

Course Prospectus

For THL 136 Acts and the Writings of Paul

Overview

This introductory "general education" course in early church history focuses upon the ministry of the Apostle Paul. The course explores the book of Acts and the Pauline epistles in their historical and contextual setting. Designed primarily for distance education, this course provides a means by which persons located away from the traditional college or university classroom can complete a university-level course in early church history. The course focuses students in assigned readings, conceptualization activities, vocabulary building, and upon leading issues.

Course catalog description for this course

Focused in the book of Acts of the Apostles this course deals with Paul's life, times, and writings including the background, purpose, message, and themes of the Pauline epistles; his personal life and character; his companions; and the chronology of the apostle's life. Emphasis is on the theology of his writings and the issues that Paul dealt with in the apostolic church. Upon completion, students should be able to show the message of Acts and each of each of the Pauline Epistles and their implication and application.

Prerequisites and corequisites

There are no Prerequisites or Corequisites for this course.

Course credit

Three (3) semester hours.

Instructional objectives

On completion of this course, a student should be able to:

1. State the definition of basic terms and demonstrate basic biblical research skills in the field of New Testament study including the analysis and exegesis of key Bible passages;
2. Identify the cultural milieu and the geographical context in which first-century Christianity evolved;
3. Demonstrate with particularity Paul's background and preparation for his unique responsibility;
4. Identify and state the background, purpose, and basic themes of the book of Acts and each of the Pauline epistles;
5. State and demonstrate Paul's teaching on various doctrines and themes throughout all of his epistles and in particular his views on Christian living;
6. Identify and demonstrate the leading issues confronted by the early church, and their resolution, regarding Jewish and Gentile converts to Christianity; and
7. Demonstrate the chronology of the early church in the C.E. 31-70 period and to identify and state the significant chronological markers of the apostolic period.

Students with disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. Students who believe they have a disability requiring an

accommodation, should inform the instructor through the “Contact Instructor” link on the course home page.

Technology access

This course requires web access and the student also has to have an established e-mail account. The Adobe Acrobat Reader is necessary to view documents that are PDF files. It may be downloaded free at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>, which may then be installed and used to access PDF documents on this site.

Course evaluation

Student input is welcome for improving this course. Making suggestions by e-mail is helpful. Our goal in this course is to facilitate the successful achievement of all instructional objectives by all students. At the end of the course students have the opportunity of assessing the course. We want to make distance learning courses as effective as we can. We may also ask some other questions concerning a student’s experience in distance learning to help us improve our program. We appreciate students letting us know how we can improve our products and services for them and other distance learners.

Textbooks

The textbooks for this course are:

Elwell, Walter A and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. 2nd Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.

Lester, James D., & Lester, James D., Jr. *Writing Research Papers: A Complete Guide* (12th ed.). New York: Longman, 2006.

and preferably a New King James edition of the Holy Bible.

These may be ordered through the University Bookstore.

Recommended supplementary references are:

Gaebelein, Frank, ed. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976. Volumes 10, 11, and 12.

Goodwin, Frank J. *A Harmony of the Life of St. Paul*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1951.

Stirling, John. *An Atlas of the Acts*. London: George Philip, 1966.

A word of caution, the textbook used in this course is a commercial publication. It represents the views and ideas of its authors, editors, and publishers. Living University does not endorse the text nor vouches for its accuracy. We simply employ it in helping students master the content of the course.

As a Bible student one needs to consult Bible dictionaries, commentaries, and biblically-related magazine or journal articles for information. When doing this a student has to sort out the wheat from the chaff. That is, the student must have sufficient grounding in the Bible to sort out the correct from the incorrect, the plausible from the implausible. This is a critical thinking skill, one we want students to further develop in this course and in all LU courses.

The textbook we selected, Elwell and Yarbrough’s *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey* is a conservative approach written in an easy to read and well laid out fashion. There is some material in this book that is helpful and some that is not. In the setting of this course we want students to not only discern the difference but to know why there is a difference. Our quest is to help students to “rightly divide the word of God” (II Tim 2:5 KJV).

Icebreaker assignment

To officially begin course students must complete an icebreaker assignment by which they introduce themselves to their classmates through the posting of a short autobiography on the course Forum. The icebreaker assignment must be submitted by the eighth day of the semester. Students post their

biographies as a reply to the "Bios" topic on the course forum. A student can earn 25 bonus points in this course by doing so "on time." As there are people from all over the world enrolled in this course each autobiography will help all know, understand and appreciate each other. Students are to read and comment on each other's bios throughout the first week of class.

Course requirements and grades

Due dates and extensions

Students must complete the course by the last official day of instruction as set forth in the academic calendar.

Reading and writing exercises

Refer to "Course outline and assignments" section for reading assignments.

Filing writing assignments

For instructions in how to post assignments is provided by visiting the Frequently Asked Questions pages through the link on the course homepage.

Study tips

Distance learning emphasizes self-motivation. The instructor functions as a facilitator with the student as the driving force in mastering course content. Students are encouraged to not put off completing their readings and assignments. While there are many different learning styles, the following strategy should serve the needs of most students.

- Look over assigned readings.
- Read the assigned readings making notes before viewing the assigned lecture.
- Define terms in the assignment. The exams will specifically test basic terminology. Students should develop their biblical and theology vocabulary as they proceed assignment by assignment.
- As students view lectures they should complete their notes.
- Complete the answers for the writing assignment.
- Each week students should review notes, geographical terms and locations, and the words they defined.
- If a student has a question, ask. Questions should arise in the teaching-learning process. By bringing questions to our attention students not only acquire assistance but they also maintain the interaction necessary in higher education. Use the Inbox on the course home page to send questions.

Lectures

This course includes several lectures by Dr. Meredith and possibly some guests. Links to lectures are placed in lessons.

Quizzes and examinations

Each of the seven lessons has an associated online exam of not more than 28 questions. They are open book exams, but under no circumstances are students to print the quiz. An open book quiz is not a workbook exercise. It is a test where the student can consult his or her notes and books. Students are allowed ninety (90) minutes to complete each quiz. Quizzes are objective tests (which may include true/false, matching, multiple choice questions). Students may be asked:

1. To identify geographic locations on maps by matching numbers on the maps with a list of locations.

2. To answer objective questions covering lectures, readings, vocabulary words and discussion topics.

Research paper

This course requires a term paper. It is a major assignment worth about 25% of a student's final grade. The following guidelines apply:

Objective: To research the Scriptures and other sources to become aware of the Apostle Paul's background and preparation for his unique responsibilities as the apostle to the gentiles.

Purpose: To develop facility in using written resources in biblical study and in applying them in a well reasoned manner.

Criteria: To demonstrate an understanding of the cultural conditions and times in which the Apostle Paul received his education and rearing.

An "A" paper: An "A" level paper will show a careful selection of various works of fairly recent publication worked into the paper in support of the propositions the writer is making. More than 12 references is excessive for this assignment. An "A" paper will have 9 - 12 references evenly balanced between scholarly books, Bible reference works, and journals. An "A" paper will develop the topic along at least three lines—his years growing up in Tarsus and the Greco-Roman world, his Jewish culture and his education and training in Judaism, and his early years in the church, with discussion of any interrelationships. An "A" paper presents an organized presentation of the Apostle Paul's early life.

Sources: There is much information available concerning the Apostle Paul. Students may find material in a variety of sources such as general encyclopedias, Bible commentaries, works on the New Testament and Old Testament, secular and church histories. Do not overlook the New Testament itself as it provides considerable biographical information concerning his youth, family, and career preparation. This is an opportunity for students to use the online resources of the University Library.

Style: Be sure to present a balanced review of the literature dealing with this topic and properly acknowledge and cite sources. The research paper will be graded on form and documentation style as well as organization and content. As applicable the editorial style should be as set forth in the following work:

Lester, James D., & Lester, James D., Jr. *Writing Research Papers: A Complete Guide* (12th ed.). New York: Longman, 2006.

Students will also find the following a useful reference guide:

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. 6th edition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Length: This research paper should be from 8-12 pages. One should not exceed twelve (12) typewritten or word processed pages double spaced (excluding a title page) with 10 point Courier or the equivalent, including the "works cited" page(s).

Value: 258 points.

Due date: The research paper is due at the end of Lesson 6. Late papers will be marked down one (1) letter grade unless there are extenuating circumstances.

Grading

A course grade will be determined based on the number of points a student has earned over the semester as follows:

Short Writing Assignments (seven, each worth 50 points, for a total of 350 points)
Research Paper (258 points)
Quizzes (seven, each worth 56 points, for a total of 392 points; online, open book]
TOTAL 1,000 points

By getting the autobiography posted on time can earn a student 25 bonus points. These points could make the difference between an A or a B, or passing or not passing.

Grades are assigned in the traditional American style of an A, B, C, D, or F. In distance learning we believe that mastery of the subject matter is achieved when a student can demonstrate that they have achieved 80% of the objectives for a course. That means that we want students to earn at least 800 points in this course. If they do not do so then they have not developed the mastery we would like them to have.

We want this course to be competency-based and so it is possible for the entire class to receive an A or a B. There is no artificial curving of scores in the assignment of grades (if you don't know what that means, don't worry about it). Mastery of the material is what one's goal should be.

Grades are assigned by points as follows:

- A 900-1000 points
- B 800-899 points
- C 700-799 points
- D 600-699 points
- F Below 600 points

Academic irregularity

Students have the responsibility for conducting themselves in such a manner as to avoid any suspicion that they are improperly giving or receiving aid on any assignment or examination. An academic irregularity not only includes cheating but also includes plagiarism (taking another's ideas and/or words and presenting them as if they were the writer's own) and the submitting of the same paper in separate courses without prior consent from the faculty members concerned.

In cases of suspected academic irregularity, faculty members are authorized to refuse to grade such papers, in whole or in part, or examinations, and to record each of them as a failure.

If an academic irregularity is sufficiently serious, the University may take one or more of, but not limited to, the following actions:

1. Drop the student from the course with a grade of F;
2. Place the student on academic probation; and/or
3. Dismiss the student from the University.

Course calendar

Lesson	Readings (this is not an exhaustive list, some additional readings will be added during the semester)
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Lesson 1 FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH OF GOD AND THE WORK IN JUDEA

	Elwell and Yarbrough Chapter 13 & 14 (pp. 193-222).
Topic 1 The Commission of the Apostles from Christ	Acts 1:1-11
Topic 2 The Equipment of the Disciples for their Task	Acts 1:12-2:47 "Church of God Founded (CE 34-38)" in <i>Chronology of the Apostolic Age</i> Chapter 4 (Founding of the Church) in <i>The First Christians</i> .
Topic 3 The Development of the Work in Jerusalem	Acts 3:1-7:60

Lesson 2 THE EXTENSION OF THE GOSPEL

Topic 1 The Extension of the Gospel to Judea, Samaria, and the Surrounding territory	Acts 8:1-40 Elwell and Yarbrough Chapter 17 (pp. 253-271) Safrai, Shmuel. "The Place of Women in First-Century Synagogues." <i>Jerusalem Perspective</i> . Safrai, Shmuel. "Synagogue and Sabbath." <i>Jerusalem Perspective</i> .
Topic 2 Paul's Conversion and Early Years	Acts 9:1-30 "Period of Paul's Conversion (CE 34-38)" in <i>Chronology of the Apostolic Age</i> . The section on Peter and the conversion of Cornelius at Acts 9:31-11:18. "Peter's Ministry in Lydda and Joppa (ca. CE 40)" in <i>Chronology of the Apostolic Age</i> .
Topic 3 Paul's Education and Background	Optional background reading: Findlay, F. F. First part of the section entitled "The Life of St. Paul" (pp. 697-703) in <i>A Dictionary of the Bible</i> . Ed. James Hastings. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1898. Ramsey, W. F. Chapter 2 (pp. 24-29) in <i>St. Paul the Traveler and the Roman Citizen</i> . Tenth edition. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907.

Lesson 3 BARNABAS AND PAUL AT ANTIOCH, C.E. 33-45

Topic 1 Paul's Antiochene Ministry with Barnabas,	Acts 11:19-12:25.
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C.E. 38-45

"Paul the Incessant Traveler" (pp. 1-23 of Chapter 8) in Germano *The First Christians*.

Buth, Randall. "That Small-fry Herod Antipas, or When a Fox Is Not a Fox." *Jerusalem Perspective*.

The section "Antiochene Ministry [CE 38-46]" in Germano *Chronology of the Apostolic Age*

Germano – "The House of Mary"

Lesson 4 FIRST APOSTOLIC TOUR THROUGH THE APOSTOLIC CONFERENCE, C.E. 45-50

Topic 1 First Apostolic Tour and Paul's First Sojourn at Antioch, C.E. 45-50

Acts 13-14.

The sections "First Apostolic Tour [CE 46-48]" and "Sojourn at Antioch [CE 47-50]" in Germano *Chronology of the Apostolic Age*.

Topic 2 Galatians: Background and Major Themes

Galatians 1-6

Hall, Robert G. - "Epispasm—Circumcision in Reverse"

Elwell and Yarbrough Chapter 19 (pp. 296-299 only)

Topic 3 The Apostolic Conference: Issues and their Resolution, C.E. 49/50

Acts 15; 21:17-30

"The Private Visit (Visit 3)" and "The Apostolic Conference Visit (Visit 4)" (pp. 23-29 of Chapter 8) in Germano *The First Christians*.

Pritz, Ray "Who Is a Jew in the Gospels?"

Lesson 5 SECOND AND THIRD APOSTOLIC TOURS, C.E. 50-58

Topic 1 Paul's Second Apostolic Tour, C.E. 50-53

Acts 16:1-18:22, "Corinth in Paul's Time" by Furnish, and "Why Not Idol Meat: Is It What You Eat or Where You Eat It?" by Witherington.

Topic 2 Paul's Third Apostolic Tour, C.E. 53-56

Acts 18:23-21:18.

Lesson 6 ARREST, CONFINEMENT AT CAESAREA, AND FIRST ROMAN CAPTIVITY, C.E. ca. 57-62

Topic 1 Arrest at Jerusalem, Imprisonment at Caesarea, Journey to Rome, and His Civil Detention in Rome, C.E. 58-61

Read Acts 21:18–28:31.

The sections "At Jerusalem and His Judean Imprisonment [CE 57-59]" and "Journey to Rome [CE 59]" in Germano *Chronology of the Apostolic Age*.

"The Collection Visit" (Visit 6) pp. 309-310 in Germano *The First Christians*.

Topic 2 Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon: Background and Major Themes.

Read Ephesians 1:1–6:24

Philippians 3:2–21

The section "Civil Imprisonment at Rome [CE 60-62]" in Germano *Chronology of the Apostolic Age*.

Elwell and Yarbrough Chapter 20 (Ephesians, pp. 307-310; Philippians, pp. 312-314; Colossians,

A research paper will be considered “late” if it not received by the lesson 6 due date.

Lesson 7 PAUL'S FINAL MINISTRY, C.E. 62-68

Topic 1 Visit to Ephesus and Likely Trip to Spain and the West, C.E. 62-66; I Timothy and Titus: Background and Major Themes.	I Timothy 1:1-6:21 Titus 1:1-3:15 The sections “Return to Asia Minor (CE 62-63)”; “Trip to the West (CE 63-66)”; and ‘Return and the Final Days (CE 66-70)” in Germano <i>Chronology of the Apostolic Age</i> . Elwell and Yarbrough Chapter 21 (Thessalonians, Timothy, and Titus, pp. 327-339; stop at Titus).
Topic 2 Hebrews: Background and Major Themes.	Hebrews 1:1–13:25 Elwell and Yarbrough Chapter 22 (Hebrews and James, pp. 347-350, stop at Focal Points).
Topic 3 II Timothy: Background and Major Themes.	Read II Timothy 1:1–4:22.
Topic 4 The Legacy: Formation of an Apostolic Complement to the Hebrew Scriptures	Read all of Chapter 9 (Apostolic Writings) in the <i>First Christians</i> .