

Paul

Dr. Mark Given

"The earliest books in the New Testament are the seven undisputed letters of Paul, and no letters have more profoundly influenced human history."

— Calvin Roetzel

Welcome to the online home of **REL 321**, Paul. Click [here](#) for Requirements and [here](#) for Calendar.

The Goals

The purpose of this course is to deepen your knowledge of Paul and the Pauline trajectory in the early Church through primary and secondary sources. You will become acquainted with many of the historical, literary, hermeneutical, and ideological issues currently under investigation in Pauline scholarship. It's a great time to be alive and to be a Paul scholar! But why should this particular figure receive so much attention? For better or worse, Paul is often identified as the true founder of Christianity. Paul is the church's first great theologian--many would say the greatest. And yet, just as passages in Paul's letters pertaining to morality and ethics have become more controversial within the church and society in recent decades, even passages in his most "theological" of writings have come under scrutiny. At the same time, however, aspects of his thought have continued to inspire even readers outside Christianity, including several leading contemporary secular intellectuals.

The purpose of this course is not to convert you to any particular confessional or non-confessional position. In a 1963 decision, the supreme court encouraged the study of religion in an academic environment. This is consistent with a goal common to most universities of studying all significant aspects of human experience in a sympathetic and responsible, yet thoughtful and critical, manner. Religion is a very significant aspect of human experience and Paul's influence on Christianity and western culture more generally, both past and present, may overshadow that of Jesus himself. One can easily see that Paul is a highly appropriate subject for study in a state university.

Methods and Style

This course emphasizes **literary-historical** and **socio-rhetorical** methods. The former method concentrates on interpreting the literature of the early church in its original historical context. It includes investigation of the very complex literary problems encountered in biblical texts. The latter method focuses on the social structures and conflicts of the early churches. It includes investigation of the types of arguments employed by early believers and their opponents.

A **literary-historical** religion course is an excellent place to begin to develop the sort of critical thinking skills that will serve you well in your university career and beyond. It takes acquired skills and diligent efforts to reconstruct the past and understand how and what people were thinking and feeling two millennia ago in a world more different than like our own. I encourage you to think critically about current issues of interpretation and learn to support your ideas with reasoned and evidence-based arguments.

A **socio-rhetorical** religion course is an excellent place to contemplate an important issue addressed by the Public Affairs mission of Missouri State. The early church, like the Judaism from which it sprung, was a

religious movement of great diversity. Already within the pages of the New Testament we see religious and political rhetoric in action as competing ideologically and ethnically defined groups assert their particular visions/versions of "the good news" and struggle with the problem of maintaining unity in diversity. Examining their experience with such issues may encourage reflection upon our own situation.

Office Hours

My office is Strong Hall 266 and my office hours are posted on the Blackboard site. Appointments are also possible. My email addresses are available on the campus web and on the Blackboard site. I encourage you to email me with questions, comments, etc., if you cannot come by during office hours.

Additional Course Policies

Dropping the Class

It is your responsibility to understand the University's procedure for dropping a class. If you stop attending this class but do not follow proper procedure for dropping the class, you will receive a failing grade and will also be financially obligated to pay for the class. For information about dropping a class or withdrawing from the university, contact the Office of the Registrar at 836-5520.

Academic Dishonesty

Missouri State University is a community of scholars committed to developing educated persons who accept the responsibility to practice personal and academic integrity. You are responsible for knowing and following the university's student honor code, [Student Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures](#) and also available at the Reserves Desk in Meyer Library. Any student participating in any form of academic dishonesty will be subject to sanctions as described in this policy. In this course, cheating on any assignment besides the final exam will result in an F for that assignment and usually cannot be made up. Cheating on the final exam will result in an XF.

Nondiscrimination

Missouri State University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution, and maintains a grievance procedure available to any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against. At all times, it is your right to address inquiries or concerns about possible discrimination to the Office for Institutional Equity and Compliance, Park Central Office Building, 117 Park Central Square, Suite 111, 417-836-4252. Other types of concerns (i.e., concerns of an academic nature) should be discussed directly with your instructor and can also be brought to the attention of your instructor's Department Head. Please visit the OED website at www.missouristate.edu/equity/.

Disability Accommodation

To request academic accommodations for a disability, contact the Director of the Disability Resource Center, Carrington Hall, Room 302, 417-836-4192 or 417-836-6792 (TTY), www.missouristate.edu/disability. Students are required to provide documentation of disability to the Disability Resource Center prior to receiving accommodations. The Disability Resource Center refers some types of accommodation requests to the Learning Diagnostic Clinic, which also provides diagnostic testing for learning and psychological disabilities. For information about testing, contact the Director of the Learning Diagnostic Clinic, 417-836-4787, <http://psychology.missouristate.edu/ldc>.

Cell phone policy

As a member of the learning community, each student has a responsibility to other students who are members of the community. When cell phones or pagers ring and students respond in class or leave class to respond, it disrupts the class. Therefore, the Office of the Provost prohibits the use by students of cell phones, pagers, PDAs, or similar communication devices during scheduled classes. All such devices must be turned off or put in a silent (vibrate) mode and ordinarily should not be taken out during class. Given the fact that these same communication devices are an integral part of the University's emergency notification system, an exception to this policy would occur when numerous devices activate simultaneously. When this occurs, students may consult their devices to determine if a university emergency exists. If that is not the case, the devices should be immediately returned to silent mode and put away. Other exceptions to this policy may be granted at the discretion of the instructor.

Emergency Response

At the first class meeting, students should become familiar with a basic emergency response plan through a dialogue with the instructor that includes a review and awareness of exits specific to the classroom and the location of evacuation centers for the building. All instructors are provided this information specific to their classroom and/or lab assignments in an e-mail prior to the beginning of the fall semester from the Office of the Provost and Safety and Transportation. Students with disabilities impacting mobility should discuss the approved accommodations for emergency situations and additional options when applicable with the instructor. For more information go to <http://www.missouristate.edu/safetran/51597.htm> and <http://www.missouristate.edu/safetran/erp.htm>.