

HON 201H (A): PERENNIAL QUESTIONS LAW, JUSTICE, MERCY & GRACE: PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

T/Th 3:30-4:45 p.m.
LAU 113 & The Honors Commons
SPRING 2012

Dr. Brian Carroll
LAU 100
bc@berry.edu, 706.368.6944

Course introduction



Martin Luther said that anyone serious about his or her faith should memorize Paul's letter to the Romans. It is perhaps the single most important book in the Bible because it gives meaning or explains the events chronicled in the New Testament books prior to it. The gospels describe the key events of the faith - the crucifixion, the resurrection; Romans explains their significance. In this course we will examine Paul's letter verse by verse, line by line, and as we do so, we will

encounter three of the most basic questions people ever ask:

- Is God there?
- Does he care?
- Is he fair?

We will critically examine these questions. We will analyze how Paul presents the questions and their answers. This intellectual, spiritual, and at times emotional journey will force us to ask critical questions about law, justice, mercy, and grace. We will bring up Paul himself on charges of misogyny, homophobia, and for being pro-slavery. These accusations, which have been a sort of theme in criticism of the letter, will force us to take a thoroughly interdisciplinary, trans-disciplinary approach. Philosophy, religion, history, anthropology, sociology, psychology and the natural sciences all will be brought to bear on our interrogation of Paul's argument, in which the apostle seeks to carefully lay a foundation for the Christian faith, a foundation centered on Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.

Are we seeking truth? Hmm . . . Yes and no. Ultimately, the existence of God is a matter of faith, not truth, at least truth as a discrete, provable (or dis-provable) fact. But then science isn't even searching for truth. Like the sciences, we will be searching for a set of principles that enable us to see the disparate and apparently chaotic mass of phenomena as a coherent whole, or at least to critically examine and analyze Paul's principles seeking these same goals. A premise or pre-supposition of the course, then, is that design is an argument for the existence of God, a premise that was at the heart of the Scottish Enlightenment.

Course goals

Conscious and close analytical reading is central to whatever learning takes place in this course. Our effort will be to learn how to read more effectively so that as much as possible of Paul's ideas become available to enrich our own thinking, and, perhaps, behavior.

A closely related goal is the development of critical and analytical thinking skills. Students will present in-class summaries of, references to, and evaluations of ideas encountered in required readings and in class discussion itself. In turn, the response of the instructor and other students will stimulate and demand collegial but also critical responses to ideas as they are presented.

More generally, our goal will be to begin a focused and sustained analysis of some of the basic questions our species has asked since whenever self-reflexive consciousness became a part of our being. We do not need to set as our goals the discovery of final answers; rather, our goal is to understand and interrogate one attempt at an answer, Paul's letter to the Romans.

Course requirements

- Response papers (roughly 2 pages each)
- Final, comprehensive paper (roughly 10 pages)
- Participation in discussion, class activities, blog discussion
- Professionalism, leadership, civility and citizenship

How you will be graded

Response papers	50%
Final paper	20%
Discussion participation	20%
Professionalism	10%
TOTAL	100%

A theory about human nature and grading: Most human beings turn out average work most of the time. Many can do superior work. Of that many, most could do excellent work. The factors involved are obvious: native intellect, gifts from the gods, interest, desire to succeed, desire to learn, discipline, and sheer hard work. The first two are beyond our control. The others are within our control.

To compute your final grade, add up your point totals, apply the appropriate percentages, then refer to the grading system summarized here:

A = 93-100	A-= 90-92	B+=88-89	B=83-87
B- = 80-82	C+= 78-79	C=73-77	C-=70-72
D+= 68-69	D=60-67	F=59 and below	

Definitions of the grades can be found in the Berry College Catalog. "A" students will demonstrate an outstanding mastery of course material and will perform **far above**

that required for credit in the course and **far above** that usually seen in the course. The “A” grade should be awarded sparingly and should identify student performance that is relatively unusual in the course.

Attendance/class participation

You are required to be in class. Recognizing that illness or personal problems may, rarely, cause one not to be able to come to class, two absences and/or latenesses are allowed before your course grade is affected. Unless credible, extreme circumstances arise that cause more than two absences, any absence beyond the two will deduct a point from the professionalism/participation portion of the course grade.



You are required to bring relevant readings, journal entries, and other materials to class as outlined elsewhere on daily syllabus. Failure to have copies of assigned reading materials could also result in professionalism/participation deductions.

What you will need

Romans, by R. W. Stott
Bible, preferably New International Version, but any version is acceptable

Other resources

N. T. Wright's website: <http://www.ntwrightpage.com>

Video:

- N. T. Wright discussing Romans: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7gIk-aSt-IM>
- And http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jN_LSIF9ySk&feature=related

Updates on Pauline scholarship:

- <http://www.ntgateway.com/paul-the-apostle/romans/>
- <http://www.ntgateway.com/paul-the-apostle/>
- <http://www.thepaulpage.com/>

General resource website for Romans:

http://www.theopedia.com/Epistle_to_the_Romans

Commentaries:

- *Romans*, part of the New Interpreter's Bible, N. T. Wright
- *Paul for Everyone: Romans*, Part 1 (Chapters 1-8) and Part 2 (Chapters 9-16), N. T. Wright (Westminster John Knox Press)
- *Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power*, John Stott (InterVarsity Press)
- *Romans*, F. F. Bruce, part of the Tyndale New Testament commentary series
- *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, F. F. Bruce
- *The Epistle to the Romans*, Leon Morris (Eerdmans)

- *The Epistle to the Romans*, Karl Barth (Oxford University Press)
- *Encountering the Book of Romans: A Theological Exposition*, Douglas J. Moo (Baker Academic)
- *Commentary on Romans*, NIV Application Commentary series, Doug Moo.

Other Romans resources:

- *The Ordinary Hero*, Tim Chester (more devotional than commentary)
- http://www.theopedia.com/Epistle_to_the_Romans

Stuff you need to know

Instructor: Dr. Brian Carroll, Laughlin 100

Office phone: 706.368.6944 (direct)

E-mail: bc@berry.edu | bc@unc.edu

Home page: <http://www.cubanxgiants.com>

Blog: <http://wanderingrocks.wordpress.com>

Office hours: MWF 10-noon; 2-4 | by appointment | walk-ins welcome

Decorum



Distractions, including digital devices: I am easily distracted; ringing cell phones, therefore, will be lobbed out of the classroom window or run over with a truck. Texters will be publicly humiliated. Late arrivals will be stared down unmercifully. In short, be professional and civil, pay attention and don't distract anyone, including the professor. If you are unsure what "civil" means, the professor would be happy to elaborate.

Preparation: Complete the assignments and be ready to tackle the activities of the day. Be ready to discuss and debate ideas, approaches and opinions.

Academic integrity: Because academic integrity is the foundation of college life at Berry, academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure on the assignment in question. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, fabrication, submitting the same work in multiple courses, and aiding and abetting. For definitions of these terms, please consult the instructor. Students who are sanctioned for violating the academic integrity policy forfeit the right to withdraw from the class with a grade of "W."

Writing requirements

You will be writing throughout the semester, realizing that writing IS thinking. It's difficult to write every day; it's difficult to write poorly every day. As your writing improves, so will your thinking, which will produce yet better writing. A virtuous cycle. The course asks you to write in three basic forms or formats: two-page response papers, a deep analysis of roughly 10 pages, and very short, discursive comments to the class blog, <http://wanderingrocks.wordpress.com>.

The various writing assignments will invite students to engage in the pursuit of the course goals as outlined above. These projects should not be considered informal diary

entries of cryptic, vague thoughts, randomly recalled as if they were inspired by a muse. Rather, they should be a deliberate and systematic analysis of ideas written in complete sentences and paragraphs as appropriate. Just as Paul did.

To give you a sense of the kinds of writing you will be doing, below are a few possibilities for writing emphases in your response papers. The list is not comprehensive, but should help you begin thinking about what to write (and how to write):

1. Consider significant arguments that cause you to think, to recognize a new perspective on or a new analysis of some idea, issue, or passage from Paul's letter. In this type of paper, you would define what the key idea is and then explain or analyze how and why that idea is significant to other parts of the letter or to larger issues under discussion in the class. Please do not re-tell, re-phrase or merely summarize what you have read. Explain and analyze what ideas in the passages are provocative, new, troubling, brilliant and insightful.



2. Think about and comment on some of the **implications** of one or more specific ideas in the letter or commentary or analysis of the article: implications for your understanding of the letter, or of Paul's or a commentator's key ideas; for ideas you have previously held; for values, beliefs related to our culture; or for your own understanding, values, beliefs, behaviors as any one or more of those relate to law, justice, mercy, or grace. In other words, "So what?" How does it matter?

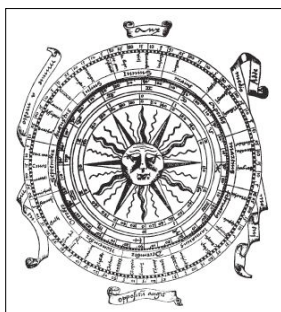
3. Once we've read a few articles, I will ask you to write about how you see how two or more ideas interact. What is it you have noticed; why is it intellectually or spiritually engaging? What are some questions and issues that have arisen directly from readings or class discussion that you want to pursue further?

For all of the ideas and themes above, **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE NIGHT BEFORE TO WRITE YOUR PAPERS.** As Ernest Hemingway put it: "All first drafts are sh--." And remember rule one of and for writing: "Sit your butt in the chair."

Revisions of earlier ideas/analyses will also be required. You will get fair warning on when these will be due, and which papers you are to revise. These revisions (think 're-VISIONing,' seeing anew) are critical, both for discussion and for your own journey.

You will get much more help with the writing projects as the semester unfolds.

CALENDAR of class sessions



Early Roman calendar

The calendar is an educated guess outlining the various activities we will undertake. Small or significant changes will be announced in class so that you can alter our tentative class plan as needed. If you are absent and if changes are made, you are still responsible for those changes.

Print and bring all articles to class on day(s) they are to be discussed, and of course you should have read them prior to our discussion of them.

Week 1: Jan. 10, 12

Introduction to class and each other. Review class policies and what we will be doing. Discuss learning and thinking—both critical and analytical. Discuss why learning (and un-learning) is often difficult. Introduction to Paul's letter to the Romans.

CONDEMNATION BY THE LAW: IS GOD THERE?

Week 2: Jan. 17, 19

Romans 1: Paul introduces himself and presents his credentials. Begins his almost legal, or law-like, case against humanity. LAW

Week 3: Jan. 24, 26

Romans 2: The case against humanity. Verdict: CONDEMNED. LAW

JUSTIFICATION APART FROM THE LAW: DOES GOD CARE?

Week 4, Jan. 31, Feb. 2

Romans 3: A righteousness apart from the law is revealed. MERCY

Week 5, Feb. 7, 9

Romans 4: Justified by faith, not works. Example? Abraham. MERCY

PRIVILEGES OF THE BELIEVER

Week 6, Feb. 14, 16

Romans 5: Born into Adam and death; re-born into Christ and life. MERCY

Week 7, Feb. 21, 23

Romans 6: Identity. Motivations. GRACE

Week 8, Feb. 28, March 2

Romans 7: What then is the purpose of the law? LAW

SPRING BREAK: March 4-12

Week 9, March 14, 16

Romans 8: Life, loss and suffering. GRACE

SOVEREIGNTY OF AND SELECTION BY GOD: IS GOD FAIR?

Week 10: March 21, 23

Romans 9-10: The sovereignty of and selection by God. LAW

Week 11: March 28, 30

Romans 11: Selection by God. GRACE

TRANSFORMED LIVING: SACRIFICE, SUBMISSION, FORBEARANCE, FORGIVENESS

Week 12: April 3, 5

Romans 12: In view of God's mercy, a response. LIFE

Week 13: April 10, 12

Romans 13-14: Application by God's community of believers. GRACE

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Week 14: April 17, 19

Romans 15-16: Forgiveness and women's rights. GRACE

Week 15: April 24

Wrapping up and finishing out. LAW? OR GRACE?