

UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: **Fall 2009**
Instructor: Dr. John Zemler
Course #: THEO 2110
Sections: 102 & 103
Course Title: **New Testament Selected Books**
Course Sub-Title: The Gospels

Description:

We will explore the four Gospels. Many Christians, and sometimes non-Christians, profess that their lives are influenced by the four Gospels. Our aim in this course is to gain as much understanding as possible about these texts. Are they biographies of Jesus of Nazareth? Are they manuals for how to live as a Christian? Are they rulebooks of acceptable and unacceptable behavior? Do they predict the future or explain the past? Did the Gospel writers know Jesus during his ministry? Why four Gospels and not a single Gospel? Are these texts still relevant or are they obsolete? Do we read these stories the same way we read non-biblical stories? What about “gospels” not located in the Bible?

These questions and many others provide an opportunity to learn the Gospels. In order to engage this opportunity we will study how the Bible came together: the who, what, when, where and why of how the Gospels were written. Of particular interest will be the role played by Jesus stories in the early Christian communities. We will also engage the texts to discover the roots of many Christian traditions (beliefs and practices). Additional areas of interest will include what the Gospels have to say about prayer, faith, action, and suffering.

Successful students will come away from the course knowing the contents, theology, and history of each Gospel. They will also be aware of the major scholarly debates concerning each text. Students will learn how to conduct academic research on biblical texts using resources ranging from paper and pencil to the latest electronic databases. Lastly, the successful student will not only have acquired this information, but will have learned how to communicate it to others and apply it in the “real world.”

Required texts:

- TBA