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**ISP-NTX501: Paul: The Person, the Passion, the Preaching**  
**July 7 - 11, 2025**

**PURPOSE:** The letters of Paul make up over a quarter of the New Testament and so get a lot of air time in the “Epistle” readings during liturgical services. They also play an outsized role in Christian theology after the various reformation movements in Europe. But there is another story behind these writings that makes them especially relevant for Indigenous readers. Paul’s letters and the teachings within them are written when he and other “Followers of the Way” were sorting out what it meant to take the good news about Jesus across a cultural divide. This course will study Paul and his teachings by situating him in his time and the challenges he faces as he takes his ancestral story and his transformative experience of Jesus and works out his conviction that a crucified Creator is relevant not just to his people, but to all people. The ultimate goal of the course is to explore how Paul and his writings can be used as a resource to those in communities that understand that working out your faith is working out your identity.

**PREREQUISITES:** NT(X)500: Synoptic Gospels

**COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES:**

1. Identify the social, cultural, and religious context of Paul and the letters associated with him, especially as it pertains to his Jewish heritage within Second Temple Judaism and the Roman Imperial context of the early Christian movement.
2. Identify and compare the profile of Paul as presented within Acts (by a third person narrator) and the letters (in first person), become familiar with critical scholars' understanding of any differences, and ultimately integrate these in a meaningful way, particularly from an Indigenous perspective.
3. Effectively develop and apply skills in analyzing letters associated with Paul, including identifying the Hebrew Bible stories and texts that inform Paul’s teachings and recreating the early Christian context and issues driving the letter.
4. Demonstrate an ability to use the critical tools available for engaging in the study of New Testament texts like Paul’s letters.
5. Identify how Paul has been used and applied within systematic theology as well as how Pauline texts have been used in debates on cultural issues arising in the church over the past few decades.
6. Discuss the ongoing impact of Paul and his writings in present church contexts, including from personal experience, and share and develop a strategy for the ongoing application of Paul’s teachings within Indigenous churches in particular with fellow students.

**FORMAT AND CONTENT:**

This is a one week intensive course, consisting of 3 hours of in class lecture/discussion with the instructor in the mornings (9 am - 12 pm) and afternoon tutorial sessions for students in the ISP Masters of Divinity program.

### **TEXTS:**

Select one of the following (options will be further discussed during the first day of class):

- Michael Bird, *Introducing Paul: The Man, His Message, and His Mission* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009)
- James D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, revised edition (Grand Rapids & Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2008) (*student may select 11 of the essays to meet textbook reading requirements*)
- J. R. Daniel Kirk, *Jesus Have I Loved, but Paul? A Narrative Approach to the Problem of Pauline Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011)
- E. P. Sanders, *Paul: The Apostle's Life, Letters, and Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016) (*student may select 11 of the chapters to meet textbook reading requirements*)
- N. T. Wright, *Into the Heart of Romans: A Deep Dive into Paul's Greatest Letter* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2023)
- N.T. Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008)

### **RESERVES:**

Any reserve articles will be available through the Populi site for the course.

### **COURSE POLICIES**

1. **Attendance** Students are expected to attend all five morning sessions.
2. **Reading and assignments** Students are expected to read all required assignments before class and to complete all assignments as outlined in the syllabus within the specified dates of the course and term.
3. **Academic honesty** Students are expected to adhere to VST's requirements for academic honesty as published in the Student Handbook.
4. **Inclusive language** In speaking and writing, inclusive language is expected when making reference to humans and a variety of metaphors are anticipated when making reference to God.
5. **Assignment and Course Evaluation**
  - Course evaluations at VST combine a letter grade system (A+ to B-; course failure is "Not Approved") including narrative comments based on the competencies of the course. No number grades or weights of assignments are calculated, nor are final grades given numerical equivalents.

- Individual assignments within a course are given narrative evaluations, that is, APP (Approved) or INC (Incomplete) with narrative comments, based on the competencies and expectations set for that assignment. One re-write is allowed on any assignment that is INC. The re-written assignment is due two weeks after the work is returned. The final evaluation for an assignment can be APP or NAPP after a re-write.
- For a passing grade in the course, all assignments must be Approved.

## 6. Late assignments

Submission of assignments on time is a part of academic, professional and pastoral competence and a part of every course at VST. All assignments in courses are due on the dates specified in the syllabus. Failure to submit an assignment on time will be noted in the narrative evaluation of an assignment. Repeated failure to submit assignments on time may affect the final grade for the course.

## 7. Limitation on use of social media

Ordinarily, the use of electronic devices in the contexts of classrooms or meetings will be to support the learning, formation, or agenda at hand.

VST is committed to creating safe space and an inclusive learning environment. If you have a diagnosed or suspected learning disability, chronic condition, mental health concern, or physical requirement which you anticipate may impact your participation in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs with the instructor and the Dean within the first week of classes.

## CALENDAR

<b>Monday, July 7</b>	Paul the Person: A Second Temple Jew in the Roman Empire goes on a journey from persecutor to passionate preacher READ for class: Acts 7-28 and Galatians
<b>Tuesday, July 8</b>	Parsing Paul: Developing skills in reading Paul's letters READ for class: Phillipians, 1 Thessalonians
<b>Wednesday, July 9</b>	Puzzling over and puzzling with Paul: The writings of Paul in the context of Church debates from the Reformation to Affirmation READ for class: Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, 1 Timothy, Philemon
<b>Thursday, July 10</b>	"New perspectives" on Paul: The shift in Pauline studies and the systematic and pastoral theology implications READ for class: Remaining letters – Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 2 Timothy, Titus

**Friday, July 11** Preaching Paul in Indigenous Contexts:  
Reflections, strategies, and discussions related to Paul's writing  
and the identity of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, God's People and  
God's Indigenous Peoples

**Wednesday, October 15** ISP M.Div assignments due

### **EXPECTATIONS, ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATIVE CRITERIA**

1. **Class Participation:** Students are expected to prepare for and participate in class discussions. Evaluation criteria: comments and questions that demonstrate active engagement with the preparation or in class material or other students' contributions.
2. **Analyzing a Pauline Text:** Students will use the methodology and tools provided in the second session to demonstrate their ability to process and interpret a short text within a Pauline letter and do so within the context of the letter as a whole. Evaluation criteria: students will "show their work" with a final interpretation offered based on the example provided and worked through in class.
3. **Reading Journal:** Students will maintain a reading journal for all readings assigned including the biblical text readings and textbook readings (see below). Evaluation criteria: students have significant latitude in terms of using a journaling method they find most personally valuable with the instructor expecting that students would produce the equivalent of a paragraph worth of notes for each Pauline letter read and each chapter in a textbook.
4. **Project:** Students may choose either an academic or application based project within the field of academic Pauline studies or the use of Paul's letters within a church ministry (e.g., preaching, teaching, etc.). Students should discuss and confirm their project proposal with the instructor to ensure projects are meaningful and may be completed within the student's time constraints.
5. Audit students are required to do all the reading and participate in the class discussions and exercises.
6. Certificate students are required to do all the reading, participate in class discussions and exercises, and submit a daily journal due at the end of each day.

### **SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**