RELG 310: Paul and the Philosophers

The course provides an in-depth look at the ways that using various ancient philosophical schools and concepts as comparanda for the writings, social formations, and ideas associated with the Apostle Paul can help create a historically plausible picture of the formation of early Christian groups. During the first part of the course, students will engage in close readings of Paul’s letters with an eye toward identifying themes, concepts, and practices central to the texts. The second part of the course will be a comparative analysis of aspects of Paul’s letters with Greek and Roman philosophy. The third part of the semester provides students with an opportunity to share and discuss their own research projects while also seeing how the course fits within the broader academic fields of Pauline studies, ancient philosophy, and Christian origins.

Requirements

Participation (25% of the final grade)
Several factors contribute to the participation grade. Students should attend class* prepared to discuss the assigned Discussion Questions (DQs), which will be available on Blackboard. It is recommended that students write out answers (or at least notes) to the questions and bring them to class so that the discussion can be informed and constructive. Four times throughout the semester, each student must type up thorough answers to the DQs and submit them to the professor for evaluation. Further details to be distributed and discussed during the first class meeting.

* Please make every effort to attend all class meetings. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get any and all relevant notes and/or handouts and to keep up with announcements. Please do not simply ask, “Did I miss anything in class?” because the answer will undoubtedly be, “Yes.”

Research Presentation (25% of the final grade)
Each student will be responsible for preparing and delivering a brief (10 minutes) presentation of her or his chosen research topic and for helping to facilitate a brief discussion of the paper topic (20 minutes). The presentation and discussion are designed to help students focus their arguments and receive feedback before submitting the paper for evaluation. Specific criteria for the presentation will be distributed and discussed during class.

Research Paper (25% of the final grade)
Students will submit a 10-12 page paper on the last day of class. Paper topics and research plans must be discussed ahead of time with the professor. Possible topics could include: the passions;
moral progress; living according to nature; sin; self-mastery; natural law; bodily resurrection; *pneuma* (Stoic physics); sex, marriage, divorce, family; divination, magic, miracles; group formation/recruitment; or any number of other topics relating to Paul and philosophy. Specific criteria for preparing the paper will be distributed and discussed during class.

Final exam (25% of the final grade)
The final examination will be an in-class exam containing questions created through collaboration between students and the professor. Specific details will be distributed and discussed during class.

**Required Texts**

Any translation of Paul’s letters (NRSV preferred, but not required; the NRSV version will be available on Blackboard, but you need to have a hard copy of his letters with you at each class meeting)


Magnus Zetterholm. *Approaches to Paul: A Student’s Guide the Recent Scholarship* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2009)

All other required readings will either be available on Blackboard or will be distributed in class ahead of time.

**Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments**

January 14  Topic: Introduction to the Course; Who was Paul?

**Part One: The Apostle Paul**

January 16  Topic: 1-2 Thessalonians  
Read: 1 & 2 Thessalonians  
Prepare: DQs

January 16  MLK Day, no class

January 23  Topic: Galatians  
Read: Galatians  
Prepare: DQs

January 28  Topic: 1 Corinthians  
Read: 1 Corinthians  
Prepare: DQs
January 30  Topic: 2 Corinthians
Read: 2 Corinthians
Prepare: DQs

February 4  Topic: Romans
Read: Romans
Prepare: DQs

February 6  Topic: Philippians & Philemon
Read: Philippians & Philemon
Prepare: DQs

Part Two: Paul in the Context of Greek and Roman Philosophy

February 11  Topics: (1) Who was Paul? (2) Cynics
Read: Stanley K. Stowers, “Paul the Apostle,” in Graham Oppy and Nick Trakakis, eds., The History of Western Philosophy of Religion Volume 1 (Oxford University Press, 2009) 145-157; Malherbe 1-24; Cynic sources TBD
Prepare: DQs

February 13  Topic: Paul and the Cynics
Read: Malherbe 35-48; Dio Chrysostom, selections from Discourses 12, 32, 33, 35
Re-read: 1 Thessalonians, with attention to sections discussed by Malherbe
Prepare: DQs

February 18  Topic: Paul and Moral Exhortation
Re-read: 1 Thessalonians, with attention to sections discussed by Malherbe
Prepare: DQs

February 20  Topic: Epicureans
Read: Epicurus, Letter to Menoeceus; Diogenes Laertius, PD
Prepare: DQs

February 25  Topic: Paul and the Epicureans
Re-read: 1 Corinthians, with attention to sections discussed by Tomlin
Prepare: DQs

February 27  Topic: Stoics
Read: TBD
Prepare: DQs

March 1  Julia Annas Lecture (details TBD)
March 4  | Topic: Paul and the Stoics  
Re-read: sections of Paul’s letters discussed by Stowers  
Prepare: DQs

March 6  | Topic: Paul and the Stoics  
Re-read: sections of Paul’s letters discussed by Ware  
Prepare: DQs

March 11 | Spring recess, no class
March 13 | Spring recess, no class

**March 15-17 SECSOR Annual Meeting, Greenville, SC**

March 18  | Topic: Paul, the Passions, and Self-Mastery  
Re-read: 1 Corinthians 7  
Prepare: DQs

March 20  | Topic: Paul and “Sin” part 1  
Read: Stowers, Discourses of Sin; philosophical stuff TBD  
Re-read: Selections from Romans 1  
Prepare: DQs

March 25  | Topic: Paul and “Sin” part 2  
Read: Roberts; philosophical stuff TBD  
Re-read: Sections from 1 Corinthians discussed by Roberts  
Prepare: DQs

March 27  | Topic: Paul and “Sin” Part 3  
Re-read: Romans 6-8
Prepare: DQs

Part Three: The Field of Pauline Studies; Student Research Projects

April 1  Topic: The Traditional Western Paul
Read: Zetterholm 33-67
Prepare: DQs

Student presentation and discussion

April 3  Topic: The Traditional Western Paul
Read: Zetterholm 69-93
Prepare: DQs

Student presentation and discussion

April 8  Topic: Critiquing the Tradition
Prepare: DQs

Student presentation and discussion

April 10  Topic: Critiquing the Tradition
Read: Zetterholm 127-163
Prepare: DQs

Student presentation and discussion

David Konstan lecture in the evening (details TBD)

April 15  Topic: Resent Research
Read: Zetterholm 195-240
Prepare: DQs

Student presentation and discussion

April 17  Judaism and Hellenism
Read: Paul Beyond the Judaism /Hellenism Divide, 1-27
Prepare: DQs

Student presentation and discussion
April 18/19  Annual Religious Studies Lecture & Workshop (details TBD)

April 22  Topic: Judaism and Hellenism  
Read: Paul Beyond the Divide, 29-61  
Prepare: DQs  
Student presentation and discussion

April 24  Topic: Pauline Christianity and Hellenistic Philosophy  
Prepare: DQs  
Student presentation and discussion

April 29  Course Wrap-up

April 30  Reading Day

Final exam, date TBD