

Evangelism in the Fourth Gospel
MS/NT 2XE3
Fall Semester 2013

Instructor: Dr. Lee Beach

Time: Monday 8:30-10:20

First Class: Sept. 9, 2013

Location: McMaster Divinity College (room #
TBA)

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Course Description:

John's Gospel is a highly missional narrative. Explicitly written to engender belief in Jesus in the lives of its readers, it depicts Jesus' evangelistic encounters as highly experiential and interactive. John's narrative offers a suggestive vision for missional engagement in a context where Jesus and his message are new or even unknown, much like our own cultural reality. This course will center around an interactive study of selected passages and themes from John's Gospel with a view to understanding how Jesus' message and methods can deeply inform the evangelistic enterprise of the church in postmodern, post-Christian contexts today.

Specializations: Biblical Studies, Church & Culture, Christian Worldview, Pastoral Studies

Course Objectives:

Knowing

1. Students will become conversant with the setting, uniqueness's, key themes and selected texts from John's Gospel.
2. Students will understand the particular relevance of John's Gospel for evangelism today.
3. Students will understand the demands and possibilities for evangelism in today's North American culture.

Being

1. Students will be invited to be shaped by the spirituality of John's Gospel.
2. Students will be invited to adopt the mindset for evangelism that is offered in John's Gospel.

Doing

1. Students will be equipped with specific paradigms and practices for evangelism in today's world.
2. Student's will acquire practical ideas for connecting the message of Jesus to the needs of spiritual seekers in contemporary society.

Basic Course Outline

Section One: Introduction to John's Gospel

- Setting
- Themes and Theology
- What is the "Gospel" in John?
- Uniqueness

Section Two: The Gospel of John and Postmodern Evangelism

- Signs
- Christology
- Spirit
- Conversation
- Symbol
- Discipleship
- Church
- Mystery
- Mission
- Incarnation

Section Three: Jesus' Encounters as Models for Contemporary Evangelism

- Wedding at Cana
- Man Born Blind
- Peter
- Nicodemus
- Religious Leaders
- Women at the Well
- Pilate

Required Texts:

Koester, Craig R. *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2008.

Adeney, Frances S. *Graceful Evangelism: Christian Witness in a Complex World*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010.

Suggested Text

Kostenberger, Andreas J. *The Missions of Jesus and The Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9C 5K1: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

Course Requirements:

1. Reading Journal

Read through the Gospel of John and keep a journal that records your thoughts and impressions as you engage with the text. Pay special attention to issues and ideas that relate to the theme of the course (i.e. evangelistic themes, methods, cultural equivalencies, etc.). This is not a research paper, no sources are required, it is a personal response to your reading of John's gospel. The grade will be based upon the depth and extent of your engagement with John's presentation of Jesus' message and ministry.

This assignment is worth 20% of the course grade. The length is negotiable but should not exceed 10 double-spaced pages. The journal is due September 23, 2013.

2. Research Paper: Two Options (choose ONE)

Option One: Why John? Why Now?

This course is built on the assumption that John's gospel has a particular relevance to evangelism in contemporary Western culture. This paper should explore the ways in which contemporary Western culture and the culture of John's time intersect (and ways that they don't), by offering an introductory analysis of both cultures. Further the paper should explore themes, theologies and methodologies present in John's gospel that may connect well with a postmodern, post-Christian culture. Finally some reflection on how these themes can be effectively presented to a 21st century seeker should be offered. Include references to course material, course texts and other relevant sources in your paper.

Option Two: Is Evangelism Still Relevant?

In many sectors of the church and society, evangelism is a negative concept. Some may think that it is no longer relevant to church ministry, or that our approach to evangelism needs complete renovation. Is evangelism still an activity that the church should be committed to in our current cultural milieu? What is evangelism? How should evangelism be re-envisioned? If evangelism is still relevant, how does a post-Christian culture affect how we practice it? If it is not relevant how should we understand the churches call to mission? This paper should explore the place and practice of evangelism in the contemporary North American church and the ramifications that go along with it. Include reference to course material, course texts and other relevant sources in your paper.

This paper should be 10-12 double spaced pages and is worth 40% of the course grade. It is due October 21, 2013.

3. Research Paper: A Theological Theme or Specific Passage from John's Gospel

This paper invites you to engage one theological theme from John's Gospel or one specific passage from the gospel. Your paper should explore your theme or text from several different angles but ultimately should engage the question, "how does this theme or text relate to sharing the Gospel message with people in contemporary culture?" Papers that choose a specific text should offer a clear (though not exhaustive) exegesis of the text. Thematic papers must give attention to how the theme is traced throughout the whole Gospel. In both cases the paper should lead to concrete ideas for application in terms of how your conclusions apply to the work of mission and evangelism in the church today. Reference to relevant course material, course texts and other relevant sources is expected.

This paper should be 10-12 double spaced pages and is worth 40% of the course grade. It is due December 2, 2013.

Additional notes:

Academic Dishonesty – Academic dishonesty is a serious offence in the academic world that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on the transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the McMaster Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty located at <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>.

Inclusive Language ~ McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV is a good example of the use of inclusive language. It is expected that all students will use inclusive language in all MDC assignments.

Sexual Harassment ~ Sexual harassment is a violation of the integrity of persons in the form of unsolicited, unwelcome, verbal or physical behavior, which discriminates on the basis of gender about a person's body, attire, gender, marital status or economic status. Among faculty, staff, and students, sexual harassment of any kind will not be tolerated.

Disclaimer ~ This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up until the first day of class.

