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# REL. 252: The Epistles of Paul

## AIM OF THE COURSE

The goal of this course is to understand the writings of Christianity's greatest missionary, the apostle Paul, whose letters ("epistles") are the earliest surviving Christian documents. While our primary concern will be to understand Paul's letters in terms of their original historical and cultural context, some attention will also be given to their possible meaning and relevance for contemporary Christians. Among the more complicated issues we will need to consider are Paul's ideas about the role of women in the churches, homosexuality, and the status of non-Christian Jews (Paul was himself a Jewish convert to Christianity).

## EDUCATIONAL PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES

1. Students will acquire, integrate, and apply knowledge relating to the New Testament and the origins of Christianity.
2. Students will read and analyze challenging texts, speak clearly and listen actively as we discuss those texts, and write essays explaining their understanding and interpretation of those texts.
3. Students will connect with diverse ideas and with people whose experiences differ from their own as we explore how first century C.E. Jewish and Roman beliefs and practices provided the context for Paul's life and teachings.
4. Students will respect the ways spiritual well-being may contribute to a balanced life by learning about the life and teachings of Paul, which have been a source of inspiration for millions of people for two millennia. *This course supports the Educational Priorities and Outcomes of Cornell College with emphases on knowledge, communication, intercultural literacy, and well-being.*

## PREREQUISITE

There is no prerequisite for this course.

## CLASS MEETING TIMES

Class meetings will be held on Monday through Friday, from 12:15 to 3:00 PM.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

1. C. Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context*, 5th ed.
2. K. Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*.
3. V. Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul: Selected Issues*, 3rd ed.
4. A Bible (Preferred translation: New Revised Standard Version).

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

*1. Class Participation (20% of final grade).* There are two components to this requirement, each constituting approximately 10% of your final grade.

- Your oral contributions to our class discussions. Formal focus passages will be provided for each class session. *Work on these passages carefully and thoroughly*, as you prepare for class each day—this will facilitate informed participation in class discussion.
- Additionally, regular attendance at class meetings is required. *More than one absence from class will progressively lower this portion of your grade.*

2. *Midterm Exam (25%)*, which will take place on the second Thursday of the term. The exam will contain short answer and short essay questions.

3. *A 4-5 page essay (25%)*, due on the third Thursday of the term. *Late essays will not be accepted without prior consent of the professor.*

4. *Final Exam (30%)*, which will take place on the fourth Wednesday of the term. The exam will contain short answer, short essay, and longer essay questions.

## STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Students who need accommodations for learning disabilities must provide documentation from a professional qualified to diagnose learning disabilities. For more information see [cornellcollege.edu/disabilities/documentation/index.shtml](http://cornellcollege.edu/disabilities/documentation/index.shtml). Students requesting services may schedule a meeting with the [disabilities services coordinator](#) as early as possible to discuss their needs and develop an individualized accommodation plan. Ideally, this meeting would take place well before the start of classes. At the beginning of each course, the student must notify the instructor within the first three days of the term of any accommodations needed for the duration of the course.

## ACADEMIC HONESTY

Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgment of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in The Catalogue, under the heading “Academic Honesty.”

## COURSE CALENDAR

*Note: The reading assignments listed in this course calendar are to be completed PRIOR to that day's meeting of the class.*

### WEEK 1

**Monday:** Getting oriented.

**Tuesday:** Introduction to the Life and Thought of Paul.

(a) Roetzel, *Letters of Paul*, Introduction and chap. 1.

(b) Acts 9:1-30; 13:1-12; 15:1-41; 21:27-36; 22:30-23:11; 25:1-12; 27:1-28:31.

## *The Undisputed Letters of Paul*

**Wednesday:** The Letter to Philemon and the First Letter to the Thessalonians.

- (a) Roetzel, chaps. 2-3, and pp. 85-90, 125-126 of chap. 4.
- (b) Philemon.
- (c) 1 Thessalonians.

**Thursday:** The Letters to the Galatians and Philippians.

- (a) Roetzel, pp. 105-110, 122-125.
- (b) Galatians.
- (c) Philippians.

**Friday:** The First Letter to the Corinthians.

- (a) Roetzel, pp. 90-99 (also the outline on p. 103).
- (b) 1 Corinthians.

## WEEK 2

**Monday:** The Second Letter to the Corinthians.

- (a) Roetzel, pp. 99-105.
- (b) 2 Corinthians.

**Tuesday:** The Letter to the Romans.

- (a) Roetzel, pp. 110-122.
- (b) Romans 1-8.

**Wednesday:** The Letter to the Romans (continued).

- (a) Romans 9-16.
- (b) [*Optional:* Roetzel, chap. 5.]

**Thursday:** MIDTERM EXAM.

### *The Disputed Letters*

**Friday:** The Letters to the Colossians and Ephesians, and the Second Letter to the Thessalonians.

- (a) Roetzel, pp. 141-159.
- (b) Colossians.
- (c) Ephesians.
- (d) 2 Thessalonians.

## WEEK 3

**Monday:** The Two Letters to Timothy, and the Letter to Titus.

- (a) Roetzel, pp. 159-166.
- (b) 1 Timothy.
- (c) 2 Timothy.
- (d) Titus.

### *Issues of Paul in Contemporary Scholarship*

**Tuesday:** Where Things Stand Between Jews and Gentiles.

- (a) Roetzel, pp. 179-186.
- (b) Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, pp. 1-40, 125-133.

**Wednesday:** On Weakness, Love, and Glossolalia.  
Stendahl, pp. 40-67, 109-124.

**Thursday:** ESSAY DUE, AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS.

In-class viewing of the opening scenes of the film, *Christianity: The First Thousand Years* (vol. 1 of *Christianity: The First Two Thousand Years*).

**Friday:** On Marriage, Divorce, and Homosexuality.

Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul*, chaps. 1-3 (skip the “For Further Reading” sections at the end of each chapter).

#### **WEEK 4**

**Monday:** Women in the Church; the Church in the World.

(a) Roetzel, pp. 186-194.

(b) Furnish, chaps. 4-5.

**Tuesday:** Review session (optional).

**Wednesday:** FINAL EXAM.

#### **A LIST OF REFERENCE RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN THE LIBRARY**

*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (Ref 220.3 An21)  
*Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Ref 220.3 Ee72)  
*Harper's Bible Dictionary* (Ref 220.3 H231)  
*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Ref 220.3 In8)  
*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 5 vols. (Ref 220.3 In83)  
*Mercer Dictionary of the Bible* (Ref 220.3 M534)  
*Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Ref 220.3 Ox2)  
*New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 3rd ed. (Ref 220.5204320 N42h)  
*The New Revised Standard Version Concordance* (Ref 220.520433 K824n)  
*Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Ref 220.7 Ee72 2003)  
*Harper's Bible Commentary* (Ref 220.7 H234)  
*Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* (Ref 220.7 In84)  
*New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Ref 220.7 N42)  
*The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Ref 220.7 Ox2b)  
*The Women's Bible Commentary* (Ref 220.7082 W842)  
*New Interpreter's Bible*, 12 vols. (Ref 220.77 N42)  
*Oxford Bible Atlas* (Ref 220.9 M451o)  
*Women in Scripture* (Ref 220.92 W842m)

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