

# **THE GOSPEL OF MARK and EMPIRE**

**Professor:** Dr. Bruce Worthington

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**Teaching Assistant:** TBA **Office Hours:** By Appointment

**Location:** FYB UG01 **Time:** Wednesday 7:00PM to 9:30PM

**Course Code:** THEO3213/5950 **Chinese Title:** N/A

**Course Description:** Of the four canonical Gospels, the Gospel of Mark is the shortest, and was likely the first to be written. One should not, however, confuse its brevity for lack of interest in portraying its main character—Jesus—as one opposed to Roman Imperial rule. This course looks closely at exegetical features in the Gospel of Mark to determine the political implications and possible trajectories of Christ as Messiah in the Roman Empire. Using the socio-historical method, the course surveys key texts in the Gospel of Mark which encourage the reader to develop an awareness of Jesus' anti-Imperial message, and therefore what this might mean for followers of Jesus today.

The course is taught with the following two streams, of the students choice:

- 1) An **English Exegetical stream** where students follow standard conventions of English exegesis and interpretation.
- 2) A **Greek Exegetical stream** where students may submit Greek translations of key texts as substitutes for English reflection assignments.

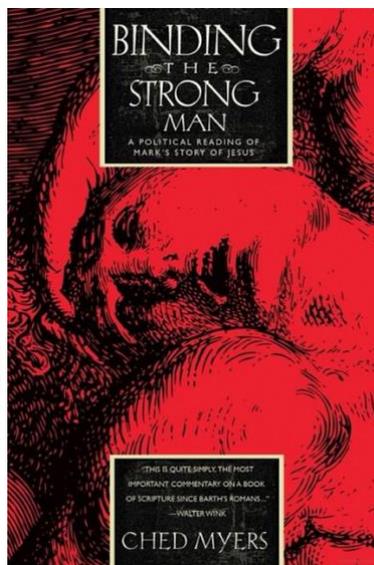
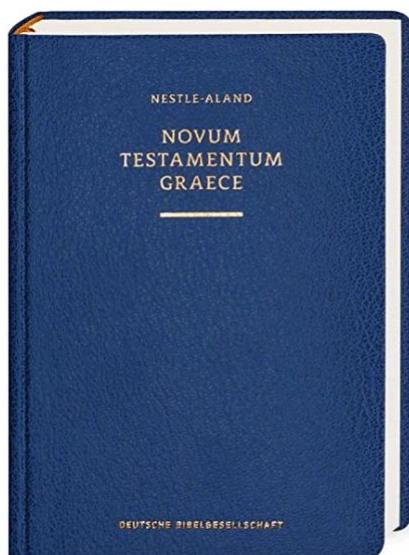
## **Course Outcomes:**

- 1) Analyze the relationship between early Christianity and its historical conditions, particularly the Roman Empire and Second Temple Judaism. Students should be able to properly contextualize the Gospel of Mark within this historical sequence.
- 2) Understand and utilize the socio-historical method in examining political factors surrounding the life of Jesus and his ministry in the Gospel of Mark.
- 3) Reflect critically on the political subjectivity of Jesus Christ and his earliest followers, be able to synthesize key political themes in the Gospel of Mark with contemporary Christian belief.

### Course Textbook(s):

Myers, Ched. *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*. Anniversary Edition. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008.

*Novum Testamentum Graece with Dictionary: Nestle Aland 28th Revised Edition (NA28)*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft 2012. **(FOR GREEK STREAM ONLY)**



### Course Syllabus (Weekly Mandatory Reading Schedule):

**Week One (September 6<sup>th</sup>):** Introduction—what is Ideology?

Myers, Ched. *Binding the Strong Man*, pp. 3-38.

**Week Two (September 13<sup>th</sup>):** The Roman World and its Conditions

Myers, Ched. *Binding the Strong Man*, pp. 39-87.

**Week Three (September 20<sup>th</sup>):** What is the Gospel of Mark?

Myers, Ched. *Binding the Strong Man*, pp. 91-136.

(First Reflection paper or Greek Translation due)

**Week Four (September 27<sup>th</sup>):** Jesus and The Social Order (Mark 1:21-3:35)

Myers, Ched. *Binding the Strong Man*, pp. 137-168.

**Week Five (October 4<sup>th</sup>):** Revolutionary Patience (Mark 4:1-36)

Myers, Ched. *Binding the Strong Man*, pp. 169-185.

**Week Six (October 11<sup>th</sup>):** Constructing a New Social Order (Mark 4:36-8:9)

Myers, Ched. *Binding the Strong Man*, pp. 186-210.

(Second Reflection Paper or Greek Translation Due)

**Week Seven (October 18<sup>th</sup>):** Political Violence (Mark 6:1-32; 7:1-23; 8:10-21)

Myers, Ched. *Binding the Strong Man*, 211-231.

**Week Eight (October 25<sup>th</sup>):** Healing Bodies and Subversion (Mark 8:22-9:30)

Myers, Ched. *Binding the Strong Man*, pp. 235-256.

**Week Nine (November 1<sup>st</sup>):** Social Boundaries and Solidarity (Mark 9:30-10:52)

Myers, Ched. *Binding the Strong Man*, pp. 257-288.

(Third Reflection Paper or Greek Translation due)

**Week Ten (November 8<sup>th</sup>):** Destroying Property (Mark 11:1-13:3)

Myers, Ched. *Binding the Strong Man*, pp. 290-323.

**Week Eleven (November 15<sup>th</sup>):** The End of the World (Mark 13:4-37)

Myers, Ched. *Binding the Strong Man*, pp. 324-353.

**Week Twelve (November 22<sup>nd</sup>):** Getting Arrested (Mark 14:1-15:20)

Myers, Ched. *Binding the Strong Man*, pp. 354-382.

**Week Thirteen (November 29<sup>th</sup>):** The Execution of Jesus (Mark 15:21-16:8)

Myers, Ched. *Binding the Strong Man*, 383-409.

(Fourth Reflection Paper or Greek Translation Due)

**Course Components:** Lecture, guest lecture, tutorial discussions.

**Blackboard Course Address:**

Will be posted when available.

## Assignments and Course Assessment

1. **Class Attendance (10% of Final Grade):** Students are expected to come to class and arrive on time. Students will use the Ureply app to log attendance at the beginning of class. Students may miss class due to medical or personal reasons but must consult with the instructor ahead of time. Given that there are 13 weeks of instructions, students may miss up to three (3) class and still receive at full 10% grade on attendance.
2. **Personal Reflection Papers for Students in the English Exegesis Stream (12.5% of Final Grade x 4 reflections, 500 words each in length):** Students will submit personal reflections on four of the key themes of the course. The reflections are not meant to be academic style papers, but instead a personal interaction/interventions with the topic, with particular interest paid to how the student has changed, or grown from learning on the topic, either from an academic perspective and/or a theological one. The four themes for reflection papers include:
  - 2.1 What is the Ideology?
  - 2.2 Jesus and the Social Order
  - 2.3 Miracles and Bodies in the Gospel of Mark
  - 2.4 Summative thoughts—what have you learned?
3. **Greek Translation Assignment for Students in the Greek Exegesis Stream (12.5% of Final Grade x 4 translations):** Students will submit four translation assignments from four sections of the Gospel of Mark. One week ahead of the assignment, students will be given the selection to translate, with simple conjugation exercises. Along with the translation, students will be given 250 words to justify particular, or peculiar translational decisions. These translations are done in lieu of personal reflection papers.
4. **Academic Essay (40% of Final Grade):** Students will be required to submit a 2500–3000-word exegetical essay on a topic of their choice, related to one of the topics listed below. Proper footnoting and bibliography are required according to the Chicago Manual of Style (17<sup>th</sup> Edition). Deadline will be negotiated at the beginning of the semester. Students in the Greek exegetical stream are welcome to show evidence of exegetical skill in translation. Topics include, but not limited to:
  - 4.1 Jesus and Money in the Gospel of Mark
  - 4.2 Purity in the Gospel of Mark
  - 4.3 Class in the Gospel of Mark
  - 4.4 Colonialism and the Gospel of Mark
  - 4.5 Political Features of Messiah
  - 4.6 Mark's Use of the Old Testament
  - 4.7 Healing Miracles as Subversion in the Gospel of Mark
  - 4.8 Bodies in the Gospel of Mark
  - 4.9 Feeding the 5000 as Political Strategy

- 4.10 Spatial Features of Mark's Gospel
- 4.11 Why was Jesus Executed?
- 4.12 Short or Long Ending for Gospel of Mark?

### **Structure of the Class:**

The course readings will generally be given on the Blackboard site, along with courses grades, Professor feedback, and written submission guidelines.

**Academic honesty and plagiarism:** Attention is drawn to University's policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>. With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines, and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration. For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

**Grading:** The grading follows the general grading policy of the CUHK outlined below (in short form):

**Grade A / Excellent:** Outstanding performance on ALL learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would surpass the normal expectations at this level and typical of standards that may be common at higher levels of study.

**Grade A- / Very Good:** Generally outstanding performance on all or almost all learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would fully fulfill the normal expectations at this level and occasionally reaches standards that may be common at higher levels of study.

**Grade B / Good:** Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance. Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a comprehensive manner that would sufficiently fulfill the normal expectations at this level.

**Grade C / Fair:** Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to partially apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would meet the basic requirement at this level.

**Grade D / Pass:** Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes. Addresses the task inadequately by meeting the basic requirement at this level only in some areas while responding minimally with possibly tangential content in others.

**Grade F / Failure:** Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements. Fails to address the task and likely does not understand the assignment, perhaps completely misses the point.

	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement	Unacceptable
Thesis	A clear statement of what is being proposed or argued in the paper.	The thesis is easily detectable after reading the paper, but it is not presented in a single and clear statement.	The thesis is present, but a reader must work hard to reconstruct from the entire paper.	There is no thesis or central argument/proposal to tie the paper together, or the thesis is unclear.
Arguments	Each reason, support, or argument to follow the thesis is made clear, thorough, relevant and convincing. Proper references are consistently made to the text in question (biblical and/or a textbook) to show why the proposed thesis is valid.	Arguments made to support the thesis are clear, but less thorough, relevant, and/or convincing. References are often made to the text in question (biblical and/or a textbook) to show why the proposed thesis is valid, but this is done not as consistently.	Arguments made to support the thesis are acceptable but sketchy or their relevance unclear. Some references are made to the text in question (biblical and/or a textbook) to show why the proposed thesis is valid.	Arguments to support the thesis are missing, irrelevant, or not convincing. The paper makes lots of claims or assertions that are not substantiated. There are few or no references to the text in question (biblical and/or a textbook) to show why the proposed thesis is valid.
Counter-Arguments	The paper acknowledges, anticipates, and accounts for conflicting evidence, counter-examples, counter-arguments, and/or opposing positions,	The paper acknowledges and accounts for obvious conflicting evidence, counter-examples, counter-arguments, and/or opposing positions.	The paper acknowledges and accounts for a few obvious conflicting evidence, counter-examples, and counter-arguments, but miss other obvious	No awareness or acknowledgment of conflicting evidence, counter-examples, counter-arguments, or opposing positions.

Organization	The paper's flow, from one paragraph to another, is consistently sensible, logical, and always with clear transitions. The movement from introduction to the body and then the conclusion is easy to follow and coherent.	The paper's flow, from one paragraph to another, is largely sensible and logical. Transitions are mostly appropriate. The movement from introduction to the body and then the conclusion is distinguishable if not easy to follow.	There are signs of sensible and logical organization, but these are mixed with abrupt or illogical shifts and ineffective flow of ideas. The movement from introduction to the body and then the conclusion is not clearly distinguishable.	The paper does not flow well in terms of organization or for the argument of the thesis. Transitions from paragraph to paragraph or from one idea to the next are missing. The movement from introduction to the body and then the conclusion is non-existent.
Style	The paper is written in complete and grammatically correct sentences. Word choice is precise; definitions are provided if and when needed. Paper has been spell-checked, proofread, and contains no errors.	The paper is written in complete sentence and grammatically correct sentences. Word choice is understandable, definitions are generally (though not always) provided if and when needed. Paper has been spell-checked, proofread, and contains only a few errors.	The paper contains some incomplete or grammatically incorrect sentences. Word choice is imprecise, at times not understandable, and/or not defined when needed. Not clear if the paper has been spell-checked and proofread because of the number of errors present.	The paper is written with many incomplete or grammatically incorrect sentences. Word choice is not understandable and definition of particular terms or words is not given even when needed. The paper has clearly not been spell-checked or proofread, and hence contains an excessive number of errors.
Documentation	Notes to indicate sources of information are given whenever they are needed. Both notes and bibliography use consistent and academically acceptable format.	Notes to indicate sources of information are generally given when they are needed. Notes and bibliography are generally but not always consistent or conform to required academic standard.	Sources of information are not consistently documented. If they are, format is inconsistent or does not conform to required academic standard.	Source materials are used without documentation.

## Bibliography

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