

## STMM 527-01 & 02 Christian Scriptures

### DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

(Syllabus subject to change)

This introductory course is designed to equip students with a fundamental knowledge of the Christian Scriptures. We will study the Christian Scriptures:

- Historically, as ancient records that reflect the socio-cultural context of production.
- Rhetorically, as texts that respond to the literary conventions of their time, for a particular audience.
- Theologically/Hermeneutically as authoritative discourses of the Christian faith.

As we study the Scriptures we will survey some of the major interpretive methods in biblical criticism (redaction, reader-response, narrative, ideological, and feminists criticisms among others) to provide both a framework for the study of the Christian Scriptures and some hermeneutical tools for preaching and teaching its message.

This course operates under a policy of inclusivity and respect: EVERYONE has a voice in this class and ALL opinions are welcomed. 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 and readings are subjective.

Our general approach to the Christian Scriptures will be both academic and ministerial. Overall, from the academic standpoint, we will use cultural studies approaches in the analysis of biblical texts. From the ministerial standpoint, we will read the Christian Scriptures with an emphatic interest on the inclusiveness of the Christian Word.

At the end of the course students should be able to:

- Read the Christian Scriptures critically
- Use biblical tools and resources as a way to inform their own exegesis for the purpose of doing their ministry
- Critically understand and be aware of their own social location/ assumptions/ hermeneutics as they engage the text in their own lives, their communities, and the larger world.

### REQUIREMENTS

**A. Class attendance and participation – 30%:** Attendance to all class sessions and informed participation is expected. Complete the required readings and written assignments prior to each session following the instructions from the class calendar.

**B. Audiovisual assignments:** Watch the following two movies – (6%)

**1) “The Matrix”** (Directed by Andy Wachowski, Lana Wachowski. Starring Keanu Reeves – 1999). Pay attention to what this film is symbolically saying about society, culture, religion, and gender roles. Come prepared to share your response with the class on **January 5 (Th) / 10 (T) (3%)**

**2) “Galaxy Quest”** (Directed by Dean Parisot. Starring Tim Allen, Sigourney Weaver – 1999). What is this film symbolically telling us about the biblical canon and the ways in which we tend to appropriate the Letters of Paul and the Bible in general? Come prepared to share your views with the class on **January 12 (Th) / 17 (T) (3%)**

**C. Written assignments – 64%:**

**1) 1Thessalonians/1 Corinthians** - Write a short exegetical essay on **the apocalyptic character of Paul’s message** as expressed in 1Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians. Read both letters, marking the

passages with apocalyptic tone, and then select the one passage from each letter which, according to you, better captures Paul's apocalyptic expectations. Analyze the selected passages first within their literary context, and then in relation to the other letter. What conclusions can you draw about Paul's apocalyptic view in these two letters? How do Paul's apocalyptic expectations influence his message and advice to the churches? What are the ramifications of such passages/perspective for the Church today? What would the alternative message/advice be if Paul had a realized eschatology instead? **(700-words - minimum) (IC) Due on January 12 (Th) / 17 (T) (11%)**

**2) Romans and Galatians** - Write a mini-theological-essay on the meaning of "**Justification by Faith**" according to Paul's letters to the Romans and the Galatians. After a thoughtful reading of Romans and Galatians, explain your interpretation of Paul's idea of being "justified by faith apart from works of the Law" (Romans 3:28 and Galatians 2:16), within the ideological context of the letters. Write the essay as if you were explaining the concept to the members of your ecclesial community or to your friends. Use practical examples to illustrate your interpretation. **(300-words - minimum) Due on January 19 (Th) / 24 (T) (5%)**

**3) Mark:** Write a short exegetical essay on Mark 12:13-17. From your own social location, how do you interpret this text? What was the meaning of this text from the perspective of those living under the oppressive rule of the Roman Empire? What were the theological implications then and what are they now? 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 is the meaning of the story for you today? Be ready to question the traditional interpretations we have "inherited" from culture, family, and church, as well as the story itself, its content, possible purpose, concepts, symbolism, ideology, structure and the place it has in the Gospel. (PC) **(700-words) Due on January 26(Th) / 31 (T) (11%)**

**4) Matthew and Luke:** Write a short exegetical essay on Matthew 5:1-12 and Luke 6:17-26. Compare and contrast the details of these two passages and, making intelligent guesses, write a short essay discussing the evangelists' motivations for writing the beatitudes from such different perspectives. Consider the overall perspective of Matthew and Luke, as well as the setting of the passages when writing your observations. What are the theological and ethical implications of each version? What text would you use to preach at your church and why? **(700-words) (RC) Due on February 9 (Th) / 14 (T) (11%)**

**5) John:** Write a short exegetical essay on Proverbs 8 and 9 in light of John 1:1-18. Compare and contrast the concepts of Wisdom and Logos, and discuss the theological/ideological/cultural implications of having Wisdom as the forerunner of Logos. What important implications and messages do we get from John's inclusive image for the church/world today? How can this image help in advancing a more human and just world? (FC) **(700-words) Due on February 16 (Th) / 21 (T) (11%)**

**6) Write one final exegetical essay 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. Write your paper in conversation with the article "Jesus and Cultures" from the *Peoples' Companion to the Bible* and Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 from Powell's textbook. 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? Which Jesus (from Mk, Jn) 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, do not use other sources. **(2000-words) Due on March 1 (Th) / 6 (T) (15%)**

The ONLY tools allowed in the writing process of these papers are: the biblical text, your own ideas and creativity, the two textbooks, and the tools to analyze the Greek text (if you choose to do so) from [www.biblos.com](http://www.biblos.com). Please do not use commentaries or any other academic resources at this point; you will have a chance to do that later.

<b>Course Requirements:</b>	<b>value</b>
Movies 3 + 3	6%
Essay on Paul's apocalyptic eschatology	11%
Essay on Justification by faith	5%
Essay on Mark	11%
Essay on Matthew and Luke	11%
Essay on John	11%
Final Essay on representations of Jesus	15%
Attendance and participation	30%
Final grade %	100%

### BIBLIOGRAPHY (required)

1. *The New Testament*. New Revised Standard Version. **NT**
2. Powell, Mark Allan. *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009. **MAP**
3. C. DeYoung, W. Gafney, L. Guardiola-Sáenz, G. Tinker, F. Yamada, eds., *The Peoples' Companion to the Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010. **PCB**

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

<b>Grading rubric for papers:</b>	<b>vg</b>	<b>g</b>	<b>s</b>	<b>us</b>
<b>Programmatic introduction:</b> start your paper with a brief and well organized introduction paragraph. Set up a clear course of action for the development of your paper.				
As part of the <b>PI</b> , clearly establish the <b>thesis, purpose, or aim</b> that you will be pursuing in your short 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 according to your thoughts. 2. <b>Sequence of topics:</b> clearly follow the line of thought you have established for your paper.				
Evaluation of content of paper:  1. Understanding of the topic 2. Clear voice of the author (you) 3. Interaction with the biblical texts				
<b>Conclusion:</b> Political ramifications and /or Ministerial implications				

Grading Scale	
Superior performance:	
A	96.36 – 100
A-	92.72 – 96.35
B+	89.08 – 92.71
Good performance:	
B	85.44 – 89.07
B-	81.80 – 85.43
C+	78.16 – 81.79
Minimal performance:	
C	74.52 – 78.15
C-	70.88 – 74.51
D+	67.24 – 70.87
Poor performance:	
D	63.60 – 67.23
D-	60.00 – 63.59
Failing:	
F	00.00 – 59.99

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**STMM 527-01 & 02 Christian Scriptures  
CALENDAR OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

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**SESSION # 1**

January 5 / 10

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

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

READ:

**MAP** - Chapter 1: The New Testament World; Chapter 2: The New Testament Writings

**PCB** - Culture and Identity; The Bible as a Text of Cultures; The New Testament as a Text of Cultures; A Self-Inventory for Bible Readers

WATCH:

**The Matrix**

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**SESSION # 2**

January 12 / 17

**Paul and his early letters**

READ:

**MAP** – Chapter 3: Jesus; Chapter 10: New Testament Letters; Chapter 11: Paul; Chapter 19: 1 Thessalonians; Chapter 13: 1 Corinthians; Chapter 14: 2 Corinthians; Chapter 17: Philippians; Chapter 22: Philemon

**PCB** - Introduction to the Pauline Letters; 1 Thessalonians; 1 & 2 Corinthians; Philippians; Philemon

**NT** – 1 Thessalonians – 1 & 2 Corinthians – Philippians – Philemon

As you read try to find out: When is the end going to happen and how according to 1 Thess? Why is the Corinthian congregation confused? Why is Paul so friendly with the Philippians? Who is Onesimus and to whom is Philemon's letter addressed?

As you reflect on your readings think: what was new or what did you find interesting, challenging, exciting in your readings for today? What was irritating, upsetting, and/or problematic? How can you use this material in your ministry or to make this world better?

WATCH:

**Galaxy Quest**

**Essay on 1Thessalonians/1 Corinthians DUE**

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**SESSION # 3**

January 19 / 24

**The gospel according to Paul**

READ:

**MAP** – Chapter 15: Galatians; Chapter 12: Romans

**PCB** – The Bible and Empire; Galatians; Romans

**NT** – Galatians – Romans

As you read try to find out: 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 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?

As you reflect on your readings think: what was new or what did you find interesting, challenging, exciting in your readings for today? What was irritating, upsetting, and/or problematic? How can you use this material in your ministry or to make this world better?

Essay on **Romans and Galatians DUE**

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**SESSION # 4**

January 26 / 31

**Mark**

READ:

**MAP** – Chapter 4: The Gospels; Chapter 6: Mark

**PCB** – Jesus and Cultures; The Bible as a Text in Cultures: an introduction & Native Americans; Introduction to the Gospels; Mark

**NT** – the Gospel of Mark

As you read try to find out: What do you think is the core message of the Jesus in Mark?

As you reflect on your readings think: what was new or what did you find interesting, challenging, exciting in your readings for today? What was irritating, upsetting, and/or problematic? How can you use this material in your ministry or to make this world better?

Essay on **Mark DUE**

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**SESSION # 5**

February 2 / 7

**Matthew**

READ:

**MAP** – Chapter 5: Matthew

**PCB** – The Bible as a Text in Cultures: introduction and Latinas/os; Matthew

**NT** – the Gospel of Matthew

As you read try to find out: What do you think is the core message of the Jesus in Matthew?

As you reflect on your readings think: what was new or what did you find interesting, challenging, exciting in your readings for today? What was irritating, upsetting, and/or problematic? How can you use this material in your ministry or to make this world better?

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**SESSION # 6**

February 9 / 14

**Luke / Acts**

READ:

**MAP** – Chapter 7 & 9: Luke and Acts

**PCB** – The Bible as a Text in Cultures: African Americans; Luke; The Acts of the Apostles

**NT** – the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles

As you read try to find out: What do you think is the core message of the Jesus in Luke?

As you reflect on your readings think: what was new or what did you find interesting, challenging, exciting in your readings for today? What was irritating, upsetting, and/or problematic? How can you use this

material in your ministry or to make this world better?

Essay on **Matthew and Luke DUE**

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**SESSION # 7**

February 16 / 21

**John**

READ:

**MAP** – Chapter 8: John

**PCB** – John; Women, Culture, and the Bible

**NT** – the Gospel of John

As you read try to find out: What do you think is the core message of the Jesus in John?

As you reflect on your readings think: what was new or what did you find interesting, challenging, exciting in your readings for today? What was irritating, upsetting, and/or problematic? How can you use this material in your ministry or to make this world better?

Essay on **John DUE**

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**SESSION # 8**

February 23 / 28

**Standing on Paul's shoulders**

READ:

**MAP** – Chapters 16, 18, 20, 21 (Deutero-Pauline Letters)

**PCB** – 2 Thessalonians; Colossians; Ephesians; 1 & 2 Timothy; Titus; The Bible as a Text in Cultures: Asian Americans

**NT** – 2 Thessalonians – Colossians – Ephesians – 1 & 2 Timothy – Titus

As you read try to find out: What is the major problem in 2 Thessalonians and what is the author's advice about it? Who are the opponents in Colossians? What are the similarities between Colossians and Ephesians?

As you reflect on your readings think: what was new or what did you find interesting, challenging, exciting in your readings for today? What was irritating, upsetting, and/or problematic? How can you use this material in your ministry or to make this world better?

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**SESSION # 9**

March 1 / 6

**Revelation and the beginning of the end**

READ:

**MAP** – Chapter 29: Revelation; Chapters 23: Hebrews; Chapter 24: James; Chapter 25: 1 Peter; Chapter 26: 2 Peter; Chapter 27: 1-3 John; Chapter 28: Jude

**PCB** – Introduction to the General Letters and Revelation; Hebrews; James; 1 & 2 Peter; 1- 3 John; Jude; Revelation; The Bible as a Text in Cultures: Euro-Americans

**NT** – Revelation, 1 Peter, James, Hebrews, 1-3 John; Jude & 2 Peter

As you reflect on your readings think: what was new or what did you find interesting, challenging, exciting in your readings for today? What was irritating, upsetting, and/or problematic? How can you use this material in your ministry or to make this world better?

**Final exegetical essay on the representation of Jesus DUE**

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