



Grace Communion Seminary

NT04 Epistles of Paul

Short Syllabus 2012

Instructor: Michael Morrison, PhD

Course Description: Epistles of Paul

Students in this course examine the 13 letters attributed to Paul in the New Testament. Students will learn the circumstances in which each letter was written – the problems Paul was attempting to address and the way he responded to them. Lectures will include questions of date and authorship, theological considerations involved in what Paul wrote, and how students can find modern significance in these letters.

Required Textbooks

Bird, Michael F. *Introducing Paul: The Man, His Mission and His Message*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008. 978-0830828975. \$13

Capes, David B., Rodney Reeves, and E. Randolph Richards. *Rediscovering Paul: An Introduction to His World, Letters and Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007. ISBN 978-0-8308-2598-1. About \$19 at online booksellers.

You might find lower prices on these books by using bookfinder.com.

Recommended Resources

Hawthorne, Gerald F., Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993.

Wright, N.T. *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005. Preview at <http://www.amazon.com/dp/0800663578>.

Student learning outcomes for NT04

Students will be given an opportunity to:

1. Describe how Paul's letters fit into the sequence of his missionary travels.
2. Give the circumstances of each letter, and explain how those circumstances affected the way that Paul wrote.
3. Describe how different sections of each letter are related to other parts of the same letter.
4. Describe how a selected passage in these letters may be used in theology and ministry today.

Requirements and assignments

1. **Ten lectures.** Lectures will be posted each Monday for the first ten weeks. See the *Student Handbook* for study suggestions. You should look up the scripture references in the lectures. The lectures average about 28 pages each week, and we expect that you will spend about 2½ hours on each lecture.
2. **Five forum discussions.** Part of the learning that occurs in traditional classrooms comes through discussion and interaction with other students. In an online class, this is done through comments posted on a forum. These count for 10 percent of the final grade.
3. **Two textbooks.** They total about 470 pages. We estimate that the average student will read these books in about 45 hours, or about 5 hours per week. You may want to read less during the weeks when a paper is due, so you will need to read more during the weeks when a paper is not due.
4. **Three quizzes.** Short quizzes will be about the lectures and the reading assignments. These account for only 5 percent of the grade.

5. **One exegetical paper:** Write a 12-page paper on a passage in one of Paul’s letters. Choose one of five passages – 1 Cor. 2:1-12; 2 Cor. 5:11-21; Eph. 4:7-16; Phil. 3:12-21; or 1 Thess. 2:1-12. See the document “How to Write an Exegesis Paper” for more detailed instructions.

This paper will be written **in two parts**. The first part, discussing historical and literary details, is due at the end of the fifth week. The second part, discussing the original meaning and contemporary significance of the passage, is due at the end of the 12th week.

Students must consult and interact with at least three modern¹ scholarly books, including at least two major commentaries.² (*Modern* means within the last 25 years, and *major* means at least 15 pages per biblical chapter; a one-volume commentary will not have enough detail.) Students may need to obtain these through the interlibrary loan service of a public library, so students should select a passage and identify potential resources as soon as the course begins.

6. **One book review:** Write a 3-5 page review of the book by Bird. Identify at least two sections you found helpful, and explain how they are helpful. Identify at least one passage in the book that you found confusing, unpersuasive, or wrong, and support your view on that passage. This paper is due at the end of the 8th week.

Here’s a chart to summarize the assignments:

¹ This does not mean that older commentaries are bad. Many are very useful. However, new information or analyses will occasionally help us see that a new interpretation is better. If we do not consult more recent commentaries, we may be unwittingly perpetuating a mistake. Another advantage of modern commentaries is that they may address questions that older commentators simply did not deal with. We won’t know whether they are helpful unless we consult them.

² See the list of approved commentaries at <http://sites.google.com/site/apugbb1512/paul>.

Assignments, estimated hours, and grade weighting

Assignment	Hours *	Percentage of grade
Reading lectures and website documents	24	
Reading discussions and making responses	8	10
Taking the quizzes	3	5
Reading the textbooks	45	
Writing exegetical papers	60	70
Writing the book review	8	15
Total – about 12 hours each week	148	100

* This is an estimate for the “average” student. A student who reads quickly may be slow in writing papers, and vice versa. Some students will complete the course requirements in less total time, and some will take more time.

Weekly Topics and Assignments for Spring 2012

	Date	Lecture topics	Reading assignments	Forum
1	Jan. 16	Paul’s three backgrounds. Philemon as example of tact.	Bird chapter 1 Capes chaps 1-3	x
2	Jan. 23	Galatians: how Gentiles can be in the people of God.	Galatians Bird chapter 2 Capes, chap. 4	x
3	Jan. 30	1 & 2 Thessalonians, and Paul’s comments about the return of Christ.	1 & 2 Thess. Bird chapter 3 Capes, chap. 5	quiz
4	Feb. 6	1 Corinthians: A mix of sociology and spirituality.	1 Corinthians Bird chapter 4 Capes, chap. 6	x
5	Feb. 13	2 Corinthians: Paul confronts challenges to his authority.	2 Corinthians Bird chapter 5 Capes, chap. 10	-
The first paper is due by the end of February 19.				

6	Feb. 20	Romans, part 1: The gospel of salvation, and being in Christ.	Romans 1-8 Bird chapter 6 Capes, chap. 7	x
7	Feb. 27	Romans, part 2: How Israel fits into God's plan, and Christian behavior.	Romans 9-16 Bird chapter 7 Capes, chap. 11	quiz
8	March 5	Philippians, and the question of pseudepigraphy.	Philippians Bird chapter 8 Capes, chap. 8	x
The reaction paper is due by the end of the eighth week				
9	March 12	Colossians and Ephesians and the cosmic victory of Christ.	Col. & Eph. Bird chapter 9 Capes, chap. 12	quiz
10	March 19	The Pastoral Epistles, and some concise advice for the early church.	1 & 2 Timothy, Titus. Bird chapters 10-11 Capes, chap. 9	
The final paper is due in 2½ weeks – by the end of Wednesday, April 11. (The normal due date would be on April 8, but since that is Easter, and a busy time for many of you, I am extending the deadline by a few days. Some of you may prefer to turn the paper in early instead of late.)				