

## The Gospel of John: A Narrative Analysis

Trinity Term, 2022

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**Course Description:** John's Gospel records the life and ministry of Jesus. The Evangelist chose to do this in a narrative format. As such, John is more approachable than you think! Far from being a strange and hard-to-understand document, the Gospel uses exactly the same techniques as your favorite Marvel movie, that beloved classic novel, and even your most compelling story-formed branded marketer. These principles of narrative are preparing us to be excellent readers of Scripture if only someone would show the way. This course will help you to do just that.

We will divide the course into eight major segments:

- Chapter One: What is “**story?**”
- Chapter Two: Believe it or Not, Nothing (and Everything) Happens: **Plot** in John's Gospel.
- Chapter Three: The Dead Giveaway and the Prologue: **Identity** in John's Gospel
- Chapter Four: Tragedy, Comedy, and Fairy-Tale: **Characters** in John's Gospel
- Chapter Five: Let's Back Up a Bit: **Setting** in John's Gospel
- Chapter Six: Origin Stories: **Genre** in John's Gospel
- Chapter Seven: Inconceivable!: **Wordplay** and **Image** in John's Gospel
- Chapter Eight: But Wait--There's More!: **Post-Credit Scenes** and John's Gospel

**Course Format:** While the course will include a few short lectures, the primary pedagogical tool will be guided discussion of the key texts and readings. Reading will average 50-70 pages per week, and students will be expected to have read and analyzed the texts, prepared to share thoughts in each week's session. Each session will meet on Zoom for two hours a week and will be recorded for those who cannot attend (but not recorded for dissemination outside of the class). Further participation will take place on a Discord discussion board.

### Course Assignments:

**Participation (20%):** Attentive and sustained participation in class is the primary requirement. For-credit students may have one excused absence.

**Reading Responses (30%):** All students are requested and for-credit students are required to complete the assigned readings each week. Students will submit a Reading Response each week offering a brief synopsis and critical reflections on the main reading for the week (600-1000 words).

**Term Paper (50%):** For-credit students are required to submit a 3,000-5,000 word term paper. Papers will combine limited secondary source research with attentive primary source engagement and thoughtful analysis. They may be primarily exegetical,

historical, or biblical-theological in their orientation, or blend elements of all three, though the topic should be approved with the instructors in advance. Topic choice is due Week 4 (5/2) and the final paper is due Week 8 (5/30).

**Course Outcomes:** At the conclusion of the course, students will be enriched with a larger understanding of (1) John's narrative purpose, (2) theological outcomes, and (3) situation within the broader context of Scripture. Furthermore, they will be equipped with (4) narrative-critical analytical tools that can be applied to other narrative texts and be ready to (5) compare and contrast John's approach with that of the Synoptic gospels.

### **Assigned Texts:**

All reading materials other than the Gospel of John itself will be made available electronically as we will use excerpts and chapters from each of these books but not any single volume in its entirety.

The Gospel According to John.

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. Basic Books, 2011.

Brown, Sherri. *Interpreting the Gospel and Letters of John: An Introduction*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2017.

Calvin, John and William Pringle, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John, vol. 1* Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010

Estes, Douglas and Ruth Sheridan, eds. *How John Works: Storytelling in the Gospel of John*. SBL Press, 2016.

Hannon, Richard. "Plot in the Gospel of John."

Hannon, Richard. "Setting in the Gospel of John."

Hannon, Richard. "What is Story?"

Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John*. in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995.

Painter, R. Jackson. *The Gospel of John: A Thematic Approach*. Wipf and Stock, 2010.

Ressugie, James L. *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction*. Baker Publishing, November 2005.

Snyder, Blake. *Save the Cat: The Last Book on Screenwriting You Will Ever Need*. M. Wiese Productions, 2015.

Thatcher, Tom, ed. *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past Present and Future of Johannine Studies*. Baylor University Press, 2007.

Thompson, Marianne. "‘Every Picture Tells a Story’: Imagery of God in the Gospel of John." in *Imagery in the Gospel of John: Terms, Forms, Themes, and Theology in the Gospel of John*, edited by Frey, et al. Mors Siebeck, 2006

Vanhoozer, Kevin. *Hearers & Doers*. Lexham Press, 2019.

Watson, Edward and Martin Culy. *The Making of a Disciple: Character Studies in the Gospel of John*. Cascade Books, 2021.

## Course Calendar:

### Week 1 (4/11): What is “story?”

Readings: The Gospel of John (please complete in one sitting)

Brown, Sherri. *Interpreting the Gospel and Letters of John: An Introduction*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2017. (Chapter 6)

Ressugie, James L. *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction*. Baker Publishing, November 2005. (Chapter 1)

### Assignments:

As you read John, make some notes about some key features of the Gospel including:

- 1) Characters
- 2) Locations
- 3) Images

Include these notes in your Reading Analysis for this week. We will use your own inductive analysis of the Gospel as one of the primary points of discussion for our meetups, so I expect that you will continue to read and analyze John throughout the course, making notes as you read our secondary literature as to how those tools and frameworks impact our understanding of the gospel.

Lecture Attendance and Participation

### Week 2 (4/18): What is “Story,” part 2

Readings: The Gospel of John, in a different translation than you used in Week One

Hannon, Richard. “What is Story?”

Snyder, Blake. *Save the Cat: The Last Book on Screenwriting You Will Ever Need*. M. Wiese Productions, 2015.

### Assignments:

As you read John, make some notes about key features of the Gospel including:

- 1) Conflict faced by the characters
- 2) Questions asked by characters
- 3) Answers given to those questions!

Include these notes in your Reading Analysis for this week.

Lecture Attendance and Participation

**Week 3 (4/25):** Believe it or Not, Nothing (and Everything) Happens: **Plot** in John's Gospel.

Readings:

Hannon, Richard. "Plot in the Gospel of John."

Estes, Douglas and Ruth Sheridan, eds. *How John Works: Storytelling in the Gospel of John*. SBL Press, 2016. (Chapter 7: Plot)

Assignments:

Weekly Reading Analysis

Lecture Attendance and Participation

**Week 4 (5/2):** The Dead Giveaway and the Prologue: **Identity** in John's Gospel

Readings:

Chapter 1 in Painter, R. Jackson. *The Gospel of John: A Thematic Approach*. Wipf and Stock, 2010.

Assignments:

Weekly Reading Analysis

Lecture Attendance and Participation

Term Paper Topic Due!

**Week 5 (5/9):** Tragedy, Comedy, and Fairy-Tale: **Characters** in John's Gospel

Readings:

Watson, Edward and Martin Culy. *The Making of a Disciple: Character Studies in the Gospel of John*. Cascade Books, 2021.

Assignments:

Weekly Reading Analysis

Lecture Attendance and Participation

**Week 6 (5/16):** Let's Back Up a Bit: **Setting** in John's Gospel

Readings:

Hannon, Richard. "Setting in the Gospel of John."

Estes, Douglas and Ruth Sheridan, eds. *How John Works: Storytelling in the Gospel of John*. SBL Press, 2016. Chapter 4: "Space"

Thatcher, Tom, ed. *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past Present and Future of Johannine Studies*. Baylor University Press, 2007. Chapter 10.

Assignments:

Weekly Reading Analysis

Lecture Attendance and Participation

**Week 7 (5/23):** Origin Stories: **Genre** in John's Gospel

Readings:

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. Basic Books, 2011. (Chapter 1)

Assignments:

Weekly Reading Analysis

Lecture Attendance and Participation

**Week 8 (5/30):** Inconceivable!: **Wordplay** and **Image** in John's Gospel

Readings:

Thompson, Marianne. "'Every Picture Tells a Story': Imagery of God in the Gospel of John." in *Imagery in the Gospel of John: Terms, Forms, Themes, and Theology in the Gospel of John*, edited by Frey, et al. Mors Siebeck, 2006

Assignments:

Weekly Reading Analysis

Lecture Attendance and Participation

**Week 9 (6/6):** But Wait--There's More!: **Post-Credit Scenes** and John's Gospel

Readings:

Vanhoozer, Kevin. *Hearers & Doers*. Lexham Press, 2019. Pages 43-63

Assignments:

Weekly Reading Analysis

Lecture Attendance and Participation

**Week 10 (6/13):** All Good Things Must Come to an End

Readings:

Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John*. in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995.

Calvin, John and William Pringle, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John, vol. 1*  
Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010

Assignments:

Weekly Reading Analysis

Lecture Attendance and Participation

**Term Paper Due.** (Deadline can be extended to 6/26 if needed)