



BI524 Epistles of Paul Syllabus

Instructor: Michael Morrison

Course description

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. **Prerequisite: BI501.**

To do well in this course, you need to spend approximately 12 hours each week. For details on student learning outcomes, see Appendix B.

Required textbooks

See Appendix C for a way that you can rent these books.

Capes, David B., Rodney Reeves, and E. Randolph Richards. *Rediscovering Paul: An Introduction to His World, Letters and Theology*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017. 414 pages. ISBN [0830851917](#). About \$30 new; less for used. A good overview of the letters. Kindle OK.

Thiselton, Anthony C. *The Living Paul: An Introduction to the Apostle's Life and Thought*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009. 190 pages. ISBN: [0830838813](#). Price for a new book: \$14; used, \$11. Kindle OK.

You might find lower prices on these books by using [bookfinder.com](#).

Recommended resources

Gorman, Michael J. *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016.

Hawthorne, Gerald F., Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993. An old but useful reference work; a new edition is in the works but may take years.

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 the GCI website. If you want a printed copy, see Amazon ISBN [978-1502719072](https://www.amazon.com/dp/978-1502719072).

Requirements and assignments

1. **Lectures.** Lectures will be posted each Monday for the first ten weeks. See the *Student Handbook* for study suggestions. You should look up scripture references in the lectures. The lectures average about 40 pages each week (more than for most GCS courses), and we expect that you will spend about 4 hours each week on them. 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.
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 600 pages. We estimate that the average student will read these books in about 40 hours, or about 4 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. You may use your books and notes when you take the quizzes, and you may take them a second time if you want a higher grade.

5. **One exegetical paper:** Write a 10-page paper on a passage in one of Paul’s letters. Choose one of four passages – 1 Cor. 2:1-12; Eph. 4:7-16; Phil. 3:17–4:1; or 1 Thess. 2:1-8. 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 modern scholarly books, including at least two modern, major commentaries.¹ This can be done online. If you want to use printed books, you may need to obtain some 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 Anthony Thiselton. Identify two sections you found helpful, and explain how they are helpful. Identify one passage in the book that you found confusing, unpersuasive, or wrong, and support your view. This paper is due at the end of the 8th week.

¹ *Modern* means within the last 25 years. *Major* means at least 15 pages per biblical chapter; a commentary that covers the entire New Testament in one volume will not have enough detail. See <https://sites.google.com/view/biblestudyresources/paul>.

Assignments, estimated hours, and grade weighting

Assignment	Hours *	Percentage of grade
Reading lectures and website documents	40	
Reading discussions and making responses	5	10
Taking the quizzes	3	5
Reading the textbooks	40	
Writing exegetical papers	50	70
Writing the book review	8	15
Total – about 12 hours each week	146	100

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

Weekly topics and assignments

week	Lecture topics	Reading assignments ²	pages	Assignments
1	1a: Introduction to the course 1b: Paul's three backgrounds 1c: Philemon as example of pastoral tact 1d: Introduction to Paul's theology	Philemon	1	forum
		Thiselton chapters 1-2	19	
		CRR chapter 1	44	
2	2a: The date and location of Galatians 2b: Overview of Galatians 1-2	Galatians	6	forum
		Thiselton chapters 3-4	18	
		CRR chapter 4	32	

² AT = Anthony Thiselton, *The Living Paul*. CRR = Capes, Richards and Randolph, *Rediscovering Paul*, 2nd ed. Page count for biblical books is from the NET Bible, 2nd ed., Times Roman 14, line spacing 1.1, page margins 1 inch.

	2c: Galatians 3-6 2d: God and Scripture			
3	3a: Background of the Thessalonian letters 3b: 1 Thessalonians 3c: 2 Thessalonians 3d: Eschatology	1 & 2 Thessalonians	7	quiz
		Thiselton chapters 5-7	29	
		CRR chapter 5	22	
4	4a: Background of 1 Cor. 4b: Survey of 1 Cor. 1-7 4c: 1 Corinthians 8-16 4d: Humanity and sin	1 Corinthians	19	forum
		CRR chapter 6	42	
5	5a: Background of 2 Cor. 5b: 2 Corinthians 1-7 5c: 2 Cor. 8-13: Paul defends his authority 5d: The Law and covenants	2 Corinthians	13	paper
		Thiselton chapters 8-9	15	
		CRR chapter 2	28	
The first paper is due by the end of Sunday.				
6	6a: Introduction to Romans 6b: Romans 1-4 6c: Romans 5-8 6d: Salvation in Christ	Romans 1-8	11	forum
		Thiselton chaps. 10-11	19	
		CRR chapter 7	42	
7	7a: Romans 9-11: How Israel fits into God's plan 7b: Romans 12-16: Behavior 7c: The church	Romans 9-16	10	quiz
		Thiselton chaps. 12-13	16	
		CRR chapter 3	36	
8	8a: Background of Philippians 8b: Survey of Philippians 8c: Paul's Christology	Philippians	6	paper
		Thiselton chaps. 14-17	46	
		CRR on Philippians	11	
The book review is due by the end of Sunday.				
9	9a: Pseudepigraphy 9b: Colossians 9c: Ephesians: cosmic victory	Colossians & Ephesians	10	forum
		CRR, remaining	41	
		sections in chapter 8		

	9d: The Holy Spirit			
10	10a: The Pastoral Epistles	1 & 2 Timothy, Titus	11	quiz
	10b: 1 Timothy 10c: Titus 10d: 2 Timothy 10e: Ethics	CRR chapters 9-10	54	
11		CRR chapters 11-12	50	
The final paper is due by the end of Sunday, December 4, 2022.				

Appendix A: Course policies

- a) Student code of conduct, including policies about copying work done by someone else³ - <https://learn.gcs.edu/mod/page/view.php?id=6471>
- b) Grading policies – descriptions of what it takes to get an A, B, C, etc. <https://learn.gcs.edu/mod/page/view.php?id=6473>
- c) Additional academic policies: auditing, withdrawing, etc. - <https://learn.gcs.edu/mod/page/view.php?id=6472>
- d) Library resources - <https://learn.gcs.edu/mod/page/view.php?id=6474>

To contact the instructor: Log in to our website, go to the main page for this course, and you will see a box named “Course Contacts.” Click on the icon under my name there to send a message to me (your message will not be visible to any other students). We want all class-related communications to be sent through the website, rather than email.

Late papers will be penalized 5 percent for each day they are late, so only in rare cases it will be worth your while to take an extra day to do a better job. Most GCS students are involved in pastoral work, and emergencies are common in this line of work, so you need to make allowance for the possibility.

Late forum assignments will be penalized 20 percent for each day they are late. The discussions are opportunities to learn, to think about what you are learning, and to apply ideas into your own circumstances. But we cannot have a *discussion* if your comments are late.

Plagiarism is representing the words, ideas, or work of someone else as if they were your own. It does not matter whether this is done intentionally or accidentally. In general, any quote of more than five words in a row should be in

³ The penalty for plagiarism on the first offense is a failing grade for the assignment. On the second offense, the student will be given a failing grade for the course.

quote marks, and the source noted. It is not enough to cite the source – the quoted words should be in quote marks. The penalty for plagiarism is a failing grade on the assignment. The penalty for a second infraction is a failure of the entire course.

Class confidentiality: Materials posted in the class, including lectures and discussion forums, are for class use only. Grades are confidential; we do not report your grades to your employer or to anyone else outside of GCS administration. Students are to protect the confidentiality of all classroom materials and should not share any classroom materials without written permission of the person quoted and the instructor.

Appendix B: Student Learning Outcomes

GCS Mission Statement

“Equipping the Saints for Pastoral Ministry.” We are committed to equip the saints for pastoral ministry through quality graduate-level distance education programs in biblical, theological, ministerial and pastoral studies informed by Incarnational Trinitarian faith.

Grace Communion Seminary has five core learning outcomes for its students. The focus for this course is one section of the New Testament. It therefore serves largely to support the first GCS objective:

GCS Student Learning Outcome 1: Students will be able to explain the revelation of the Bible in its historical and cultural setting as it relates to God, Jesus Christ and salvation, and its application for faithful living today.

Within this larger objective, this course has four more specific student learning outcomes:

Course Student Learning Outcome 1: Describe how Paul’s letters fit into the sequence of his missionary travels.

Lectures

- This is addressed not by any one lecture, but in the sequence of lectures as a whole, and the introductions of each lecture

Assignments

- One required textbook discusses the chronology of Paul’s travels and letters

Course Student Learning Outcome 2: Give the date and circumstances of each letter, and explain how those circumstances affected the way that Paul wrote.

Lectures

- All the lectures address the date and circumstances of each letter

Assignments

- One textbook examines the details for each letter.

Course Student Learning Outcome 3: Describe how different sections of each letter are related to other parts of the same letter.

Lectures

- Every lecture gives an outline of the letter(s) being addressed in that lecture, with some commentary on how the letter flows as a whole

Assignments

- One textbook also examines how each letter progresses from topic to topic.

Course Student Learning Outcome 4: Describe how a specific passage in these letters may be used in theology and ministry today.

Lectures

- Each lecture contains comments about how the letter(s) are useful in the modern church.

Forum discussions

- The forums ask students to discuss contemporary application and meaning.

Assignments

- The exegetical paper requires student to focus on one passage and it includes sections on theology and application.
- The exegetical paper requires that the student take into consideration the circumstances of writing (learning outcomes 1 and 2) and the literary context (outcome 3).
- The reaction paper requires students to analyze one scholar's analysis of a theological issue in Paul's letters.

Appendix C: Textbook rental

You may want to consider the possibility of renting electronic textbooks: You can gain access to both required textbooks on scribd.com for \$12 per month. You'll need them for three months, so that would be \$36 – that's about the same as buying them used. However, there are some advantages to renting the books:

1. Immediate access. You can get that with Kindle, too, so there's not much advantage here.
2. Scribd offers the first two weeks free, and sometimes there are coupon codes for a longer free period.
3. The best advantage is that with scribd, you will also get access to many other books that could be useful for writing the papers in this class. For example, there are more than five commentaries for each of Paul's letters. Their books can be viewed online, but most cannot be downloaded or printed. There are some research papers and other documents that can be downloaded. You might want to buy used books, and use the two-week free trial for your research paper.

Scribd is not the only way to get access to commentaries on the internet.

1. **Openlibrary.org** has a few commentaries that you can check out for an hour at a time.
2. **Biblegateway.com/plus** offers access to some Zondervan resources for \$4 per month. Most of their commentaries are one-volume commentaries, so they don't offer much detail, but they are good for an overview.
3. **Scholar.google.com** can link you to numerous books. You cannot access the entire book, but you can often see enough of the book to get useful information from it.
4. **Kindle Unlimited**. If you already subscribe to Kindle Unlimited, or have a free trial, you may want to see what books are available to you free. It does not include many commentaries and reference books, but some others may be useful.

5. Commentaries on miscellaneous sites:

- [Asbury Bible Commentary](https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/asbury-bible-commentary/toc/) <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/asbury-bible-commentary/toc/>
- [IVP New Testament Commentary series](https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/ivp-nt/toc/) <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/ivp-nt/toc/>
- Bob Utley commentaries, at <http://www.freebiblecommentary.org/>.
- David Guzik commentaries, www.enduringword.com
- Basic Bible Commentary series and the Abingdon New Testament Commentaries at <https://www.ministrymatters.com/library/>
- Constable's Notes, <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>
- [Bridgeway Bible Commentary](http://www.studydrive.net/), on [studydrive.net](http://www.studydrive.net/)

More free resources can be obtained from Logos.com, though you probably won't get free what you want right away. You can sign up for a basic account for free at <https://www.logos.com/basic>. They give away three free books each month, and some of them may be useful in the future.⁴ These books can also be read on mobile devices with the free Faithlife app. Logos will offer you dozens of "good deals" and imply that you'll be a better preacher and scholar if you pay more money. Just ignore the ads unless you have an immediate need for the resources.

You can get another free ebook each month by signing up at wipfandstock.com.

It takes a few minutes each month to gather these free resources, but you'll eventually have a good list of resources.

⁴ They advertise one free book each month, but you can also get another free book at their parent company, faithlife.com, and a third book at an affiliated site for Roman Catholics, verbum.com; all can be viewed with the Logos program.