

**Contents**[Course Description and Objectives](#)[Course Format](#)[Textbooks](#)[Course Requirements and Evaluation](#)[Course Outline](#)[Pedagogical Reflections](#)

Paul of Tarsus

Instructor

Michel Desjardins
 Department of Religion and Culture
 Wilfrid Laurier University
 Waterloo, Ontario N2L 5T8
mdesjard@wlu.ca

Institution

Wilfrid Laurier University
 Provincial University; enrolment: 6000 undergraduates, 1000 graduates

Course Level and Type

Year 3; lecture

Hours of Instruction

36 hours; 3 hours per week over a 12 week term

Enrolment and Last Year Taught

35 students; 1998

Course Description and Objectives

An examination of Paul's life and teachings as seen in the early Christian literature likely written by him (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon), about him (Acts, Acts of Paul and Thecla), and in his name (Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Prayer of the Apostle Paul, Apocalypse of Paul). I would hope that you emerge from the course conversant with the early Christian literature connected to Paul, familiar with issues central to Paul and to many Christians since his day, and eager to continue exploring the world of Christian origins.

Course Format

The course will focus on the relevant texts in combination with their key themes. Tuesdays we will look closely at the texts, and much of this will be in lecture format; Thursdays we will look at themes which range more broadly throughout the Pauline literature, and much of this will be interactive, including small-group discussions and the viewing of movie extracts. I expect you to come to each class having read the assigned readings.

Textbooks

A modern translation of the Bible (the WLU bookstore has copies of the New Revised Standard Version)

C. J. Roetzel, The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context (available at the WLU bookstore and on 3-hr/overnight reserve at the library)

D. R. MacDonald, The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon (available at the WLU

Course Requirements and Evaluation

1. A quiz, written in class January 29, worth 20% of your final grade

* Explanation: The quiz will be based exclusively on C. Roetzel's *The Letters of Paul*. This book offers a fine introduction to Paul, and once you have worked through it carefully you will likely benefit more from the rest of the course. In week 2, I will provide you with more specific information on how to prepare effectively for this quiz.

2. An essay, ca. 1500 words, due either February 24 or March 10, worth 30% of your final grade

* Explanation: I am offering you the choice between two essays, allowing you to deepen your knowledge in one area. The first essay, due February 24, is an exploration of the "Paul" who emerges from his seven undisputed letters (Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Philemon, 1 Thessalonians): if you had only these sources with which to draw a portrait of Paul, the man and the thinker, what would that portrait resemble? The second essay, due March 10, is a comparison of the "Pastoral" Paul (as seen in 1-2 Timothy and Titus) and the one that emerges from the undisputed letters (Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Philemon, 1 Thessalonians). For both essays I expect you to focus exclusively on the primary sources (build your picture from the biblical texts, not from scholars' points of view). I will provide you with more specific essay-writing information in the weeks to come.

3. A book review, ca. 1300 words, due March 31, worth 20% of your final grade

* Explanation: I expect you to review D. R. MacDonald's *The Legend and the Apostle*.

This book situates the Acts of Paul and Thecla in an early Christian context and allows you to experience some scholarly debates. I will provide you with more review-writing information as the time approaches. What might help you now is to anticipate spending roughly two thirds of the review summarizing the author's position (what does he say? how does he say it? why might he be saying it?), offering your own opinions in the remaining one third (keeping this section distinct).

4. A final examination, written during the examination schedule, worth 30% of your final grade

* Explanation: The university requires final examinations. They can be good learning experiences. We will discuss this one together as the time approaches. Count on it primarily reflecting class material and discussion.

We will have the help of a Teaching Assistant in this course: Jason MacDonald. He will hold weekly office hours (to be determined; you will receive written notification), and will be responsible for grading your quiz and book review (I will assess your essay and the final examination). Jason (email: macd1140@mach1.wlu.ca) is an M.A. student in our department and works in the field of Christian origins.

Course Outline

1. **January 6** Introduction to the Course and to the Academic Study of Paul

January 8 Introduction

2. **January 13** Social Settings of the Pauline Communities

* READING: C. Osiek, "Paul and the People of his World" (handout)

January 15 Theme: Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Eucharist)

* READINGS: Galatians 3:26-29; 1 Corinthians 10:14-22; 11:17-34; 12:12-13; Colossians 2:9-15; 3:9-11; Romans 6:1-10

3. **January 20** 1 and 2 Thessalonians

* READING: 1 Thessalonians

January 22 Theme: Apocalypticism

* READINGS: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 2

* Video clip of Jack van Impe (TV)

* Audio: Leonard Cohen's "The Future"

4. **January 27** 1 and 2 Corinthians

* READING: 2 Corinthians

January 29 In-class quiz today

5. **February 3** Galatians and Romans

* READING: Galatians

February 5 Theme: Salvation through Faith Alone

* READING: Romans 1-4

* Video clips from "Tender Mercies" and "Dirty Harry"

6. **February 10** Philippians and Philemon

* READING: Philemon

February 12 Theme: Jews and Gentiles

* READINGS: Romans 1-3; 9-11; Philippians 3:2-6; Ephesians 1:3-3:21; Acts 28:23-31

* Video clips from "Star Trek 6," "The Return of the Jedi," and Star Trek: The Next Generation's "The Chase"

[February 17 and 19: READING WEEK]

7. **February 24** Ephesians and Colossians

* READING: Colossians

* Essay is due today (if you've chosen this assignment)

February 26 Theme: Image of Christ

* READINGS: 1 Corinthians 15; Colossians 1:1-2:23; Philippians 2:5-11; Titus 2:11-14

* Video clips from "High Plains Drifter" and "ET: The Extra Terrestrial"

8. **March 3** 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus

* READING: 2 Timothy

March 5 Theme: Women

* READINGS: Galatians 3:25-28; 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:34-35; Colossians 3:18-19; Ephesians 5:21-33; 1 Timothy 2:9-15

9. **March 10** Acts

* READING: Acts 13-28

* Essay is due today (if you've chosen this assignment)

March 12 Theme: Suffering

* READINGS: Romans 5:1-8; 8:1-30; 12:4-21

10. **March 17** Acts of Paul and Thecla

* READING: Acts of Paul and Thecla (handout)

March 19 Theme: Sex and Celibacy

* READING: 1 Corinthians 7

11. **March 24** Prayer of the Apostle Paul and Apocalypse of Paul

* READINGS: Prayer of the Apostle Paul; Apocalypse of Paul (handout)

March 26 Theme: Conversion and Mysticism

* READINGS: Acts 9:1-9; 22:4-16; 26:9-19; Galatians 1:11-17; 1 Timothy 1:12-16; 2 Corinthians 12:1-4; Colossians 1:27-28

12. **March 31** Course Review

* Book review is due today

April 2 Review and Exam Preparation

Pedagogical Reflections

I have liked the weekly mix of (a) close attention to primary texts, (b) thematic focus which involves ranging widely in the Pauline material and finding modern parallels. Students have found that the mix keeps them awake (no mean feat in Winter term; they particularly like the modern video connections, and tell me that in this regard they now see "Paul" everywhere in their lives--eegads). They have also been appreciative of the variety of assignments.

It's a challenge teaching a course on Paul: everyone loves Jesus, half the class typically will resent Paul before they enter the course--and by the time my course (where anything goes as long as one can find strong textual support) is over, many of those who found Paul appealing no longer think so, while some who found him troublesome are attracted ... it's like having a class that collectively is in a perpetual state of PMS.

Select a location 

http://www.wlu.ca/~wwwaar/syllabi/paul_tarsus-desjardins.html

Latest update: August 02, 2002

Number of accesses since March 1, 1998: