



Grace Communion Seminary

BI524 (NT504) Epistles of Paul

Short Syllabus

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. Paperback ISBN 978-0830828975. About \$15. A look at Paul's theology. Not perfect, but very helpful.

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. Paperback ISBN 978-0830839414. About \$15 at online booksellers. A good overview of the letters. Older editions OK.

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. A very useful reference work.

Morrison, Michael. *Exploring the Word of God: The Letters of Paul*. PDF and e-book formats are free at www.smashwords.com/books/view/370593. This is a compilation of all GCI articles about Paul on www.gci.org/bible/paul. If you want a printed copy, see <https://www.createspace.com/5034435>.

Wright, N.T. *Paul: A Biography*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2018. A readable introduction by an influential New Testament scholar.

Student learning outcomes for BI524

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. **Lectures.** Lectures will be posted each Monday for the first ten weeks. See the *Academic Catalog* 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. In many cases the lectures comment section by section on one of Paul's letters, and you will need to refer back and forth to the Bible as you read the lectures. An audio version of the lectures is also available, but this should be supplementary, rather than the primary way that you receive the lectures.
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 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. 2:6-16; 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 the Exegesis Papers" 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 one commentary that is more than 100 years old, and at least three modern¹ scholarly books, including at least two modern, major commentaries.² Students may need to obtain these through the interlibrary loan service of a public library, or through the GCS 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 Michael 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 part of the book. This

¹ *Modern* means within the last 25 years.

² *Major* means at least 15 pages per biblical chapter; a one-volume commentary covering the entire New Testament will not have enough detail. See the list of approved commentaries at <https://sites.google.com/site/gcsnt502/paul>.

paper is due at the end of the 8th week.

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 |

* Some students will complete the course in less time, and some will take more.

Weekly Topics and Assignments

| | Date | Lecture topics | Reading assignments | Assignments |
|---|---------|--|--|-------------|
| 1 | May 14 | 1a: Introduction to the course 1b: Paul's three backgrounds 1c: Philemon as example of pastoral tact | Bird chapter 1 Capes chaps 1-3 | forum |
| 2 | May 21 | 2a: The date and location of Galatians 2b: Overview of Galatians 1-2 2c: Galatians 3-6 | Galatians Bird chapter 2 Capes, chap. 4 | forum |
| 3 | May 29 | 3a: Background of the Thessalonian letters 3b: 1 Thessalonians 3c: 2 Thessalonians | 1 & 2 Thess. Bird chapter 3 Capes, chap. 5 | quiz |
| 4 | June 4 | 4a: Background of 1 Corinthians 4b: Survey of 1 Corinthians 1-7 4c: 1 Corinthians 8-16 | 1 Corinthians Bird chapter 4 Capes, chap. 6 | forum |
| 5 | June 11 | 5a: Background of 2 Corinthians 5b: Survey of 2 Corinthians 1-7 5c: Survey of 2 Corinthians 8-13: Paul | 2 Corinthians Bird chapter 5 Capes, chap. 10 | - |

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| | | confronts challenges to his authority. | | |
| The first paper is due by the end of Sunday. | | | | |
| 6 | June 18 | 6a: Introduction to Romans 6b: Survey of Romans 1-4 6c: Romans 5-8 | Romans 1-8 Bird chapter 6 Capes, chap. 7 | forum |
| 7 | June 25 | 7a: Survey of Romans 9-11: How Israel fits into God's plan 7b: Survey of Romans 12-16: Christian behavior | Romans 9-16 Bird chapter 7 Capes, chap. 11 | quiz |
| 8 | July 2 | 8a: Background of Philippians 8b: Survey of Philippians 8c: Paul's Christology | Philippians Bird chapter 8 Capes, chap. 8 | - |
| The reaction paper is due by the end of Sunday. | | | | |
| 9 | July 9 | 9a: The question of pseudepigraphy 9b: Colossians 9c: Ephesians: the cosmic victory of Christ. | Col. & Eph. Bird chapter 9 Capes, chap. 12 | forum |
| 10 | July 16 | 10a: Introduction to the Pastoral Epistles 10b: 1 Timothy 10c: Titus 10d: 2 Timothy | 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus. Bird chapters 10-11 Capes, chap. 9 | quiz |
| The final paper is due in 2 weeks – by the end of Sunday, August 5. | | | | |