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**WYB 1501 H F**  
**FROM THE GOSPEL TO THE GOSPELS**

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**Instructors**

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**Description**

An introduction to the four Gospels in their social, historical and theological setting. Using a “socio-literary” approach, we will study the Gospels within a three-dimensional framework centred on what the early Christians called the “gospel.” One dimension has to do with social history—the origin and development of Christianity as a distinct social entity, from its foundations in the ministry of Jesus and the Easter experience (summarized as the “gospel”), through its emergence as a Jewish renewal movement, and on to its development into a separate, largely Gentile, institutionalized religion. The second dimension has to do with literature—the process by which the Gospels came to be written, their literary form and texture, and their character as narrative versions of the “gospel.” The third is theological: what does the Gospel say about God? How do the social and literary dimensions point to theological meaning?

**Text**

The primary text, of course, is the New Testament itself; students should bring a copy of the NT to each class. While most modern versions are acceptable, lectures will be based primarily on the NRSV. There is no required secondary text for the course; instead, students will be required to read a set of lectures prepared by the instructor. In addition, two other books will be of interest to most students. One of these is Zeba A. Crook, *Parallel Gospels: A Synopsis of Early Christian Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), which arranges the first three Gospels in parallel columns for handy comparison. We will be using a portion of this (about 4 pages) in each of our weekly tutorial sessions; many students will find it a useful volume to have on their shelves. The other supplementary text is Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green and Marianne Meye Thompson (eds.) *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001). This book will not only provide a second opinion on things (in addition to the class lecture notes), it also serves as a required text for the second introductory course in the New Testament that many of you will take in

the winter term (“Who Is Jesus?”). Both books are available at the Crux Theological Bookstore, Wycliffe College. They will also be available on the reserve shelf at the Graham Library.

### Website

As with all Wycliffe courses, this course has a Blackboard website that is accessible through the “Portal” on the University of Toronto home page (<http://www.utoronto.ca>) or directly at <http://portal.utoronto.ca>. One important function of the website is to provide you with copies of the lectures (see below). In addition, students will post weekly questions and responses on the website. It will also contain the syllabus, course assignments, notices from time to time, and various other pieces of information.

### Content and outline

The content of the course will be treated in accordance with the following outline:

#### **1. SETTING DIRECTIONS: ASSUMPTIONS AND METHOD OF APPROACH**

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|--|----------------------|
| 1.1 Introduction   | Lecture 1 / Sept. 16 |
| 1.2 Starting Point: The “Easter” Experience                      | Lecture 2 / Sept. 23 |
| 1.21 <i>In Search of a Starting Point</i>                        |                      |
| 1.22 <i>The Easter Message: The “Gospel”</i>                     |                      |
| 1.23 <i>Easter as a “Crisis Experience”</i>                      |                      |
| 1.24 <i>The Easter Experience</i>                                |                      |
| 1.3 Questions of Approach  | Lecture 3 / Sept. 30 |
| 1.31 <i>Agenda Setting</i>                                       |                      |
| 1.32 <i>The Historical-critical Approach and Its Limitations</i> |                      |
| 1.33 <i>A Socio-literary Approach</i>                            |                      |

#### **2. CHRISTIAN ORIGINS: THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW “SOCIAL WORLD”**

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|--|---------------------|
| 2.1 The Jewish Context: A World in Tension                 | Lecture 4 / Oct. 7  |
| 2.2 Easter and the Construction of a New Christian “World” | Lecture 5 / Oct. 14 |
| 2.3 Case Study: The Gospel of Mark                         | Lecture 6 / Oct. 21 |

#### **READING WEEK: OCTOBER 26 – 30**

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|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| 2.4 Canon, Text and Translation | Lecture 7 / Nov. 4 |
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#### **3. FROM THE GOSPEL TO THE GOSPELS**

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|---|----------------------|
| 3.1 The Formation of the Synoptic Gospels | Lecture 8 / Nov. 11  |
| 3.2 The Gospel of Matthew                 | Lecture 9 / Nov. 18  |
| 3.3 The Gospel of John                    | Lecture 10 / Nov. 25 |
| 3.4 Jesus: A Bridge Between two Worlds    | Lecture 11 / Dec. 2  |
| 3.5 The Gospel of Luke                    | Lecture 12 / Dec. 9  |

## Format and procedure

The spine of the course is provided by a series of written lectures (is that an oxymoron?), which will be made available on the website (see above) immediately following the class in which the topic is to be covered. Some of the lecture material will be covered in class, but not all of it; **one of the course requirements will be to read the lecture during the subsequent week.** The lectures will be available in both PDF and Word formats, either of which can be readily printed out.

The skeleton of the course is provided by our week-to-week classes and tutorials (Wed. 7-9). Most of the **class time** will be devoted to the lecture for the week, including an introduction to the written lecture as a whole and an oral lecture dealing with some part of it. For the most part, we will follow an “interactive-lecture” format; discussion pertaining to the course material is invited and will be welcomed. In addition, in many of the classes there will be a photo-illustrated segment (usually right after the break) examining selected aspects of “The World of the Gospels.”

The **tutorials** will provide several opportunities for engagement with the course material in a smaller, more informal, face-to-face setting. The primary focus most weeks will be an analytical question, which will attempt to encourage interaction between the content of the previous week’s lecture and a specific set of passages (the “Discovery of the Empty Tomb” in all four Gospels). The set of weekly analytical questions is contained in a separate handout. At least one of the tutorial sessions, however, will be used for an activity involving the whole class.

The flesh on the skeleton will be provided by all of us, as we work together (students, TAs, instructor) at the various assignments for the course.

## Requirements and evaluation

### Preparation, presence, participation (20%)

This will be based on attendance at the lectures and tutorials (5%), weekly postings on the course website (5%), and participation in class and tutorial discussion (10%).

Each week students are required to do the following: (1) to read the lecture for the week; (2) to give some consideration to the analytical question for the week; and (3) to make at least two postings to the tutorial discussion board. In general terms, the purpose of the analytical questions is to gain insights into the passage from the perspective developed in the lecture, and to gain insights into the lecture material from an examination of the passage. The first posting each week should relate to this purpose. It can take the form of an insight into the passage or lecture, or an observation (about the passage or lecture), or a question (about the passage or lecture). The second posting should consist of a response to a posting made by someone else in the tutorial. The first posting should normally be made two days before the class (i.e., by Tuesday at 11:00 a.m.). The best postings will be those that reflect an awareness of the lecture as a whole, that make some attempt to connect the lecture with the passage, and that have the

potential to stimulate discussion among fellow students. The postings should be concise and focused; don't attempt to provide a full answer to the question for the week.

The determination of the grade will begin with a base-line, consisting of the unweighted average of the grades for the four pieces of written work (three assignments and final exam), which will be then shaded up or down on the basis of a student's performance in this area. (Some allowance will be made for the weakness of the flesh and the vicissitudes of life.)

### Term assignments (3 x 15%)

There are three written assignments to be submitted during the term. Each will be worth 15% of the final grade. While further information will be made available in the course, the titles and due dates are as follows:

Exploring the Kerygma: Part I	Oct. 7
Exploring the Kerygma: Part II	Nov. 4
Jesus and Judaism	Nov. 25

You are strongly encouraged to submit the assignments electronically (Word or pdf format), preferably by uploading the file to the course website on the U of T Portal.

### Final examination (35%)

The questions for the final examination will be very similar to the weekly analytical questions, though there will not be quite as many. The full set of questions (probably nine of them) will be available two or three weeks in advance of the exam; at the beginning of the exam period a random selection of these questions will be made (probably five), from which students will choose three.

(NOTE: Since the questions will be very similar to the weekly analytical questions, if you spend time each week thinking about the questions and making some notes about how you might respond to them, you will have done most of the necessary preparation for the exam itself.)

Students have the choice of writing the exam either as a 24-hour take-home or as a 2-hour sit-down. The sit-down exam will take place on Wednesday Dec. 16 from 7:00 p.m to 9:00 p.m. For the take-home option, the 24-hour period will begin at 7 p.m. on December 15; the questions need to be submitted within the next 24 hours (i.e., they are due before the start of the sit-down exam). Late submissions will not be accepted; if the take-home exam is not submitted by the deadline, students are expected to write the full sit-down exam.

## **Basic Biblical Knowledge**

One of the intended outcomes for each of the basic degree programs at Wycliffe College is that students demonstrate an appropriate level of basic Biblical knowledge. The means by which this will be demonstrated is still under discussion, but we will give some attention to the issue in this course.

### Learning outcomes

Wycliffe College has developed detailed statements of “learning outcomes” for the MDiv and MTS programs. They are available on the College website. “Learning outcomes” have to do in part with the level of knowledge and skill that will be characteristic of a typical graduate of the program. In accordance with this overall statement, instructors are required to develop a statement of learning outcomes for each course. These outcomes will provide one of the benchmarks for evaluation and grading.

COURSE OUTCOMES	COURSE ELEMENT	PROGRAM OUTCOMES
<b>By the end of this course, students</b>	<b>This outcome will be achieved through these course elements:</b>	<b>This course outcome corresponds to these aspects of Wycliffe’s statements of outcomes (MTS, MDiv)</b>
• will have increased their familiarity with the content of the four Gospels;	lectures 6, 10, 11, 12; analytical questions; tutorials; exam (Part II)	<b>MTS: 1.1</b> <b>MDiv: 1.1</b>
• will have developed a greater awareness of the historical and cultural context in which the Christian movement emerged and in which the writings of the New Testament were produced;	lectures 2, 4, 5, 8; assignment 3; tutorials	<b>MTS: 1.1</b> <b>MDiv: 1.1</b>
• will be able to recognize and reflect on issues pertaining to the formative period of early Christianity, especially those having to do with unity/diversity and continuity/development;	course as a whole; lectures 2, 5, 6, 8-12; assignments 1 and 2; tutorials	<b>MTS: 1.3; 1.4</b> <b>MDiv: 1.3; 1.4</b>
• will have become aware of the importance of method in NT interpretation, and will have begun to develop an appropriate method of interpretation for themselves;	lecture 3; analytical questions; tutorials	<b>MTS: 1.2</b> <b>MDiv: 1.2</b>

• will have an increased ability to consider different viewpoints and to relate in a mature and collegial manner with those who hold them	tutorial groups; online discussions	<b>MTS:</b> 1.5; 2.1; 3.1 <b>MDiv:</b> 1.5; 2.1; 3.3
• will have an increased and more mature confidence in the NT as a source and ground for faith;	course as a whole; homiletical reflection at the end of some lectures; tutorials	<b>MTS:</b> 1.3 <b>MDiv:</b> 1.3

Additional learning outcomes will be found at the start of the lecture notes for each week.

### Course evaluation

At the end of the course students are expected to complete a course evaluation. The evaluation is done online and instructions will be contained in an e-mail message that will be sent out by the Wycliffe College registrar.

### College policy on assignment extensions

Basic Degree students are expected to complete all course work by the end of the term in which they are registered. Under **exceptional circumstances**, with the written permission of the instructor, students may be granted an extension (SDF = “standing deferred”) beyond the term. An extension, when offered, will have a mutually agreed-upon deadline that does not extend beyond the conclusion of the following term. An SDF must be arranged before the completion of the term in which the course is taken; at a point no later than the last day of exam week, students need either to have submitted all required work for the course or to have made a formal request for an extension. The extension request form is available on the college website or from the Registrar’s office. **One percentage point per day will be deducted on the course grade if an extension has not been requested by the stated deadline.**

### Academic integrity

All TST students are subject to U of T’s “Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters.” Copies of the code are available at [www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm](http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm). Please take special note of the section on plagiarism. For a helpful set of guidelines on how to avoid plagiarism, see <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>. This is part of a more general—and equally helpful—website that provides advice on academic writing (<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice>).