

DM-N606: Paul's Urban Ministry

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Wesley Theological Seminary

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Course Description:

A study of Paul's mission and ministry in light of his social world.

Course Objectives:

- To introduce students to the complexities of Paul's social environment through the course readings and through biblical study
- To gain an appreciation for the social dynamics of ministry in an urban environment of the first century Roman world (including patronage, civic responsibilities, household matters, slavery, and poverty)
- To draw implications for ministry in our world

Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment:

This course is designed so that students will be able to

- Critically evaluate scholarship in Pauline studies that pertains to Paul's urban ministry. This examination will occur through class discussion of the required readings, the pre-class critical review, and the student's use of research in the final project.
- Engage in exegesis of Pauline and deutero-Pauline texts. Exegetical skills will be practiced in class through close readings of the texts and will be assessed in the exegetical paper included in the final project.
- Examine the historical, social, and cultural contexts that shaped Paul's ministry. The consideration of these contexts is necessary in the exegetical process (see above point for assessment).
- Draw implications from a close reading of the biblical text to ministry today. This work will be practiced in class and will be assessed in the final project.

Intersection with Wesley Seminary's Curricular Objectives

- Religious Heritage. Knowledge of the texts and traditions from which the Christian Church originated. Facility in the use of tools of critical scholarship, including historical and exegetical methods that contribute to a working biblical hermeneutic.
- Cultural Context. Knowledge of the ways in which the relationship of Christian faith to culture has been portrayed and socially embodied. Encounter with the dominating issues, enduring, current, and anticipated. Sensitivity to the human and environmental consequences of individual and institutional acts.
- Ministerial and Public Leadership. Integration of biblical, historical, and socio-ethical perspectives into a concrete practice of ministry. Proficiency in written and oral communication.
- Formational Objectives: Development of faith through biblical study. Creation of connections between biblical study and today's social concerns. Intellectual stimulation and growth.

ASSIGNMENTS

Required Texts and Readings:

- Osiek, C. and Balch, D. *Families in the New Testament World*, Read Part 2 (pp. 91-222)
- Winter, Bruce. *Seek the Welfare of the City*, Read chapters 2-3 and 5-11
- Meeks, Wayne. *The First Urban Christians*, Read chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-110)

Required Readings Posted on Blackboard:

- Harrill, "Paul and Slavery," *Paul in the Greco-Roman World*, 575-607
- Lloyd Lewis, "An African American Appraisal of the Philemon-Paul-Onesimus Triangle," in *Stony the Road We Trod*, 232-241

Pre-Course Assignments:

1. Reading: Please see readings listed above.

2. Critical Review: Choose one of the required textbooks to read in its entirety. In four pages (double-spaced, 12-point font), please offer a critical review of the selected book. A successful paper will identify the author's thesis, offer a sketch of the project as a whole, evaluate the book's effectiveness at supporting the thesis, and assess the value of the argument for interpreting Paul's letters. The review is due at the beginning of class. Please post the paper on Blackboard. If there is difficulty posting the assignment on Blackboard, then please print a copy of your paper for class.

Post-Class Assignment

Final Project: Due Date: TBA. Please turn the project in through Blackboard.

Adult Bible Study Series

- a. Outline a 4-6 week adult Bible study series (10% of the project grade) on some aspect of Paul's urban ministry (e.g. Paul and poverty, Paul's ministry in the city of Corinth, etc...). The project should be coherent, but it can engage any aspect of Paul's urban ministry. Use your imagination.

In this outline, state each lesson's *focal passage*, *learning objectives*, and the *implication(s)* of the biblical passage for your community. It is also expected that you *provide a brief paragraph explaining the context of the lesson's recipients*.

- b. Choose ONE of the lessons in the series to write out completely (4-5 pages, double-spaced, 20% of the project grade). Make sure that the lesson states learning objectives, key points of reflection for the group, and ways of engaging the group with the material (e.g., discussion questions, learning exercises, etc...).
- c. For the lesson that you have chosen to write out completely, also include an exegetical essay as a Teacher's Guide to the focal passage (60% of the project grade). This guide should be an interpretive essay on the focal passage (about 7-10 double-spaced pages). It should be clear that the lesson's main points come from your own exegetical work in the passage. It is expected that the student will consult the readings for the class and other resources pertinent to the topic (e.g., critical commentaries, monographs, and journal articles).

- d. An annotated bibliography (10% of the project grade) should also be provided of key sources for further study of the topic(s) covered in the series. The bibliography needs to be in a consistent style (i.e., Chicago Manual of Style), and the annotations should be focused on the contribution of this source for the topic(s) under study or for pertinent background information of the biblical passage(s). If only a portion of the book is deemed to be relevant, then the relevant page numbers should be specified.

Class Attendance and Participation. Students are expected to attend class, participate in discussions, and arrive in a timely manner. Students will be graded on the quality of their contributions to the classroom discussion. Please come to class prepared. A reading assessment guide is included in this syllabus to help students come to class ready to engage in fruitful discussion.

Grading:

Pre-Class Critical Review: 30%

Participation: 10%

Final Project: 60%

Important Information and Policies

Inclusive Language and Respect for Our Neighbors: Students are reminded that we all signed a covenant with the seminary to avoid excluding others by our language, gestures, and actions. Our dialog with one another and in our written expression should employ terminology that respects and values all persons equally.

Disability Accommodations: If you have a medical, physical, psychological, or learning disability and might require accommodations in this course, please contact the Associate Dean for Community Life immediately regarding Wesley's policies and procedures for documenting and accommodating disabilities, x8614 or shaggray@wesleyseminary.edu

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is regarded as a serious offense and will result in substantial penalties, including the possibility of academic dismissal. The Faculty regards the following as forms of plagiarism or dishonesty:

- Copying from another student's paper
- Giving or receiving unauthorized assistance to or from another student during an examination
- Using unauthorized material during an examination
- Borrowing and presenting as one's own (i.e. without proper attribution) the composition or ideas of another.

Please refer to your Wesley Student Handbook for more information about Wesley's academic policies or contact the office of Community Life, x8614.

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*Those who think they have understood the divine scriptures—or any part of them—but cannot by their understanding build up the two-fold love of God and neighbor, have not yet succeeded in understanding them.*

*Augustine of Hippo, On Christian Teaching, 1.86*

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Reading Assessment. Consider the following as you review your reading assignments for our class discussion.

1. Summarize the thesis, the key points of the argument, and critical scripture(s) cited.
2. In your evaluation, has the author remained faithful to the Pauline text(s)? Explain your answer. Are there other texts that you believe deserve consideration for his/her argument?
3. What questions does this reading raise for you? What questions might this reading pose for further discussion?