"Mark in the Frame of Ancient History-Writing: The Quest for Heuristics"
Eve-Marie Becker

When placing Mark in the frame of ancient history-writing, we are following a certain trend in Synoptic Studies in which the literary-historical contextualization of the Gospel narratives is discussed - especially in relation to Luke and Luke-Acts, but also in regard to Mark. When applying this paradigm to our academic teaching, however, we need to reflect upon the heuristics that are in the background of our research, and we will explicate them. Relevant questions to be discussed could thus be: What is our particular interest of research and how is it placed in the history of research in Markan and/or Synoptic Studies? What does the academic context look like today (Theology, Humanities, Cultural Studies)? Which methods do we use? In what sense does our approach help to better understand the rise of Christian culture, literature and theology? What is our contribution - in research as well as in teaching - for Christian theology as well as modern societies in the 21st century?

“Teaching Mark as Performance Literature: Early Literate and Post-Literate Pedagogies”
Thomas E. Boomershine

There is a direct correlation between presuppositions about ancient communication culture and contemporary pedagogies in the teaching of Mark. The assumption that Mark was a text read by readers is mirrored in our pedagogical practice. The teaching of Mark utilizes a text-based pedagogy in which students are taught to read Mark’s text in silence as the basis for papers written in silence to be read in silence. Recent study of 1st century communication culture has revealed an early literate culture in which the great majority of people were illiterate and manuscripts were scarce and relatively expensive. Manuscripts were published by performance for audiences. Mark was performance literature that was composed to be heard rather than read in silence. A further characteristic of ancient education was the memorization of manuscripts. A trained memory was the goal of ancient education. If we want to teach students about Mark in its original historical context, we need to develop pedagogical methods that invite students to hear the sounds of Mark’s story and to perform it by heart. Some ancient/modern pedagogical practices for teaching Mark as performance literature are: 1. Internalization and performance of Markan stories; 2. Introduction by a storytelling workshop; 3. An early performance of Mark by the professor; 4. A concluding communal performance of Mark; 5. Lectures and papers on sound mapping and performance criticism exegesis; 6. Study and performance of parts of Mark in the original Greek; 7.
Student production of videos and digital interpretations of Mark; 8. Identification of film clips and digital productions with similar themes and story dynamics; 9. Videos and digital collections of graphics and texts from the ancient world that set the context for Mark.

“Blogs, Pods, Websites and Mark:
How the Internet Affects the Teaching of Mark’s Gospel”
Mark Goodacre

Teaching Mark’s Gospel in the internet age presents multiple challenges and opportunities. The difficulty for most instructors is that they are digital immigrants, trained to access Mark in linear fashion in printed Greek New Testaments, Synopses of the Gospels and Biblical Translations, while their students are all digital natives, whose first access to the text may be via phone, tablet and laptop, with many navigational possibilities and different layers. So too with so-called secondary literature, the contemporary student is as likely to access Youtube, iTunes U and the blogosphere as they are the dusty articles and dated monographs that we love. But to embrace the new opportunities provided by the internet encourages instructors to rethink their approach to Mark in several ways: (1) The informal, often colloquial nature of blog posts can make the scholarship far more accessible to students, as well as encouraging them to try their hand at blogging about Mark themselves; (2) Podcasts make access to scholarship for blind and visually impaired students more straightforward and they enable all students to study away from the desk; (3) Websites that use dynamic ways of representing the Gospels and Gospel scholarship open up new avenues for both instructors and their students. Examples (good and bad) of the these phenomena in the teaching of Mark illustrate how to get the best out of digital Mark and digital Marcan scholarship.

“There is great excitement and satisfaction in joining form and content in the teaching of the narrative of Mark’s Gospel to undergraduates in a Markan narrative way. Since the categories of setting, characters, plot, and rhetoric have achieved semi-canonical status as elements of narrative analysis of the Gospels, I will apply these categories to my recent experience of teaching the Gospel of Mark, especially in two undergraduate seminars at a comprehensive, state, research university in the United States (Fall 2009 and Fall 2011). In terms of the spatial setting, in both cases the physical arrangements of a seminar room encouraged full conversation. In terms of the temporal setting, the class met twice a week for 75 minutes each time, which I have found works better than meeting once a week for undergraduates. In terms of characters, enrollments were small, 11 and 12, greatly enhancing the opportunity to involve everyone in the seminar setting. In 2009, all 11 were undergraduates; in 2011, the majority of undergraduates were joined by two graduate students (not in biblical or religious studies) and two senior citizen auditors. The plot involved having the
class as a whole read four (or five) substantive Markan commentaries, with students assigned evenly to read one of the set. Each class session began with a student report or reports on the assigned section of Mark from the point of view of his or her commentary. Then discussion opened up to other students making comments from the point of view of their commentaries, with me filling in as needed. Rhetoric was the most intriguing, and I will describe a number of in-class exercises to illustrate the way I tried to bring to life Mark’s oral background, its chiastic structures, its symbolic geography, its complex characterization, and the dynamic scholarship on Mark.

“Teaching Mark through a Postcolonial Optic”
Jeremy Punt

This contribution explores the potential value of a postcolonial approach for teaching Mark’s gospel. Investigating a number of texts from the gospel, it asks to what extent a postcolonial optic implies a different approach to the gospel, what it adds and where challenges exist. Unlike an anti-imperial or anti-Empire reading, a postcolonial optic wants to stay alert to the ambivalence and ambiguity of situations of imperial rule, investigating texts with attention to hybridity and mimicry in particular. Teaching the gospel of Mark from a postcolonial optic opens up new possibilities for interpretation and contextualization but at the same time also poses certain challenges, pedagogically and otherwise.