Course Description

This course is oriented particularly toward future ministers and Christian leaders, intending to facilitate their preaching and teaching on Pauline texts, in the first instance, by highlighting Paul’s biography. Telling the story that is going on around a letter, including Paul, the congregation, and any opposition in view – its “frame” – generates both a more precise historical grip on the text and a more interesting, memorable sermon. This broader frame complements good old-fashioned close work on the text. But the course is also designed to introduce important insights into Paul’s early Trinitarian and participatory theology—in particular, that it is catalyzed by his missionary practice and informs his whole understanding of the church. Good teaching and preaching on Paul is theological through-and-through. In addition, the course will draw eclectically on both the church’s tradition and on various recent sociological theories to illuminate other aspects of what Paul was up to and writing about.

A good sermon (in my view) is theologically clear and dynamic, in touch with contemporary questions and debates, textually accurate, and biographically arresting. So much of the course will try to assist preaching. Having said this, I think that Paul’s life and thought are simply dynamic things for Christian leaders to study and, where possible, to emulate and/or instantiate, in their own right. He knew how to plant and to nurture churches.

It needs to be appreciated, moreover, that the interpretation of Paul is contested, as well as, rather sadly, in certain forms, even destructive. So this course will also provide what I take to be a dynamic, and fundamentally redemptive account of Paul – one that takes him beyond both his critics and many of his more unlikeable advocates.

Hence, the following course covers a lot of ground, perhaps because it is at present the culmination of my life’s research into Paul. It draws together into one unified depiction all my previous detailed work on his biography; on his much-misunderstood conflict with other Jewish Christian teachers; on his key missiological and theological categories, which can be both illuminated and obscured by later church teaching; and on his engagements with questions of race, class, and gender. So I hope you find it all as fascinating as I do.

Competence Objectives

Students who complete this course will,

- Be familiar with all the New Testament texts by and about Paul, that is, all the letters bearing his name, the relevant parts of the book of Acts, and the other parts of the NT that seem to be in dialogue with him – specific textual knowledge.
• Be familiar with a particular account of Paul’s remarkable life that can frame the interpretation and exposition of his texts dramatically – biographical knowledge.
• Be familiar with key, orthodox theological claims and insights that vitally inform Paul’s life, texts, and gospel, helpfully – theological knowledge.
• Be familiar with a number of important and helpful sociological and missiological insights – practical theological knowledge (although I dislike this distinction).
• Be able to provide a detailed text analysis of any Pauline text, using insights drawn from the preceding materials – disciplined exegetical knowledge.
• Be able to write an accurate and dynamic sermon on a Pauline text utilizing all the foregoing insights – homiletic knowledge.

**Required Reading**
- Specified chapters of the New Testament – in the syllabus
- Selected articles and chapters: Readings provided via .pdf ca scans and links in the syllabus

**Expectations and Assignments**

*All students:*
- Reading and class participation: All Students including auditors are expected to do all the required readings and participate in class discussions. 100% attendance is required of Certificate and Degree students.
- Required reading must be completed prior to course attendance
- All students: Completed Study Journal – (prior to course attendance): topics length of entries will be specified in syllabus; 33%

*Basic Degree students:*
- Class participation: 33%
- Research paper: 22% (see instructions below)
- Sermon or equivalent: 11%

*Advanced Degree students:*
- Engagement with recommended reading also required; topic and focus for a longer paper will be discussed with instructor

**Paper and sermon preparation**

Your exegetical and homiletic work will focus on Phil. 2:5-11. I would like everyone to complete a short research paper undertaking an exegetical analysis of the text, and a practical homiletic complement to that (i.e., a sermon or the equivalent). (Alternative second assignments are possible on request.)