Greetings. Welcome to NT 312. I look forward to sharing with you our exploration of The Gospel of Luke and The American Road Movie. Take some time to get familiar with our syllabus and the layout of our course.

I will be sending out a Moodle enrollment key to students in the course. Once you receive the key, please share some information about yourself by updating your profile as part of the first assignment (click on your name and then “Edit Profile”). In a traditional class setting, I always pass out a student survey on the first day and then ask each student to share a few categories that help us to get to know them better. This first profile exercise will give you the opportunity to share in this fashion with the rest of the class in your profile.

About Me
I am currently Professor of Biblical Studies at Judson College in Elgin Illinois, just outside Chicago. My wife, Karen, and I have two children, Madeline, age twenty, and Aidan, age 17. Prior to teaching at Judson College, I taught at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, Fresno Pacific University and the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, California, American Baptist Seminary of the West and other seminaries in the San Francisco Bay area. I did my Ph.D. in New Testament at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley and wrote my dissertation in the area of Luke-Acts under the direction of Joel Green.

Contacting the Professor

Email: Please post general questions in Course Questions. Just as in a traditional classroom, it often benefits the entire class to hear and interact with the answer to these questions. When you need to send personal messages, send them to me by email. If you have an urgent matter, please flag your post with the word "Urgent" in the subject line.

Telephone: 847.628.1054 (work) or 847.697.8783 (home)

Course Description

This course pursues a mutually illuminating cultural and theological dialogue between the biblical journey motif in Luke and the American road movie, engaging such shared themes as pilgrimage, dislocation, race, gender, wealth, family, community and reconciliation. In doing so we will attempt to discern more clearly the call of Christian discipleship in the context of American culture.

Long recognized as a source of information on the historical Jesus, recent decades have increasingly demonstrated the Gospel of Luke's theological and literary genius as well. Today we
understand much more of the gospel writers' roles as narrators of the story of Jesus in their capacity as evangelists, pastors, historians, theologians, and literary artists. Beginning as early as the Infancy Narratives, Luke evokes the prominent biblical theme of journeying. Jesus is portrayed as the pioneer of the Christian way, whose entire life’s journey typifies and is instructive for the Christian life in this world. Jesus speaks of his own death as a journey or “exodus” (Lk 9:31). The final journey to Jerusalem is greatly expanded (Lk 9:51–19:44), serving as a context for instruction and for the gathering of a sojourning community. The undertaking of this journey is marked by a radical break with everything: “Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. . . . So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions” (Lk 14:27, 33 NRSV). In Acts the journey motif is also underscored in Stephen’s speech, which repeatedly emphasizes the sojourning nature of God’s people in the past (Acts 7). The early church is often simply designated “the Way” (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22), and Paul’s journeys in Acts are a literal enactment of the motif.

A significant number of themes present in Luke’s journey motif are also present in American road movies. American road movies—animated as they are by recurrent subtexts of spiritual or transformational quest—uniquely embody a distinctive American character of restless spirituality. Such journeys regularly explore occasions of liminality and communitas, intimacy and reconciliation, or threshold experiences, to use the language of Victor Turner. This perspective is nicely captured in Director Wim Winders’ own words as he relates in an interview in Image:

In the twenty years I had been absent from church, my films’ main subject was alienation, being on the road, being on some sort of pilgrimage toward understanding, or realization, or fulfillment. Even though most of those characters didn’t know what it was they were after, they were on the way somewhere. For twenty years, being on the road itself became the topic, as the destination was so uncertain. Looking back, I was like a pilgrim who didn’t believe in the marked path anymore, but still believed that being on the road had to lead somewhere as long as I was relentless about it.

Course Objectives

- To gain a basic familiarity with the Gospel of Luke and its prominent, biblical theme of journeying and to engage in close readings of specific texts which comprise this motif.

- To gain a basic overview of the history, major themes, and methodologies of gospel interpretation and a basic introduction to film interpretation.

- To theologically probe the message of Luke and American road movies within their cultural and historical environments and to reflect on their contemporary significance.

- To encourage the development of good skills and fruitful approaches to biblical narrative and contemporary film.

Required Reading and Viewing


Films: *The Grapes of Wrath; Easy Rider; Thelma and Louise; Smoke Signals; The Straight Story; Rain Man; Plaines, Trains, and Automobiles; Road to Perdition; and O, Brother Where Art Thou?*

**Related Bibliography**


**Related Commentaries or Studies**


Course Guidelines:

(1) Class Participation (30%):

Postings: Postings in online forums should strive for substantive engagement without being excessive. Each week’s assignments run from 9:00 a.m. Monday to 9:00 a.m. on the following Monday. In a typical week you should read the session readings, view the appropriate film, and read the initial questions in the forum to get things started. These will always be available to the class by 9:00 Monday morning, but often before if you need to work ahead. You will need to post one substantive response to my initial question/assignment for that week and two substantive responses to your classmate’s postings for that week. You must post your initial response to my question/assignment by 9:00 a.m. Friday. All students are expected to read ALL the initial posts of the class. Watch the discussion as it unfolds and then jump in again at some point with your responses. Substantive responses will demonstrate some critical reflection and content in relation to the question or posting being addressed. Hence, three postings per module is just the MINIMUM requirement to fulfill this part of the course. Additional postings are always welcomed and encouraged.

Grammar and English Usage: Proper English grammar should be used at all times. Please always incorporate complete sentences, punctuation, capitalization, and correct spelling. Poor grammar will be reflected in the final grade. Granted, communication in the forums will certainly be more conversational and spontaneous. Nevertheless, we should aim for clarity and precision in all of our communication. This is particularly important given the constraints of online communication.

Discussion: A crucial element of this course is the dialogue that we enter into with each other. All discussions are to be in the vein of encouragement, gentleness, patience, persistence, and hope. This does not mean that we will not challenge, confront, or question each other. It does mean that these things will be undertaken for the purpose of growth and stimulation to think and understand the subject at hand more deeply and more intimately.

Preparation and Participation: Students should prepare for each module by completing all biblical and other readings, viewing the appropriate film, and actively participating in group discussions and/or group assignments. Your participation grade will be based upon quality of participation in online discussions, and evidence of appropriate preparation. Your comments should give evidence of careful thought about the topic of discussion or question posed and careful reading of class sources. Quantity of interaction will only prove relevant in terms of the depth of your treatment of the topic. Quantity just for quantity’s sake or at the expense of quality should be avoided. In short, think through the issue and think about what others—your professor, your classmates and other authors—have said about the subject. In my own assessment, I will attend to the following: Have you posted the minimum three postings per assignment? How many total postings did you make per module? How many were significant and substantive postings? How well did you respond when questions were posed to you by the professor or other students? Did your postings show evidence of interacting with course readings?
I will periodically post updates based on your overall forum participation. These updates will employ a very basic four-point scale:

4. Excellent: Demonstrates thorough reading of class sources, attentive viewing, and exceptional reflection on forum prompts and topics of discussion. Posts and follow-ups are substantive, going beyond mere summary or easy conclusions. Indicates thoughtful and substantive responses to postings and questions of others. Specifically and appropriately references assigned texts, films, and previous discussion when relevant to support answers.

3. Good: Demonstrates appropriate engagement of class sources, viewing, and reflection on forum prompts and topics of discussion. Posts and follow-ups are substantive and thoughtful. Indicates good responses to postings and questions of others. Appropriately references assigned texts, films, and previous discussion when relevant to support answers.

2. Superficial: Indicates superficial engagement of class sources, viewing, and reflection on forum prompts and topics of discussion. Posts and follow-ups are cursory and lack substance. Perfunctory responses to postings and questions of others. Neglects references to assigned texts, films, and previous discussion when relevant to support answers.

1. Insufficient: Indicates insufficient engagement of class sources, viewing, and reflection on forum prompts and topics of discussion. Posts and follow-ups are limited or incomplete. Limited responses to postings and questions of others. Posts are lacking reference to assigned texts, films, and previous discussion when relevant to support answers.

Attendance: This is not a correspondence course with one ultimate deadline for completion. This is a graduate level online course with a high level of weekly interaction required. This does not mean that you have to be online every day, but neither does it mean that you can be absent for significant lengths of time. Timely interaction in discussion with your classmates and professor are essential requirements of the course. Posting after a discussion for the week is complete will be considered an absence.

As the catalogue states:
“For a traditional 10 week course, failure to attend at least 80% of class sessions is grounds for automatic failure. Attendance expectations are higher for intensive, hybrid, and online courses. Professors have the authority to add additional attendance requirements in the syllabus. Students are always expected to communicate with a professor in advance if they will be absent.”

(2) Interpretive Assignments (30%):

For two of the Interpretive Assignment passages (see Course Outline) students will prepare an Interpretive Assignment consisting of informal observations based upon a close reading of a specific New Testament passage. Each close reading should be at least 1,000-1,250 words (1-2 pages, single-spaced type). Your observations should always be supported by reference to the passage under consideration and your work should be carefully written with attention to grammar and spelling. However, these essays are not intended to be research assignments. Hence, consultation of secondary materials is not allowed. Nor are they intended to be application papers or sermons. Rather, they should give evidence of a close reading of the
assigned New Testament text, attending to literary form and structure, with sensitivity to social, cultural, historical and theological issues.

You will have opportunity each week to tackle one of your three Interpretive Assignment passages. (See the syllabus for the particular text we will be looking at that week.) Therefore, I would suggest you look over the passages we will be tackling this semester to find three passages you may wish to work on. These assignments will be due by 9 a.m. on Friday of the week we cover that particular passage. Since all of the class might be discussing the assigned text, Interpretive Assignments won’t be accepted late (i.e., after discussion of the passage has already taken place). If you do not have these assignments in by Friday morning of the relevant week, then you will have to choose a different assigned passage later. Remember, you have more than enough opportunities to complete the necessary three assignments.

When submitting Interpretive Assignments, please email your assignments to me in the body of an email AND as an attachment. That is, for ease of interaction, paste the actual writing in the body of the email AND attach a copy as a document. Please follow the handouts and guidelines for writing interpretive assignments as posted in the course.

(3) Final Research Paper: A Synthetic Research Assignment (40%):

A paper of approximately 10-12 pages (about 3,000 words), typed, double-spaced, in three parts:

(1) an introductory section (1-2 pages), raising a vocational, social, cultural, or theological issue of significance to the student;

(2) a research section (8-10 pages), dealing with this issue from the standpoint of a selected Lukan text or texts in dialog with a specific film, including relevant cultural background material; and

(3) a conclusion (1-2 pages), integrating the other components of the essay. This essay should exhibit both a close reading of the Lukan text(s) and close “reading” of the selected film (as in the Interpretive Assignment, above) and critical engagement with secondary sources (your fellow interpreters e.g., commentaries, reviews, special studies, articles, etc.). Students are encouraged to discuss their projects beforehand with the instructor and to peruse bibliographical tools (Green and McKeever, Bovon, Segbroeck, Wagner) for relevant secondary literature. (See Handout on Research Papers)

Due 6/15 through the link on our web page.

For research papers, you need to work with “essential” and “critical” commentaries, rather than “homiletical” or “devotional” commentaries.

• A critical commentary works with the biblical text in the original language(s), provides full notes and bibliography for further reading, and is in ongoing dialogue with alternative viewpoints.
• An essential commentary is usually more accessible than the “critical” commentary, and is often more selective and strategic with regard to the sort of technical issues it will discuss in detail; these commentaries also tend to require less knowledge of the biblical languages.

For research papers, you should draw from these two categories of commentary, critical and essential. Commentary series that would be included here would include the following:

Anchor Bible
Baker’s Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
Hermeneia
International Critical Commentary
New Century Bible
New International Biblical Commentary
New International Commentary on the New Testament
New International Greek Testament Commentary
Sacra Pagina
Word Biblical Commentary

Commentary series that would not be included (that is, that should not serve as major sources for research papers) would include the following:

Daily Study Bible (William Barclay)
InterVarsity Press New Testament Commentary
New International Version Application Commentary

Please see the Research Papers handout for detailed instructions.

The appropriate number of sources for such a paper is the amount needed to cover adequately your chosen topic. However, as a general guideline, I would suggest you include at least 10 graduate level sources beyond our course texts (such as Books, Encyclopedia or Dictionary Articles, Scholarly Journal Articles and only scholarly Internet Sources). For internet sources to be of a scholarly nature, it should represent an online version of material that is also published in printed media such as the sources above, i.e., books, encyclopedias, dictionaries or journals.

On questions of style, especially with regard to paper organization and references, see Kate Turabian, A Manual For Writers 8th ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013).

Course Requirements for Diploma/Certificate Students are as follows:

1. Full participation in at each of the forums with the appropriate reading, viewing and preparation. (100%)

Diploma/Certificate Students need not do a final research project and should not participate in Interpretive Assignment Groups.
**Grading:**

I try to adhere to the following standards:

A= Exceptional work: outstanding or surpassing achievement of course objectives  
B= Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives  
C= Acceptable work: essential achievement of course objectives  
D= Marginal work: minimal or inadequate achievement of course objectives  
F= Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives  

A plus (+) or minus (−) indicates positions between categories (for example, B+ = very good; C− = slightly below acceptable, etc.).

**Northern’s Grading Scale**

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100-95</td>
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<tr>
<td>A−</td>
<td>94-90</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>89-87</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>66-63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D−</td>
<td>62-60</td>
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**Additional Grading Policies**

1. If you should complete more than three Interpretive Assignments, I will assign your grade based upon your top three assignments. However, Interpretive Assignments will not be accepted late.

2. Other late papers will not receive written comments and will be marked down 1/3 of a letter grade per day late. For example, a “B” paper will become a “B−” if a day late.

3. Poor grammar and spelling will have an effect on your final grade.

4. Please keep a copy of all of your assignments until your final grade is issued.

**Course Outline**

[DRAFT: Specific Readings will be more selective in the final form of the Syllabus]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Material to Cover</th>
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| 4/11 | Introduction: 10:00 AM-1:00 PM @ Northern Seminary  
Prior to Saturday do the following:  
DO: Write a profile to introduce yourself to the class and upload it on your Moodle profile. Upload a picture if at all possible.  
READ: Syllabus and Handout on Interpretive Assignments  
READ: Your classmates' profiles  
READ: The Gospel of Luke (If Possible)  
READ: Johnston Chpts. 1-3  
READ: Tannehill: Introduction |
READ: “American Highways: Recurring Images and Themes of the Road Genre” (PDF document)
DO: Online Forum-Journey Reflection (Click on Forum to read assignment and post your reflection)

4/13-20 The Birth and Childhood of Jesus (Luke 1-2)
READ: Luke 1-2
READ: Tannehill on Luke 1-2
READ: Laderman Chs. 1
READ: Lecture-Following John’s Story Line (Word Document)
DO: Theology Study Questions (TSQ)-Intro. & Topics 1-2
DO: (Optional) Interpretive Assignment Luke 2:25-35 (see syllabus and handouts)
VIEW: *Grapes of Wrath*
DO: Online Forum *Grapes of Wrath*

READ: Luke 3-4
READ: Tannehill
READ: Laderman Chs. 2-3
READ: Lecture-John and Jesus in the Wilderness
DO: TSQ-Topic 3
DO: (Optional) Interpretive Assignment Luke 3:21-38
VIEW: *Easy Rider*
DO: Online Forum- *Easy Rider*

READ: Tannehill
READ: Laderman: Chapters 4-5, especially 184-204
READ: Lecture
DO: TSQ Topic 4
DO: (Optional) Interpretive Assignment Luke 8:40-56
VIEW: *Thelma and Louise*
DO: Online Forum- *Thelma and Louise*

5/4-11 On the Way to Jerusalem (9:51-19:27)
READ: Tannehill
READ: Laderman (Review 227-2350
READ: Lecture
DO: TSQ Topic 5
DO: (Optional) Interpretive Assignment Luke 13:6-21
VIEW: *Smoke Signals*
DO: Online Discussion-*Smoke Signals*

READ: Tannehill
READ: Laderman (Review 236-246)
READ: Lecture
DO: TSQ Topics 6&7
DO: (Optional) Interpretive Assignment Luke 14:25-35
VIEW: The Straight Story
DO: Online Discussion - The Straight Story

5/16 Touching Base: 10:00 AM-1:00 PM @ Northern Seminary
Touching base to discuss research projects, where we have been,
and the road ahead. Same reading for 5/11-18

READ: Tannehill
READ: Lecture
DO: TSQ Topics 8
DO: (Optional) Interpretive Assignment Luke 18:15-30
VIEW: Rain Man
DO: Online Discussion - Rain Man

5/25-6/1 The Ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem (19:28-21:38)
READ: Tannehill
READ: Lecture
DO: TSQ Topic 9
DO: (Optional) Interpretive Assignment Luke 20:45-21:4
VIEW: Plaines, Trains, and Automobiles
DO: Online Discussion - Plaines, Trains, and Automobiles

6/1-8 The Suffering and Death of Jesus (22:1-23:56)
Read: Tannehill
READ: Laderman (Review Outlaw Road Narrative in Index)
READ: Lecture
DO: TSQ Topics 10&11
DO: (Optional) Interpretive Assignment Luke 22:15-38
VIEW: Road to Perdition
DO: Online Discussion - Road to Perdition
DUE: Theology Study Questions Due: 5/28

6/8-12 The Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus (24:1-53)
READ: Tannehill
READ: Laderman: TBA
READ: Lecture
DO: TSQ Topic 12
DO: (Optional) Interpretive Assignment Luke 24:1-12
VIEW: O, Brother Where Art Thou?
DO: Online Discussion - O, Brother Where Art Thou?
DUE: Research Projects Due: 6/15

Complete Course Evaluation on Moodle
**Expectations**

**What you can expect of me:**

Prompt replies to your questions and postings. Typically, this should be within 24-48 hours.

Interaction, participation, and direction in the ongoing discussions that will occur over the course of the semester.

Timely and substantive feedback on your assignments. For example, when one assignment builds on a previous assignment, you will have received back the first assignment before the second is due. I will strive to make my comments substantive by affirming what you have done well and underscoring areas for improvement.

My genuine enthusiasm for this material and my excitement about what we will be learning.

**What I can expect of you:**

Active and engaged participation in our online discussions, as a class and in groups.

Timely completion of assignments.

Your honest questions when you do not understand the material or the instructions.

Your patience as we work together in this medium.

Your willingness to engage in material that may stretch and challenge you.

Your willingness to entertain and engage different perspectives on their own terms in a non-dismissive manner.

**POLICIES FOR ALL MASTERS CLASSES**

**NOTE:** All communications from the seminary will go to your seminary email account. Contact ithelpdesk@seminary.edu if you need help forwarding your seminary email address to your personal email address.

As a seminary community we hold integrity/hospitality as core values. Individuals are able to do their best work and thinking when their peers are fully present and engaged. We expect each person to both participate in class and carefully listen to others with the belief that everyone’s contribution is equally important. Therefore, the following policies have been established in order to provide clarity in regard to attendance expectations and relationships in the classroom.

**Late Work Policy**

If a student cannot complete the work for a course by the due date listed on the syllabus, they must submit a “Request for a Grade of Incomplete” form to the Registrar by 4:30 of the last day of the term. The form must be signed by the instructor and Dean of Students. The professor may set
stipulations and grade reductions. In the absence of a formal request form, the student will receive a grade based upon work completed by the last day of the term.

**Turabian Format**
All papers, including footnotes and bibliography, must be submitted in the correct format according to Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th ed., 2013.

**Plagiarism**
Plagiarism is the act of passing off as one’s own the words or ideas of someone else without providing proper acknowledgement or documentation. See the “Academic Honesty Policy” in the Seminary Catalog for more information on plagiarism and how to avoid it.

**Electronic Format**
Unless otherwise specified by the professor, all work submitted electronically must be in a Word document format (.doc, .docx).

**Course Evaluation in Moodle**
Students must complete an online course evaluation using the seminary Moodle system at [http://moodle.seminary.edu](http://moodle.seminary.edu). The evaluation will be open at the end of the course. If you need assistance connecting to Moodle or accessing the evaluation, please send an email to [moodlehelp@seminary.edu](mailto:moodlehelp@seminary.edu).