gospels*. Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000.
- Hill, Charles E., *Who Chose the Gospels? Probing the Great Gospel Conspiracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- *Holmes, Michael W. *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999.

- Keener, Craig S., *Christobiography: Memory, History, and the Reliability of the Gospels*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019.
- George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*. Revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).
- Mack, Burton L. and Vernon K. Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels*. Foundations & Facets Literary Facets. Sonoma: Polebridge, 1989.
- Marshall, I. Howard, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004.
- Porter, Stanley E., *Reading the Gospels Today*. *McMaster New Testament Studies*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Reynolds, Benjamin E. *The Son of Man Problem: Critical Readings*. T & T Clark, 2018.
- *Williams, Peter J. *Can We Trust the Gospels?* Wheaton: Crossway, 2018.

Synoptic

- Barker, James W. *Writing and Rewriting the Gospels: John and the Synoptics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2025.
- Bauckham, Richard, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.
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- Grindheim, Sigurd. *Christology in the Synoptic Gospels: God or God's Servant?* London: T&T Clark, 2012.
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Real Jesus. The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels*. Harper: San Francisco, 1996.
- Streeter, Burnett Hillman. *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins Treating of the Manuscript Tradition, Sources, Authorship, & Dates*. 4th ed. Edinburgh: Macmillan and Co., 1930.
- Tuckett, Christopher M. "The Synoptic Gospels and Acts," Pages 477–502 in *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament*. Edited by Stanley E. Porter. Leiden: Brill, 2002.
- Perkins, PHEME. *Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels*. Eerdmans, 2009.
- *Linnemann, Eta, *Is There a Synoptic Problem? Rethinking the Literary Dependence of the First Three Gospels*. Translated by Robert W. Yarbrough. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992.

Matthew

- *Levine, Amy-Jill. *Sermon on the Mount: A Beginner's Guide to the Kingdom of Heaven*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2020.
- Keener, Craig S., *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.
- Luz, Ulrich. *Matthew: A Commentary*. Edited by Helmut Koester. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2001.
- Morris, Leon, *The Gospel According to Matthew*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992.
- Nolland, John. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.

Mark

- Beasley-Murray, George Raymond. *Jesus and the Last Days: The Interpretation of the Olivet Discourse*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993.
- Cranfield, C. E. B., *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*. Cambridge: University Press, 1966.
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- Hengel, Martin. *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985.
- Hooker, Morna D. *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*. Black's New Testament Commentary. London: Continuum, 1991.
- Hooker, Morna Dorothy. *The Son of Man in Mark: A Study of the Background of the Term "Son of Man" and Its Use in St. Mark's Gospel*. McGill University Press. 1967.
- Rhoads, David M. and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982.

Luke

- Bock, Darrell L., *Luke*. 2 vols., Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994.
- Cyril, *Commentary on the Gospel of Saint Luke*. Studion, 1983.
- Fitzmyer, Joseph A., *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*. The Anchor Yale Bible. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.
- Green, Joel B., *The Gospel of Luke*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.
- Lee, David, *Luke's Stories of Jesus: Theological Reading of Gospel Narrative and the Legacy of Hans Frie*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999.

John

- Anderson, Paul N. ed. *John, Jesus, and History*. 4 Volumes., SBL Publishers.
- Barrett, C. K., *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*. 2d ed. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978.

- Brown, Raymond Edward, *The Gospel According to John*. Anchor Yale Bible. Garden City: Yale University Press, 1966.
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- *Carson, D. A. *The Gospel According to John*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press; Eerdmans, 1991.
- *John Chrysostom. *The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Gospel of St. John*. A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church. Oxford; London: John Henry Parker; F. and J. Rivington, 1848.
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- O'Day, Gail R. "Miracle Discourse and the Gospel of John," Pages 175–188 in *Miracle Discourse in the New Testament*. Edited by Duane F. Watson. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012.
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Historical Jesus

- Bird, Michael F., *Are You the One Who Is to Come? The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009.
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Parables

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