



# The Letters of Paul in Cultural Context

Religion 301a, Haverford College

Prof. Anne McGuire, Fall 2008



*This Page is Under Construction*

**This is the entry page for Relg. 301a, The Letters of Paul in Cultural Context. The full course syllabus for this page can be found through Blackboard or within the Tri-College network at <http://www.haverford.edu:8080/relg/relg301F08/F08Paul.htm>.**

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This seminar will focus on a critical reading of the Letters of Paul and his interpreters in cultural context. Attention will be given to close reading of the Pauline letters and recent scholarly work on the social worlds and imperial context of the Pauline communities.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

**A. Weekly postings on the course's Discussion Board at the Blackboard site (30%) and active participation in class discussion.** This is a seminar course. All students are expected to come prepared to participate actively in discussion, to make presentations in class, and to respond actively to others' presentations and comments.

**B. Three 5-Page Papers with oral presentations (40%):** Each of these papers should offer a more sustained analysis of some aspects of the primary and/or secondary texts assigned for class, together with an interpretive argument about their significance. At least one of these must have a primary focus on analysis and critique of the secondary literature assigned for class; at least one must focus on analysis and interpretation of the letter assigned.

- A draft of these papers should be prepared by the Tuesday evening before class and made available through Blackboard or email.
- For class, each student should prepare a brief oral presentation of the major points of the paper, together with a selection of textual passages from both primary and secondary sources, and questions for further discussion.
- In light of class discussion, these papers should be revised and turned in by the next class. Dates for

these papers will be assigned by the second meeting of the seminar.

### C. A Research Paper of 15-18 pages (30%).

- **Intermediate Due Dates**
  - **Wednesday, October 29** - Hand in a brief statement of your topic
  - **Monday, November 24:** Annotated bibliography of 8-10 articles and books on your topic + Outline
  - Optional: If you want feedback on a first draft, please hand it in by F, December 3
  - Some general guidelines from a Harvard web site: [Guidelines on Writing the Research Paper](#)

### REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

- Wayne A. Meeks, ed. *The Writings of St. Paul*, 2nd edition
- Helmut Koester, *Paul And His World: Interpreting the New Testament in Its Context*
- Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 2nd edition
- Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body*
- Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew Paul & the Politics of Identity*
- Richard Horsley, ed. *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*
- *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, NRSV*
- *Links to Numerous Web Resources* are included in the syllabus below. Among the most useful web sites on the Letters of Paul, see especially:
  - [New Testament Gateway](#), by Dr. Mark Goodacre, University of Birmingham, England
  - [Pauline Studies Resources](#), from a course on The Writings of St. Paul by Dr. Sheila McGinn, John Carroll University
  - [Paul's Mission and Letters:](#) Wayne Meeks and Michael White, *From Jesus to Christ* Web Site
    - [Paul's Aegean Mission: A Map](#)
    - [Paul's Congregations](#)
  - [Footsteps of Paul: A Virtual Tour of the Journeys of Paul](#) - Recommended for browsing
- Additional readings may be handed out in class or will be available online or on Reserve in Magill Library



## SYLLABUS OF READINGS

### **9/3 Approaching the Social and Cultural Contexts of Paul: The Hellenistic Jewish and Roman Worlds of the Early Church and the American Church**

- 1 Thessalonians (Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians), with introduction and notes in *The Writings of St. Paul*
- [Pauline Chronology](#): Important Dates and Events of Paul's Career

### **9/10 Paul's Earliest Letter, 1 Thessalonians; Eschatology and Apocalypse in 1 and 2 Thessalonians**

- 1 Thessalonians (Meeks, *Writings of St. Paul*, 3-10); [An Outline of 1 Thessalonians](#)
- 2 Thessalonians (Meeks, 101-106); [An Outline of 2 Thessalonians](#)
  - See also 1 Cor. 7:25-40, 15:12-28 (Meeks, 32-34, 45)

- Introduction, The Writings of St. Paul, xiii-xxviii

**Secondary sources:** Read all of these secondary sources, but choose one author to focus on and prepare to discuss the methods and theoretical approaches employed by the author

- A. Smith, "Unmaking the Powers," in Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, 47-66
- H. Koester, *Paul and His World*, 15-23; 24-32; 38-54
- Daniel Boyarin, "Introduction: Wrestling with Paul," *A Radical Jew*, 1-12; 13-56
- Recommended for further reading: [James D. Hester, "Apocalyptic Discourse in 1 Thessalonians"](#)
- Begin to familiarize yourself with the following Web Sites and note which ones you'll want to return to later in the semester
- [Paul's Mission and Letters:](#) Wayne Meeks and Michael White, *From Jesus to Christ* Web Site
  - [Paul's Aegean Mission: A Map](#)
  - [Paul's Congregations](#)
- [Footsteps of Paul: A Virtual Tour of the Journeys of Paul](#) - Recommended for browsing
- [New Testament Gateway: Paul](#)

## 9/17 Controversy in Galatia; Contemporary Scholarship on Paul and his Letters

- Galatians 1-2; esp. 1:11-2:10 (Meeks, Writings of St. Paul); Read the same passage and notes in the NOAB
  - [An Outline of Galatians](#) (compare with outlines in Meeks and Roetzel handout,)
- **Secondary sources:** Read all of these secondary sources, but choose one author to focus on and prepare to discuss the methods and theoretical approaches employed by the author
- D. Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 39-56; Recommended: 180-200 (to be read later in section on 1 Cor)
- R. Horsley, "Introduction," *Paul and the Imperial Roman Order*, 1-23
- W. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 1-50; 140-163 (with focus on section about Baptism)
- ["The Paul Page: Dedicated to the 'New Perspective' on Paul"](#) by Mark M. Mattison
- [The Diversity of Early Christianity](#), *From Jesus to Christ* web site
- Recommended [if you have time]: [Paul Koptak, "Rhetorical Identification in Paul's Autobiographical Narrative,"](#) *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 40 (1990) 97 - 113.

## 9/24 "Neither Jew nor Greek": The Gospel, Torah, Spirit, and Ethics in Galatians; The Allegory of Hagar and Sarah

## 10/1 Philippians and Philemon; Further Discussion of Galatians

## 10/8 The Cultural Context of the Corinthian Correspondence: The "New Life" in the Corinthian Church

## 10/22 Paul's View of the Body: Women, Men, and the Body of Christ

## 10/29 The New Covenant of the Spirit in 2 Corinthians; "Super Apostles" and Boasting in Christ

## 11/5 Romans 1-8: The Power of Sin and Grace

**11/12 God's Faithfulness to Promise: Israel and the Church**

**11/19 Christ and the Powers of the Cosmos: Colossians and Ephesians**

**No Class 11/26 - Attending Annual Meeting of Society of Biblical Literature**

**12/1 The Pastoral Letters and Acts of the Apostles: The Paul of the New Testament Canon**

**12/8 The Christian Proteus: Champions and Opponents of Paul in the Early Church**



### **Reserve Books**

Alfred Marshall, ed. *The RSV Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*. BS 1965 1970.

Troels Engberg-Pedersen, ed. *Paul in His Hellenistic Context*.

L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough, eds. *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks*.

Richard Horsley, ed. *Paul and Politics : Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation : Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl* BS2655.P64 H67 2000

Dale Martin. *Salvation as Slavery. The Metaphor of Slavery in the Letters of Paul*. B52665 .555 M37 1990.

Alan Segal, *Paul the Convert*. BS2655 .J4 544 1990.

E.P. Sanders. *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. Canaday BM535 .S24 1977.

Peter J. Tomsen. *Paul and the Jewish Law*. B52655 .L35 T66 1990.

Antoinette C. Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric*. 1990. BS 2655 .W5 1990

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