Wayland Baptist University

School of Religion and Philosophy

Summer 2017 Term

Mission Statement: WBU exists to educate students in an academically challenging, learning focused, and distinctively Christian environment for professional success and service to God and humankind.

RLGN 4322 – VC01 – Life and Letters of Paul

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Catalogue Description: Life and times of the apostle Paul with an interpretation of his letters. Prerequisites: RLGN 1301 and 1302

Required Textbooks:

David Capes, Rodney Reeves, and E. Randolph Richards, *Rediscovering Paul: an Introduction to His World, Letters, and Theology* IVP Academic

James D.G. Dunn, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to St. Paul* Cambridge University Press

N.T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* Fortress Press

A Bible in a good modern translation (not a paraphrase!), e.g. ESV, NAS, RSV, NRSV

Course Outcome Competencies:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the outline (outward course) of Paul’s life as revealed in the letters of Paul and the book of Acts.
2. Demonstrate understanding of the main teachings of Paul in his letters in light of their original context, and how to apply those teachings to the lives of believers and unbelievers living in the 21st century.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of some of the textual and interpretive problems involved in understanding Paul’s life and letters.

Disability Statement: In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, it is the policy of WBU that no otherwise qualified person with a disability be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational program or activity in the university. The Coordinator of Counseling Services serves as the coordinator of students with a disability and should be contacted concerning accommodation requests at (806) 291-3765. Documentation of a disability must accompany any request for accommodation.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: Writing is a collaborative art. Working out ideas for your paper with an instructor, writing tutor, classmate, family member, or friend is encouraged not only for this class, but also for other classes that involve writing. Discussion and collaborative brainstorming are good. However, passing off another’s writing or ideas as your own is plagiarism. It is unethical, it constitutes academic dishonesty (cheating), and it is sufficient grounds both for the failure of a course and suspension from the university.

Course Requirements and Format:

1. Careful reading of all assigned texts and posted notes before participation in the weekly discussion boards each week. The quality of one’s participation in the discussion boards is a major factor in enhancing the learning of your peers and the calculation of your course grade.
2. Consistent participation in the weekly discussion boards. Notes for the week’s topic will be posted on Blackboard on Mondays of each week. At approximately the same time 2-3 questions will be posted in the discussion board area of Blackboard. At least one question will be based on the posted notes and the other on the assigned readings. Each student is expected to post a response of 200-225 words to each question every week. Then, to provide class interaction, each student will respond to the initial responses of at least two classmates. These responses should be approximately 100-125 words in length. All answers and responses should be posted by 8:00 a.m. (CDT) each Saturday.
3. Students are reminded that interactions in print often lose the nuance and tone that would be evident in a classroom or face to face conversation.
4. Preparation of a college level research paper on one of Paul’s 12 basic theological convictions. This paper should be divided equally between an analysis of Paul’s teaching on the theme and an exegesis of the key texts in Paul’s letters which address the theme. Papers should be a minimum of 20 pages (double spaced) and the bibliography should contain a minimum of 15 entries consisting of relevant books and peer-reviewed journal articles. Students are urged to utilize the resources of Wayland’s library and staff in gathering their materials. The paper should conform to the Turabian style guide. Students will also prepare a synopsis of the paper to be shared with their classmates when the completed paper is submitted to the instructor. The synopsis should not be longer than three pages (double-spaced). The list of Paul’s theological convictions is included at the end of this syllabus. Two grades will be given for this paper: one for the theological analysis and one for the exegesis. Students should notify the instructor as to which theological conviction they have chosen by June 17. In case two students want the same topic, the first one to notify the instructor will be given the topic.

Grade Calculation (using the WBU grade scale):

1. Weekly responses to questions posted on the discussion boards 25%
2. Interaction with the responses posted by classmates 25%
3. Research paper – theological analysis 25%
4. Research paper – exegesis 25%

Students shall have protection through orderly procedure against prejudices or capricious academic evaluation. A student who believes that he or she has not been held to realistic academic standards, just evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading may appeal the final grade given in the course by using the student grade appeal process described in the academic catalogue. Appeals may not be made for advanced placement examinations or course bypass examinations. Appeals are limited to the final course grade, which may be upheld, raised, or lowered at any stage of the appeal process. Any recommendation to lower a course grade must be submitted through the Executive Vice-President/Provost to the Faculty Assembly Grade Appeals Committee for review and approval. The committee may instruct that the course grade be upheld, raised, or lowered to a more proper evaluation.

Course Schedule (subject to amendment at the instructor’s discretion)

Week Starting:

May 28 Paul and His World

 Read: Capes, pp. 23-82; Dunn, pp. 1-13; Wright, pp. 3-20

June 4 Life of Paul; Paul in Acts

 Read: Capes, pp. 83-101, 257-72; Dunn, pp. 19-46

June 11 Galatians

 Read: Capes, pp. 103-23; Dunn, pp. 64-73, 159-71; Wright, pp. 21-39

June 18 The Thessalonian Letters

 Read: Capes, pp. 124-40; Dunn, pp. 51-62; Wright, pp. 40-58

June 25 Romans, part 1

 Read: Capes, pp. 170-99; Dunn, pp. 91-104, 173-83

July 2 Romans, part 2

 Read: Capes, pp. 266-72; Wright, pp. 59-79

July 9 First Corinthians

 Read: Capes, pp. 141-69; Wright, pp. 83-107

July 16 Second Corinthians

 Read: Dunn, pp. 74-90, 212-22

July 23 Ephesians and Colossians

 Read: Capes, pp. 215-34; Dunn, pp. 116-40; Wright, pp. 108-29

July 30 Philippians Research Papers Due!! Synopses to be E-mailed to Peers

 Read: Capes, pp. 201-15; Dunn, pp. 105-15, 185-98; Wright, pp. 130-53

Aug 6 The Pastoral Letters

 Capes, pp. 236-55, 295-308; Dunn, pp. 141-54, 199-211

Twelve Basic Theological Convictions Held by Paul

1. The Covenant God of Israel: the one true God who created the world chose and entered into covenant with Israel. Israel was to be the people of God and the vehicle of blessing among the Gentiles. This God is an impartial judge who expects obedience from all people.
2. The Power of Sin and the Powerlessness of the Law: The fundamental problem is not sins, but sin. Sin is a kind of power at work within and on humanity. It is manifested in sins, i.e. inappropriate ways of relating to God and other humans. Being under the power of sin is like an addiction; people are enslaved to sin. Humanity needs a solution for both sin and sins: liberation from sin and forgiveness of sins that will restore appropriate relationships. The Law, despite its positive values, cannot deliver from sin or effect righteousness and life.
3. The Righteousness of God: Faithfulness to Israel and Mercy to Gentiles: the “righteousness of God” is probably best understood as God’s covenant faithfulness and saving power. For Paul, God demonstrates faithfulness in the face of human faithlessness, especially in sending the Son to die for humanity’s sins and to liberate both Jew and Gentile from sin. In doing so, God keeps the promise made to Abraham to bless all nations.
4. The Revelatory, Representative, and Reconciling Crucifixion of Jesus the Messiah: Jesus’ death reveals the faithfulness, love, and paradoxically, the power of God. As the Messiah, Jesus dies as the faithful, obedient representative of the covenant people and as the representative of all human beings. His death is the quintessential covenantal Jewish/human act of faith toward God and love toward others. This death brings about human reconciliation with God: forgiveness and redemption.
5. The Lordship of Jesus: Paul affirms both the preexistence and divine status of Jesus. When speaking of Jesus as Lord, Paul thinks of the exalted status given Jesus as consequence of His obedient, faithful human death. God’s resurrection/exaltation vindicates Jesus as Messiah and Lord of all. If Jesus is Lord, then Caesar and any other Greco-Roman deity cannot be Lord. As Lord, Jesus shares in the honor otherwise given only to God, and is to be not only confessed but obeyed.
6. The Climax of the Covenant and Overlap of the Ages: In Christ, all of God’s promises are fulfilled. Christ becomes the lens for reading the OT, and is the goal/focus of the Law, Prophets, and Writings. His coming and death marks the start of the new age/new creation Judaism anticipated, even as the present age continues. This is an “in-between time” when believers look to the cross/resurrection of the past and the Parousia of Christ/resurrection of believers in the future.
7. Justification by Grace through Faith: Justification is part of the same word family as “righteousness”. The word’s meaning comes from three different areas: God’s character and activity, the covenant, and the law court (the idea of a verdict of acquittal). Justification is the establishment/restoration of right covenantal relations with God, including fidelity to God and love for neighbor, with the certain hope of acquittal on the day of judgment. Faith is not a one-time response to the gospel but an on-going covenantal relationship with God.
8. The Trinitarian Experience of God: Believers know and are known by God the Father, who has adopted them. They live “in” the crucified/exalted Christ who also lives in them. They are empowered to live in Christ, as God’s children, by the Spirit.
9. Cruciformity, or the Law of Christ: The death of Jesus is a paradigm for believers. The essence of believing existence is conformity to the crucified Christ. While cruciformity may involve suffering, it is more comprehensive. Paul calls it the “law of Christ”, a narrative pattern of faith working through love. This is the pattern of life for all believers: faith toward God, love towards others. Faith oriented toward the future is hope, and so Paul summarizes believing existence as one of faith, hope, and love.
10. The Holy Spirit as Promise Fulfilled and Hope Guaranteed: The outpouring of the Spirit promised by the prophets for the last days, an event that would renew Israel and bring the nations to Zion, has happened. Paul sees the Gentile experience of the Spirit ass proof that the new age has begun, and as a promise that it will be consummated in the near future.
11. The Church as Alternative Community: The church is a covenant community of Jews and Gentiles, set apart and “holy”, or distinct from its host culture. It exists in continuity with Israel and in contrast to the Roman Empire and pagan social and religious sub-cultures. Within the church there is to be an ethos of harmony, humility, and love toward believers, outsiders, and enemies.
12. The Parousia, Resurrection, and Final Triumph of God: As an apocalyptic Jew/Pharisee, Paul saw in Christ’s resurrection the beginning of the “age to come”, the invasion of the future into the present. Christ is humanity’s representative both in death and in resurrection; He is the guarantee of God’s final defeat of sin and death and the restoration of the cosmos.

---- Adapted from Michael Gorman