

**Paul & His Letters BSNT 230**  
**2019 Spring (Early Week)**  
**Cincinnati Christian University**

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**Description**

An introduction to Paul and the New Testament Epistles in their socio-historical context focusing on a study of original Christianity and the application of its theology in the contemporary Church. Required as prerequisite to any advanced Epistles class. (Prerequisites: BSEG 100, BSNT 100 or BSNT 150)

**Rationale**

The New Testament epistles, especially the Pauline epistles, comprise a major section of the New Testament and house within them the foundational theological principles for faith and practice within the early church. Proper handling of this material is essential for any contemporary Christian leader who seeks to assist the stability and development of the Church's faith and practice. This course provides students with an introduction to the life and thought of the Church's premier thinker, the Apostle Paul, and to the literature of New Testament epistles.

**Objectives**

Students who complete this course will be able to:

1. Outline the historical development of the life of the Apostle Paul and relevant aspects of his social world.
2. Describe the historical circumstances and contributions of each of the New Testament epistles, with special emphasis on Paul's.
3. Articulate Paul's position on essential matters of the Christian faith, such as the role of the church in the world, the nature of sin and salvation, the nature of Christian ethics.

**Major Learning Experiences, Course Requirements & Professor**

***NB: all writing assignments, unless otherwise specified, are formatted as one-inch margins, double-spaced lines, and use 12pt serif font (such as Times or Times New Roman and not sans-serif such as Helvetica or Ariel).***

1. The class sessions mainly comprise lectures, discussion and group work; students are expected to engage the material in class and consider and discuss the material outside of class.
2. Reading assignments are to assist in developing student awareness of the material. Each book is an important book for the study of Paul and for the development of the course objectives; students are thus expected to "study" the required books, as opposed to "reading" them.
3. **CRR Notes:** Students will produce handwritten study notes that summarize each section of each chapter. What this means is that as you read the chapter, you will note that the chapter is broken into sections, you then reflect on the point/ideas being expressed in that section and your understanding of the point/ideas is what you

write down. When you write down this summary, it must be complete sentences/paragraph, and not bullet points, since your summary must be complete thoughts. You should organize these summaries in terms of the individual chapters, the title of which should begin a new page of notes. To be clear, your submitted notes that summarize each section of each chapter should be a series of handwritten pages, stapled together, and each new chapter should begin a new page.

4. **Bassler:** Students read the text and handwrite one-two page summaries of the main idea(s) being presented in each chapter. These are to be full sentences and paragraphs. Be sure to put the title of each chapter at the top of the page. As with CRR, you must use complete sentences/paragraphs and not bullet points or outlines.

5. **Reading Paul's Letters** – Students will read all of New Testament letters attributed to Paul (Romans through Philemon) and simply note on the Canvas assignment page that you read them this semester.

NB: I consider Audio Bible as a reasonable way to make your way through these texts (if you don't plan to use an Audio Bible, try to give it a go for at least one of Paul's letters). Biblegateway.com has many Audio Bibles available, and while I'm not a fan of the NIV, the NIV-International/UK version isn't as problematic, and is read by the delightful David Suchet whom I believe sounds exactly like God, so that's always nice.

Also, to be clear, Paul's letters are: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon (You can include Hebrews if you want, it's traditionally attributed to Paul but it doesn't claim to be.)

6. **Exegetical Writing Assignment** – On the first day of class, we will discuss in detail hermeneutical principles of ancient letters. Students will write an approximately 5 page research paper applying those principles to Paul's letter to Philemon. This assignment calls for consulting and citing at least four legitimate sources in order to be able to offer insightful comments on each of the hermeneutical principles as they relate to that document. No online sources may be used except for scholarly journal articles accessed through the CCU Library website. All sources must be cited by as MLA (or if you have any sense of a graduate degree in biblical studies, theology, etc., then use SBL/Chicago standards).

7. **Final Exam** Students will complete a final exam to be posted on Canvas. The final exam is designed to assess the degree to which the entire course has been understood. The purpose of the exam is to help you process the material covered in class and in your reading; hence, your own course and reading notes will be the sole resource needed to complete the exam.

### **Outline of Themes and Concepts**

The following is essentially a list of major ideas discussed in the course and roughly in the same order we shall encounter them. Students studying and reviewing this course should use this list as a basis for that study.

1. Hermeneutics of Ancient Letters (four principles)
2. Who is Paul (Pharisee to Apostle)
3. Where we are in the history of reading Paul (shifting emphases towards a new perspective)
4. Pauline Ecclesiology—Ecclesiastic Modus Operandi (Paul's assumptions concerning the Christian state of being and operation within the ecclesiastic context).
5. Pauline Pneumatology—The two roles of the Spirit (identity and ethics)
6. Pauline Soteriology—Sin & Salvation (What is sin and how is it produced, what is salvation and how is it achieved, and the relationship between these.)
7. Pauline Eschatology—The apocalyptic worldview (Paul's use of eschatological language to remind and motivate)

### **Class Policies**

### ***Submitting Assignments***

1. Assignments will be submitted as hand-written documents (unless otherwise stipulated in assignment description).
2. Please note that each submitted assignment must have the following:
  - a. Specific name of assignment
  - b. Your name
  - c. Neat and legible writing
  - d. Proper binding, such as a staple or bound to a folder. Multiple pages may not be submitted bound by a paperclip or folded top, etc. Anything not conforming to this will simply not be accepted. Consider this a basic professional reality.

### ***Grades***

- Bassler 10%
- C.R.R. 25%
- Exegetical Paper 25%
- Reading Paul's Letters 10%
- Final Exam 30%
- Students must receive a minimum grade of 65% on the final exam, in order to receive a passing grade (that is, students must pass the final to pass the course).
- All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

### ***Class Attendance and Engagement***

Missing class without excuse or regular disengagement is a 10% deduction from the final grade; missing more than two class meetings results in an FA (as per the handbook).

### ***Late Work & Completion of Work***

- No late work will receive any credit.
- Note the above requirement that “all assignments must be submitted in order to pass the course.” So, to be clear: late work receives no credit towards the final grade, but must be submitted before the last day of the semester, prior to exam week, in order to pass the course.

### ***Technology***

*Short Version: (please don't test these policies)*

- (1) No phones are allowed to be visible in the classroom, and thus may not be checked, or used in any way while students are in the classroom, and this includes use of the phone to read biblical text. All phones must be switched to silent and preferably set to DND. Breaching this policy results at least in immediate grade reduction of one letter grade from final grade.
- (2) It is recommended that you hand write your notes. Nevertheless students may take notes on their computers, but no computer device may be used for any reason other than specifically taking notes or accessing pre-approved resources, such as Accordance. Breaching this policy results at least in immediate grade reduction of one letter grade from final grade.

*Long Version:*

Research on the value of using computers to take notes clearly demonstrates that students perform much worse when they take notes on computers as a form of class engagement, by contrast they do much better with handwritten notes. If the concern is being able to access notes in the future, then it's recommended you use a tablet with handwriting apps or something like Rocketbook.

Ideally phones should stay out of the room, but as a matter of policy which is based on most recent

research, all phones must be switched to silent, remain in your bag and out of view, and but never on the desk or on your person. If you don't have a bag and are worried about your phone, give it to the professor. No phones may be accessed while the class is in session (regardless of the databases/bibles that may be on there). Any emergency calls must be taken outside the room. For security purposes, the professor will have his phone in the room with the ringer on.

Anyone who chooses to ignore science and accept the poor performance that computers introduce to learning, and take notes on a computer anyway, may only use the computer for the purpose of taking notes. Any use of the computer for any other reason, such as social media, messaging apps, etc., while in class constitutes "disengagement" with the class and counts against your grade. (Further note that research shows that one disengaged person on a computer distracts up to six other students.)

***Due Dates:***

- The "due date" is the "last date" assignments will be accepted. By all means plan ahead and submit early.
- School sponsored events do not exempt students from the due date. Students engaged in school sponsored events must plan accordingly, namely to submit work ahead of the due date.
- Students with exceptional circumstances may by all means bring this to the professor's attention to arrange for extensions, etc.

***Required Books***

- D. B. Capes, R. Reeves and E. R. Richards, *Rediscovering Paul: An Introduction to His World, Letters and Theology* (IVP, 2011) 3rd Edition. (abbreviated as CRR).
- J. Bassler, *Navigating Paul* (W/JK, 2006).
- New American Standard Bible.

***Recommended Resources***

- Dictionary of Paul and his Letters (IVP)
- Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments (IVP)
- Dictionary of New Testament Background (IVP)

***NB: The professor reserves the right to change the course requirements to accommodate needs of students***