

Canadian Mennonite University

Graduate Course Syllabus

BTS – 5270 Romans

Winter Semester 2018; Mondays, Jan 8 ~ Apr 9 (exc Feb 19); 8:30-11:15am

Instructor: Gordon Zerbe, PhD (Princeton Theological Seminary, New Testament); MA (Western Washington, Cultural Anthropology)

Office: North Campus, ph 204-487-3300, ext 616; gzerbe@cmu.ca

Note: The last day for voluntary withdrawal from the course is March 16, 2018.

Course Description

This course examines Paul's letter to the Romans with special attention to matters such as (a) the overall shape of the letter's rhetorical and theological argumentation, (b) the interpretation of particular sections of the letter, (c) the ecclesial, social, political context of the writing of the letter, (d) the context of the letter in Paul's life, ministry and thought, and (e) the meaning of this letter for contemporary Christian reflection.

Course Objectives

In this course students will

- acquire skills in the close reading and interpretation of Romans;
- develop an understanding of the letter structure and theological argumentation of Romans;
- gain an appreciation for the rhetorical, strategic and pastoral aims that appear to have motivated Paul in writing Romans, in connection with challenges within the emerging movement of Christ-adherents and in relation to dynamics and pressures from the broader Greco-Roman world;
- become familiar with the main contours in the history of Christian interpretation of Romans;
- reflect on the significance of Romans for contemporary Christian thought and practice.

Required Textbooks

Gaventa, Beverly Roberts. *When in Romans: An Invitation to Linger with the Gospel according to Paul*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016.

Toews, John E. *Romans*. Believers Church Bible Commentary. Scottdale/Waterloo: Herald Press, 2004.

Recommended: Katherine Grieb, *The Story of Romans: A Narrative Defense of God's Righteousness*. Westminster/John Knox Press, 2002.

Course Requirements

1. 10% Class preparation and participation. As way to encourage interaction, prior to each class sessions students are expected to read the appropriate passage(s) in the letter being considered, and counterpart sections in the recommended commentaries. Responsibilities to raise key questions for class deliberation, pertaining to a given text, will be assigned as the course proceeds. While no grade will be assigned, overall course grades may be reduced in the event of persistent poor class preparation or lack of attendance.
2. 25% Exegetical "probe" and short class presentation on a passage. Students should prepare a short (1,250-word) exegetical "probe" as the basis for a short presentation and ensuing discussion, emailed to the rest of the class and the instructor by noon the day before the class in question.

3. 50% Research paper on a passage in Romans or on a topic pertaining to Romans. 5,000 words.
This may be on the same passage for the class presentation
Due: April 18, 2018
4. 15% Reading reports.
 - (a) Textbooks. Students will submit a reading report on each of the two textbooks, affirming that the reading was completed. Each report should be 3-4 pages and may include a brief summary of the thesis, notation of key insights gleaned from the book (this section may be in point/note form), and a review of the book's value or significance for the study and interpretation of Romans.
 - (b) Supplementary Reading, approx. 300-500 pages. Select another commentary to read alongside Toews, or select a monograph on a topic pertaining to Paul or Romans, or select a series of articles on Paul or Romans. Provide a 2-page report on supplementary reading.

Due date: All course materials are due on April 20, 2018.

Course materials may be submitted electronically.

Recommended: You do not need to know biblical Greek to take this course. Still, students will be encouraged to supplement their study by means of an "interlinear" text of Romans (the Greek text with word-for-word English correspondences underneath). As one person has said: to read only in a translation is to read in black and white; to attend to the Greek original is to read in colour. To effectively use such an interlinear text, students will only need to learn the Greek alphabet. Assistance on this will be available the first day of class, although students are advised to check with the instructor before the course begins for support in this area. While looking at a Greek text may seem scary at first, students will feel much rewarded for the extra element.

Academic Policies and Resources

Students should be aware of CMU Academic Policies, particularly those regarding academic misconduct (plagiarism and cheating), class attendance, extensions, and exam rescheduling, which apply to all University courses. These are detailed on CMU's website (<http://www.cmu.ca/students.php?s=registrar&p=policies>) and in the CMU Calendar (also available online: <http://www.cmu.ca/academics.php?s=calendar>).

Professor Access and Availability: Emails to the professor are welcome, but they cannot be assumed to have been received until a receipt or response has been issued in reply. Office Hours: I am in my office quite steadily when not teaching or in meetings; unscheduled drop-ins are welcome.

Student Support Services

CMU strives to provide a fair and supportive learning environment for academically qualified students with disabilities. If you are eligible for these services or have questions about becoming eligible, please contact Sandra Loepky, Coordinator of Disability Services at sloepky@cmu.ca or 204.487.3300 x.340.

Academic supports for students (no cost)

- ✓ Writing assistance is available to any student registered in ACWR-090, Academic Writing Lab. Email the instructor, to set up an appointment (epeterson@cmu.ca).
- ✓ PAL – Peer Assisted Learning (Students Helping Students) is available for academic assistance in all of our programs. Watch the Daily and the bulletin boards for times.
- ✓ Academic Tutor, Denny Smith, is available to all students. *Volunteer tutors* are also available to work on a one-on-one basis with students. See Adelia Neufeld Wiens, Coordinator of Student

Advising, to access these services.

Grading Scheme:

Final grades for this course may be A+, A, B+, B, C+, C, D, or F (see *CMU Calendar*). All work for this course will receive one of these letter grades. Please note that grades submitted by instructors become final only after they are vetted by the Dean's office.

Selected Bibliography

See the extensive bibliographies in Grieb and Toews.