

NT 3321
Life and Letters of Paul
Spring 2018

Instructor: Allan J. McNicol
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Conference: By Appointment
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I. Course Description

The course will be concerned with the study of the life of Paul within the framework of the development of early Gentile Christianity. We will study the nature of Paul's background in the Diaspora, his conversion, and details of his Christian missionary work especially noting his paradigmatic role in shaping the doctrine and thought of early Gentile Christianity.

The letters of Paul are the best sources for his life, so we will survey all of Paul's canonical letters and study in detail the major letters in what can be defended as chronological order to get a broad picture of Paul's thoughts and the problems he encountered. We will also spend some time in noting the impact of his thought on the West and evaluate his significance for contemporary society.

Procedurally, each class period we will have a lecture with time provided for clarification and discussion. After our break we will discuss the assigned reading and wider issues raised by the lecture. The course will be divided into four segments. Three one hour quizzes will come at set times throughout the course.

II. Goals

1. To provide a comprehensive overview of the life of Paul—one of the most pivotal figures in shaping mainstream Christianity to this day. Fourteen of the 27 books of the New Testament are attributed to Paul.
2. To provide tools for the student to do historical study of the Bible enabling him/her to teach New Testament letters at the level of serious Bible study in the life of the average congregation.
3. To promote reflection on the key theological features of Paul's way of looking at the world which provided the basic agenda and much of the terminology of later Christian theology.

III. Objectives

1. The course will give the student essential information about the life and correspondence of Paul within the context of early Christianity enabling the student to appreciate Paul's significance.
2. By studying the basic order and sequence of Paul's letters the student will gain a deeper appreciation of the context and intricacies of Paul's theological development.

IV. Texts

New Testament (preferably RSV)

David E. Capes, Rodney Reeves and E. Randolph Richards, *Rediscovering Paul: An Introduction to His World, Letters and Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2011, paper).

Michael J. Gorman, *Reading Paul* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2008).

V. Library Resources

Austin Graduate Library: 8:30 AM - 10:00 PM, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday
8:30 AM - 4:30 PM, Wednesday, Friday

Check the Austin Grad Library page of our website for a list of helpful website links for the study of theology.

VI. Required Work

- A. Regular attendance at class sessions.
- B. Weekly reading assignments - on schedule.
- C. One 5-page book report on Gorman.
- D. Evaluation is based on the test averages and the book report. Test averages will come from 3 one-hour exams. No final. All tests must be taken. Grading will be based strictly on test averages (90 and above "A"; 80 and above "B"; etc.). Students are expected to take exams on the day and hour they are scheduled. A tentative deduction of 10 points will be made for an unexcused exam.
- E. Tests 75%
 Book Report 25%

VII. Outline

A. The Early Years (32?-51)

Week 1: Overview of the Course; The Jesus Messianic Movement as a presupposition for the study of Paul

Readings: Capes, *et al.*, Introduction and Chapters 1-2

Week 2: The Pre-Converted Paul; Paul's call and early mission as a believer in Jesus in the urban Greco-Roman World

Readings: Acts 9:1-30; 13:1-14:28; Capes, *et al.*, Chapter 3; Gorman: *Reading Paul*, 22-40

Week 3: The Galatian problem

Readings: Galatians; Capes, *et al.*, Chapter 4; Gorman, *Reading Paul*, 78-90

Week 4: Beginning of the mission of Paul in Europe (Thessalonians)

Readings: 1 and 2 Thessalonians; Capes, *et al.*, Chapter 5

Week 5: **Test 1** - February 14

B. Paul's Extended Mission in the Aegean area

Weeks 6-7: The church in Corinth

Readings: 1 and 2 Corinthians; Capes, *et al.*, Chapter 6

Week 8-9: Other churches in the Aegean area

Readings: Philippians and Colossians; Capes, *et al.*, Chapter 8, pp. 201-225

Week 10: **Test 2** - March 28

C. The Heart of Paul: Romans

Weeks 11-12: Paul's thought as expressed in Romans

Readings: Romans; Capes, *et al.*, Chapter 7

D. The Later Paul

Week 13: Ephesians and the Pastorals

Readings: Ephesians; 1 and 2 Timothy; Capes, *et al.*, Chapter 8, pp. 226-235, and Chapters 9-10

Week 14: Paul in later history and his significance today; Final Reflections

Readings: Capes, *et al.*, Chapter 12

Week 15: **Test 3** – May 2

Bibliography on Paul
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