



## Reading Salvation: the origin of the first gospel

**Start date**    Friday 14 July 2023                      **End date**                      Sunday 16 July 2023

**Venue**            Madingley Hall  
                        Madingley  
                        Cambridge  
                        CB23 8AQ

**Tutor**            **Dr Jane McLarty**                      **Course code**                      2223NRX041

**Director of ISP and LL**                      Sarah Ormrod

**For further information contact**                      [inteng@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:inteng@ice.cam.ac.uk)

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### Tutor biography

Dr Jane McLarty is a Fellow of Wolfson College, Cambridge, and taught New Testament (and New Testament Greek) for the Colleges and the Divinity Faculty for many years. Her area of research is early Christian narrative, particularly the martyrdom narratives of the first Christian centuries. One of her passions is to make academic theology accessible beyond the University lecture room, and to this end she has led a number of courses at ICE on the Gospels, the book of Revelation and other early Christian literature.

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## Course programme

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### Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the Terrace Bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| 19:00                | Dinner  |
| <b>20:30 – 22:00</b> | <b>Literacy in the 1st century: who could read, and what were they reading?</b> |
| 22:00                | Terrace Bar open for informal discussion  |

### Saturday

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| 07:30                | Breakfast (for residents only)   |
| <b>09:00 – 10:30</b> | <b>'A string of pearls': oral tradition and the formation of Mark's gospel</b>     |
| 10:30                | Coffee   |
| <b>11:00 – 12:30</b> | <b>Beginning, middle and end: structuring a new narrative (and later edits...)</b> |
| 13:00                | Lunch  |
| 14:00 – 16:00        | Free time  |
| 16:00                | Tea  |
| <b>16:30 – 18:00</b> | <b>The Markan sandwich: narrative technique</b>                                    |
| 18:00 – 18:30        | Free time  |
| 18:30                | Dinner   |
| <b>20:00 – 21:30</b> | <b>Characters: the disciples</b>   |
| 21:30                | Terrace Bar open for informal discussion   |

### Sunday

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| 07:30                | Breakfast (for residents only)          |
| <b>09:00 – 10:30</b> | <b>Characters: Mark's Jesus</b>         |
| 10:30                | Coffee                                  |
| <b>11:00 – 12:30</b> | <b>Conclusions: the message of Mark</b> |
| 12:45                | Lunch                                   |

**The course will disperse after lunch**

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## Course syllabus

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### Aims:

The course will allow you to:

1. Understand the cultural context of the first gospel to be written
2. Trace the rhetorical techniques and effects of the narrative
3. Explore the presentation of the characters in the gospel

### Content:

For centuries the Gospel of Mark was somewhat overlooked in favour of the longer and more obviously 'literary' narratives of Matthew, Luke and John. However, scholars came to realise that in all probability Mark was the first written account of the 'Jesus event'. This course will firstly explore the world in which this gospel developed - who would have read it? Where do its stories come from? We'll start by examining the social world in which the gospel narrative was written – who learnt to read and write, and what did education look like in this period? What were people reading in the first century, and where did the gospel narrative fit into the spread of genres? We'll think too about oral culture, since it was some 30 years after the death of Jesus that the first gospel appeared. Are there any clues as to how the stories about Jesus circulated before being written down?

We'll then turn to look at how the gospel is constructed; we'll consider the problem of the choice of endings for the gospel, and think about the process of transmitting a written text – copying, editing, and correcting errors. We'll consider its content: plot, narrative techniques, and characters, and see how Mark calls the reader to engage and work for meaning. We'll come to recognise, I hope, the sophistication of this apparently simply written story.

We'll end with a consideration of the gospel's purpose and theology. Is it written over against rival theologies around the Jesus event? Or is it simply derived from Peter's memoirs of his time with Jesus, and designed to be a 'call to faith'? By the end of our journey through the gospel, we'll have developed a sense of how the early believers first wrote and read their story, and the influence this first telling had on the development of Christian belief.

### Presentation of the course:

The course will involve illustrated lectures, group discussion and close reading of episodes from the Gospel of Mark – please bring a New Testament (any version/translation).

**As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:**

1. Understand the context of the first gospel
2. Appreciate Markan narrative techniques
3. Understand the overall shape of the gospel
4. Appreciate Mark's particular theological slant on the 'Jesus event'

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## Reading and resources list

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Barton, S., & Brewer, T. *The Cambridge companion to the Gospels* (Second ed., Cambridge companions to religion), 2021.

Cribiore, R. *Gymnastics of the mind: Greek education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*. Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Gamble, H. *Books and readers in the early church: A history of early Christian texts*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

Harris, W. *Ancient literacy* Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1989

Hooker, M. *A commentary on the Gospel according to St. Mark* (New ed., Black's New Testament commentaries). London: A & C Black, 1991.