It is not so very important for a person to learn facts. For that he does not really need a college. He can learn them from books. The value of an education in a liberal arts college is not the learning of many facts but the training of the mind to think something that cannot be learned from textbooks. (Albert Einstein, 1921, in response to Thomas Edison’s opinion that a college education is useless)

The growing precision of our understanding should enhance, and not diminish our sense of wonder. (Alfred Brendel)

In much wisdom is much vexation, and those who increase knowledge increase in sorrow. (Ecclesiastes 1.18)

Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire. (William Butler Yeats)

You must unlearn what you have learned. (Yoda, Star Wars V: Empire Strikes Back)

The unexamined life is not worth living. (Socrates [Plato, Apology, 38a])

ΕΝ ΟΙΔΑ ΟΤΙ ΟΥΔΕΝ ΟΙΔΑ. (= Ἐν οἴδα ὅτι οὐδὲν οἴδα.; Socrates)

ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ. (= Γνῶθι σεαυτόν.; Temple of Apollo at Delphi)
for the history of western civilization and for us
• identify and explain significant synoptic features that contrast with those in the Gospel According to John
• identify and explain methodological issues involved in the Synoptic Problem
• cultivate a reading of the Synoptic Gospels that is both critical and creative by developing exegetical skills using modern methods of interpretation, especially the historical-critical method

Achieving these goals will require hard work on your part, which will bring many challenging, enlightening, exciting, frustrating, and rewarding experiences.

- Learning Center • Disability Resources (brochure)

Requirements and evaluation for the course

For my criteria for evaluation of assignments go to Evaluation and read the information carefully.

- If you have any questions about any assignment, please ask in class or make an appointment to see me.
- If you have any questions about any evaluation or how you are doing in the course, please make an appointment to see me.

assigned readings

Assigned readings should be completed before the class for which they are assigned—use your best judgment to divide the readings evenly for each week. Occasionally I may assign additional readings, but these will ordinarily be short. You must come to class with at least 2 written questions or comments in response to the readings (see Participation). The primary focus throughout the course will be on the biblical texts and on cultivating the ability to ask informed questions about all the assigned readings based on the knowledge you gain along the way; the demonstration of your ability to formulate questions will affect the evaluation of your semester grade. Keeping notes on the readings is highly recommended. I would encourage you to use this form for every reading assignment (also on my.westminster).

Not all the assigned readings may be covered in class discussions or exams, but they are assigned for your edification toward achieving the goals of the course. The more you refer to them in class and in your work, the better your mastery of the readings and the higher your semester evaluation will be.

For the pericopes assigned, do the following in order:

- try to understand each of the passages in its particular Gospel context (see Exegesis guidelines for some tips)
- compare with parallel texts to note similarities and differences among the Synoptics (glance at John for fun)
- look at some critical commentaries in our library (i.e., scholarly books on Matthew, Mark, or Luke with lots of [foot]notes) to see what some scholars
You will draw a map of the Roman Empire during the first century and write a paper on one of the places on the map.

- You must draw (or trace) the map by hand (on a letter-size paper). How colorful or artistic the map is will not affect the grade.
  - The map must show important boundaries, territories, and cities of the Roman Empire, as well as the most significant places in Palestine, including the main areas of Jesus’ ministry
  - The map should include at least the following: Alexandria, Antioch, Athens, Jerusalem, Rome.

- The paper, which is the **main part of this assignment**, should consist of 700–1,000 words on one of the places (area or city).
  - It should include:
    - basic or notable facts about the place
    - reasons for its significance for the Roman Empire or for understanding the New Testament, or for both
  - Do not report merely where or how many times in the NT the place is mentioned; avoid mere summaries or paraphrases of biblical narratives.
  - Follow all the instructions given on my **Evaluation** page under **Written assignments**.
  - Use footnotes or endnotes to document your sources following the **Chicago Manual of Style**—for help: **NoodleTools**. Learn the automatic footnote (and endnote) function of your word processor.
  - The **Oxford Bible Atlas** and the maps at the end of NOAB (see "Required books" below) are good places to start.
  - If possible, scan and insert the map at the end of your paper file; if not, submit the map separately.

- As soon as you submit your paper, make an **appointment** to review your graded paper with me.

You may be given the chance to revise your paper after its evaluation. Should you choose to do so, your revision will be evaluated and the final grade will be the average of the two.

You will submit at **Turnitin.com** a research paper on a synoptic text of your choice (see the "Index of the Gospel Parallels" at the beginning of **Gospel Parallels**). In choosing a text, you may find it helpful to consult critical commentaries and academic journals, i.e., scholarly books and articles with lots of (foot)notes. For help with exegesis, see the **Exegesis guidelines** page. You may also find the **Tips for writing papers** helpful.

Make an **appointment as early as you can** in the semester to discuss (1) your
paper idea and (2) your preliminary bibliography (bring a hard copy). The narrower and more specific your thesis—i.e., the argument you plan to make in your paper—the better.

- The paper should consist of 1,000–1,500 words.
- The paper should represent original work (i.e., your own thoughts), not a mere digest of other people’s opinions. Your own reading and re-reading of the relevant texts, as well as review of other materials, are fundamental to the task. I want to know what you discover in your engagement with your topic, whether or not you agree with the course books, commentaries, or opinions presented in class, including mine.
  - Focus on honing your ability to argue for your opinions and conclusions by supporting them with evidence from texts (especially primary texts) and other relevant sources.
- Your final bibliography (not just “works cited”) must contain at least 8 sources used in your paper, including 4 periodical (journal) articles. Electronic sources count only if you provide evidence that they are scholarly sources.
- Use footnotes or endnotes to document your sources following the Chicago Manual of Style—for help: NoodleTools. Learn the automatic footnote (and endnote) function of your word processor.
- Follow all the instructions given on my Evaluation page under Written assignments.

You may request permission to revise your paper after its evaluation. If you submit a revision, the final grade will be the average of the grades earned on the original and on the revision.

terms

Throughout the semester, you will be responsible for learning significant terms covered in our texts or in class. You will be responsible for finding the definitions, e.g., using course texts (glossary, index) and resources listed in "Resources to consider" below and reliable Web sources. The terms may constitute a part of any quiz or exam.

quizzes & exams

The midterm exam will cover all the materials in the course we will have covered by the time of the exam (e.g., the reading assignments and terms). The final exam, which will be an oral exam, will cover the entire sweep of the course. There may be pop quizzes, the results of which will affect the evaluation of your participation. See my Evaluation page under Quizzes and examinations.

grades

Grades will be determined as fairly as possible. See my Evaluation page under Grades for more information. The final grade for the course will consist of the following:

- exegesis paper — 30%
- final exam — 20%
- map paper — 20%
- midterm exam — 15%

Participation is a significant part of this course. See my Evaluation page under
participation (including pop quizzes) — 15%

extra credit

You may earn extra credit any time during the semester.

- Submit a paper consisting of 700–1,000 words relating something from popular culture (e.g., movie, play, TV show, book, any performance) to a synoptic text or theme (consult the instructor).
- The paper should be mostly critique (not mere summary or description).

The instructor reserves the right to make the final determination concerning any extra credit. You can earn a maximum of 5% toward the final grade. You may write more than one, if you wish, but you will not receive more than 5% total in extra credit.

Required books


Recommended books (* = highly recommended)

* The *New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha* (NRSV), 3rd ed. (NB: table of contents, introductions, essays, tables, glossary, maps—all are very helpful) You are encouraged to use other English translations (e.g., NIV) and Bibles in other languages in addition to the NRSV. The Tanakh is especially recommended for comparison of Old Testament passages.


### Resources to consider

See my Resources page for helpful resources, esp. The NT Gateway.

R-drive: course folder and the “NaFiles” folder

Course pages on my.westminster

Bible concordances (McGill library)


### Keeping in touch

During the semester check your e-mail regularly for messages regarding course matters (e.g., changes in the syllabus). Visit and reload (refresh) this page for updates to the syllabus; see also my homepage for other information and resources related to the course. Please feel free to make an appointment any time about any course matters.

### Tips from former students

For some practical advice from former students, see the tips page.

### One last word . . .

Regardless of how demanding all of this is, I promise to be as fair as possible. I recognize that you will be very busy this semester pursuing various obligations and passions. I understand. I have my passions too, e.g., my family, music, philosophy, nature, mountain biking, fixing things, food. But I am also very passionate about education, both yours and mine—I mean not just the business of acquiring knowledge but more importantly the total development of honorable human beings. I do not require you to share my excitement about all the things we will cover, but I do expect you to do your best to complete the requirements for the course. To help you do that, I will make myself available outside the class time and the office hours. I will be glad to help you when you are struggling with an assignment. Or if you have any questions, concerns, complaints, and even compliments, I will do my best to take the time to listen and offer my response. Keep in mind that I am here to help you learn. So again, welcome to Religion 207: The Synoptic Gospels.

### Course schedule

| TR 1400–1530 | PH 328 | New! |

http://www.westminster.edu/staff/nak/courses/Rel207_syllabus.htm
REL 207

* = required
+ = in the library (Please do not check them out.)
bold = primary text(s) for presentation or class (discussion)
> = recommended / suggested

Week 1

General orientation: terms, concepts & approaches

Sep 1 T
Sep 3

- Course syllabus (including Evaluation link; review requirements, expectations, and criteria for grading—ask Qs, if you have any)
- Fisher: Effective Learning (pp. 3 & 6; also in Inquiry text)
- Synopsis: Preface; Introduction
- Brown: Prolegomena; ch. 1
- Goodacre: Preface
- Review beginnings of the Gospels (compare first chapters of the four Gospels)
- Apostles' Creed
- Nicene Creed
- Gos Thom
- Sec Gos Mk
- Gos Pet
- Inf Gos Thom
- Prot Jas
- Translation comparison
- The Greeks (interactive site)
- Remember: bring your written Qs & Cs to each class (see Participation).
- Copy all relevant Web pages and resources to your hard disk or flash drive, etc. for easy access. Keep the copies updated.

Week 2

Matthew matters

Sep 8 T
Sep 10

- Gospel According to Matthew (if possible read at one sitting; read any recent NT intro material on Matt)
- Synopsis: 1–6 (Synopsis tips: color coding)
- Brown: ch. 2
- Goodacre: ch. 1
- Phraseology: KoG & KoH
- Basic Synoptic solution
- Synoptic solutions (found on The NT Gateway)
- Synopsis of the Synoptics (skim & use as a reference throughout the semester); PDF version

> O Little Town of Nazareth?
> Myth
> Hermeneutics (brief def & intro)
> The Greeks (interactive site)
Week 3

Sep 15 T
• Gospel According to Mark (if possible read at one sitting; read any recent NT intro material on Mk)
  • Synopsis: 7–12
  • Brown: ch. 3
  • Goodacre: ch. 2

Sep 17

Week 4

Sep 22 T
• Gospel According to Luke (if possible read at one sitting; read any recent NT intro material on Lk)
  • Synopsis: 13–20
  • Brown: ch. 4–5
  • Goodacre: ch. 3
  • Cotton Patch: Lk 10.25–37
  • Cotton Patch: Lk 15
  • Luke: pairs

Week 5

Sep 29 T
• Synopsis: 13–20
  • Goodacre: chs. 3–4
  • Synopsis of the Synoptics (skim & use as a reference throughout the semester); PDF version

Oct 1

Week 6

Oct 6 M
• Synopsis: 30–39
  • Goodacre: chs. 4–5
  • The Case Against Q:
    Ten Reasons to Question Q
    Fallacies at the Heart of Q
    FAQ on The Case Against Q

Oct 8

Week 7

Oct 13 T
• Synopsis: 40–49
  • Goodacre: chs. 5–6
  • The Case Against Q:
    Ten Reasons to Question Q
    Fallacies at the Heart of Q

Oct 15
FAQ on The Case Against Q
• a helpful reminder (cf. the first week)

Week 8
Oct 20 T
Oct 22
• Synopsis: 50–76 (cf. 77–83)
• Goodacre: chs. 6–7
• The Case Against Q:
  Ten Reasons to Question Q
  Fallacies at the Heart of Q
  FAQ on The Case Against Q
• Review:
  • Course syllabus (including Evaluation link; review requirements, expectations, and criteria for grading—ask Qs, if you have any)
  • Brown: rules of thumb

Week 9
Oct 29 R
Nov 3
• Synopsis: 50–76 (cf. 77–83)

Week 10
Nov 5 R
Nov 10
• Synopsis: 123, 136, 138, 146, 153

Week 11
Nov 12 R
Nov 17
• Synopsis: 158–73

Week 12
Nov 19 R
Nov 24
• Synopsis: 269–95, 305–15, 330–50 (focus on triple trad)
• Course syllabus (including Evaluation link; review requirements, expectations, and criteria for grading—ask Qs, if you have any)

Week 13
Dec 1 T
Dec 3
• Synopsis: 269–95, 305–15, 330–50 (focus on triple trad)
• Apostles' Creed
• Nicene Creed
• Gos Thom
• Sec Gos Mk
• Gos Pet
• Inf Gos Thom
• Prot Jas
Week 14

Dec 8 T

Dec 10

- Synopsis: 269–95, 305–15, 330–50 (focus on triple trad)

Dec 10: movie night with the Nas 7:46 PM-ish
Feel free to bring DVDs of movies you think your classmates should see. For directions click here.

Dec 15 T

Final exam: 1130–1400 (regular classroom)

exegesis guidelines evaluation resources Na home D2L

Without education we are in a horrible and deadly danger of taking educated people seriously. (G. K. Chesterton)

Health is merely the slowest possible rate at which one can die. (Anonymous)