

BRIERCREST

BLST 825 Romans Fall 2023

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Course Dates: 23-27 October 2023
Course Delivery Method: In-Person Modular
3 Credit Hours



COURSE DESCRIPTION

A study of Paul's letter to the Romans, with particular attention to its historical setting, its theological argument, and its continuing significance for the church.

WHY STUDY ROMANS?

Romans is a complex, tightly-argued letter that is one of the most bewildering books in the New Testament. Many of the basic assumptions of Paul, the first century Jew, and the issues that preoccupied him, are foreign to a predominantly Gentile church twenty centuries later. And yet Paul's letter to the Romans has exerted a profound influence on many of the movers and shakers of Christian history:

- Augustine (354-430), the most influential Christian thinker between the New Testament and the Reformation, was converted after reading Romans 13:13-14.
- Martin Luther (1483-1546) "felt [him]self to have been born again" while studying Romans 1:17; his conclusions about the meaning of the "righteousness of God" triggered the Protestant Reformation.
- It was after reading the preface to Luther's commentary on Romans that John Wesley's (1703-1791) "heart was strangely warmed"; his subsequent preaching about salvation by faith played an instrumental role in England's Evangelical revival and in the founding of the Methodist movement.

Reading Paul's letter to the Romans in its historical context is worth the effort because, as Ernst Käsemann put it, "whenever [Paul] is rediscovered . . . there issues from him explosive power."

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this course we will make a concentrated attempt to follow Paul's argument on his own terms and in his own context. We will examine what can be known about the historical setting and purpose of Romans and look at Paul's Greco-Roman and Jewish context as it relates to the interpretation of the text. We will become familiar with debated topics in current scholarship on Romans and pause to consider some of the many hermeneutical and theological questions raised by the letter. By the end of this course, you will be able to summarize your understanding of the structure of Paul's argument, and be able to justify it with evidence from the text. Perhaps most important, you will be equipped to engage Romans seriously as Christian Scripture, as Augustine, Luther and Wesley did before you.

It will take concentration and commitment to hold together the big picture of Paul's argument and also attend to the details of this demanding text. Consider this syllabus your learning contract: During our week together, we will participate in a learning community whose success depends on joint engagement with the subject matter, with the assigned readings and with each other. By choosing to take this course, you agree to prepare diligently, to participate actively, and to help create a positive learning environment for your fellow students.

COURSE TEXTS

Required

Barclay, John M. G. *Paul and the Power of Grace*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020.

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

Keck, Leander E. *Romans*. ANTC. Nashville: Abingdon, 2005.

McKnight, Scot, and Joseph B. Modica, eds. *Preaching Romans: Four Perspectives*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019.

Reserve Reading (on Canvas)

McCaulley, Esau. "Freedom Is No Fear: The New Testament and a Theology of Policing." Pages 25–46 in *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2020.

Staples, Jason A. "What Do the Gentiles Have to Do with 'All Israel'? A Fresh Look at Romans 11:25–27." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130, no. 2 (2011): 371–90.

Students are expected to refer to Briercrest Seminary's Format and Style Guides and Guide for Writing Research Papers, available as PDF documents here: <https://www.mybriercrest.ca/seminary/documents/>.

These texts are available in store and online at the Briercrest Bookstore: <http://briercrest.ca/bookstore>.

Students are responsible for course materials and communication on Canvas (<https://briercrest.instructure.com>; cf. <http://briercrest.ca/online/canvas>) and their myBriercrest.ca email account.

COURSE OUTLINE

Date	Class Topic & Primary Reading
Mon 23 Oct AM	Introducing Romans; Romans 1
Mon 23 Oct PM	Romans 2:1-3:20
Tues 24 Oct AM	Romans 3:21-4:25
Tues 24 Oct PM	Romans 5
Wed 25 Oct AM	Romans 6-7
Wed 25 Oct PM	Romans 8
Thurs 26 Oct AM	Romans 9-11
Thurs 26 Oct PM	Romans 9-11 (cont'd); Romans 12
Fri 27 Oct AM	Romans 13; Romans 14:1-15:13
Fri 27 Oct PM	Romans 14-15 (cont'd); 15:14-16:27

Note: This course will extend through the afternoon of Friday 27 October. We will aim to conclude class on Friday by 4:00 p.m.

ASSIGNMENTS (TO BE SUBMITTED ON CANVAS)

Please submit all written assignments to Canvas.

PRE-COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

A. Romans Reading (10%): Read Paul's letter to the Romans at least twice before class begins and at least once during the week of class. Fill in the Romans Reading Log on Canvas to indicate completion.

B. Barclay & Gaventa Reading Responses (20%):

Due: Monday 23 October @ 9 a.m.

1. John Barclay, *Paul and the Power of Grace*: Read pages 1-37, 75-159 in *Paul and the Power of Grace*, reading Romans alongside Barclay's chapters on Romans. In 2-3 double-spaced pages (600-900 words) (a) describe how, according to Barclay, Paul "perfects" grace in his letter to the Romans, referring to relevant passages in Romans where the "perfections" of grace appear; (b) reflect on how Barclay's study has affected your understanding of Romans and/or Paul's theology; (c) optional: respond with questions or by identifying aspects of Barclay's argument that you find unconvincing. (Note: At least half of the assignment should be devoted to part a.)

2. Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *When in Romans*: Read Gaventa's short *Invitation to Linger with the Gospel According to Paul* in its entirety alongside one of your readings of Romans. In 2-3 double-spaced pages (600-900 words), (a) summarize the argument of chapters 1-4, paying special attention to each chapter's theme and specific hermeneutical advice; (b) respond by noting aspects of Gaventa's argument that you find unconvincing and (briefly) explaining why.

C. Issues in Romans (15%):

Due: Monday 23 October @ 9 a.m.

Read the first four chapters and the conclusion in *Preaching Romans* (pp. 3-79, 169-174) as well as the essays by Jason Staples and Esau McCaulley on Canvas. For *each* essay / chapter: (a) Summarize the argument in your own words in one paragraph. Your summaries should aim to state the problem the essay addresses, its thesis, and (very briefly) the evidence that supports the thesis. (b) Respond by raising a question about or critique of the author's argument in light of your own reading of Romans (2-4 sentences).

Note: Your pre-course assignments must be written in paragraph form and in your own words. Occasional quotations from Barclay, Gaventa, the Bible, etc., are permitted, as long as all quotations—including partial sentences—are placed within quotation marks and followed by a reference to the correct page number (or Bible reference) in parentheses following the quotation. E.g., Gaventa labels the opposing groups in Romans 14 "lettuce-eaters" and "garbage-bellies" (108). With the exception of parenthetical references to primary and secondary sources, your reading responses should follow the Briercrest Chicago-Style Format Guide (<https://www.mybriercrest.ca/college/documents/>).

MID-COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

Romans Reading (cont'd): Read the assigned chapters from Romans before each day of class, following the schedule in the course outline. Fill in the Romans Reading Log on Canvas to indicate completion.

D. Essay Presentation (10%): In a 5-10 minute presentation, briefly review and evaluate the argument of one of the assigned essays for the benefit of your fellow students. Your summary of the argument should aim to state the problem the essay addresses, its thesis, and (briefly) the evidence that supports the thesis. Evaluate the essay in light of evidence in Romans (and possibly other assigned readings), and raise two or three questions for discussion. *Note:* Plan to spend at least half of your presentation evaluating the essay. Essays will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. Please email me to indicate your preference.

E. Keck Reading (10%) - Read Romans carefully, along with Keck's commentary on Romans. In 2-3 double-spaced pages (600-900 words), (a) briefly evaluate Keck's commentary and develop 3-5 questions about specific aspects of Keck's interpretation of Romans, explaining why you are not persuaded by Keck's exegesis in each case; and (b) indicate completion of the commentary. *Note:* Keck packs a lot into his excellent 385-page commentary. For your own sake, plan to complete the Keck reading before the beginning of mod-week if at all possible. The reading log is **due at the beginning of class on Friday, October 27, 2023.**

POST-COURSE ASSIGNMENT:

F. Major Essay (35%): Write a *persuasive essay* about a central and/or debated issue within a specific passage in Romans. The topic should be something that you find puzzling, something that invites further reflection. The following is a partial list of good paper topics:

Paul's interpretation of Hab 2:4 in Rom 1:17	Resurrection with Christ in Romans 6
The meaning of "God gave them over" in Rom 1:18-32	The function of the Law in Romans 7
The identity of the true Jew in Rom 2:28-29	The identity of the "I" in Romans 7
Paul's argument from Scripture in Rom 3:10-18	The meaning of Rom 8:4
The meaning of the "faith of Jesus Christ" in Rom 3:22	The new creation in Romans 8
The meaning of "propitiation"/"expiation" in Rom 3:25	The meaning of election in Rom 9
Boasting in Romans 4	The meaning of Rom 10:4
The meaning of Rom 5:12	The proclamation of the gospel in Romans 10
The significance of death with Christ in Rom 6:1-11	The meaning of "all Israel will be saved" in Rom 11:26
	The transformation of the mind in Romans 12
	The Christian and government in Rom 13:1-7
	The identity of the "weaker" and "stronger" in Rom 14:1-15:13

The paper should be between **10-12 pages (3000-3600 words)** in length (not including outline and bibliography) and is **due on 22 December 2023 (submitted to Canvas)**. More details will be provided in class.

Note: In lieu of the major essay, students may choose to memorize the book of Romans in its entirety, and to recite it at some point during the week of class. Please contact me in advance if you intend to memorize Romans.

SEMINARY CALENDAR

Students are expected to be aware of the policies that govern course work at Briercrest Seminary, all of which are published in the current Seminary Calendar:

<https://www.briercrestseminary.ca/academics/calendar/>.

Attendance Policy

In order to benefit fully from a seminary education, to be good stewards of time and finances, and to be considerate of their classmates and faculty members, students must be in class at every opportunity.

Modular Courses

Students are expected to attend 100 per cent of each modular for which they register. If this is impossible due to extenuating circumstances, arrangements must be made with the course professor before the first day of class. If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending class, a maximum of one (1) full day of class can be foregone. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Online Courses

If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending scheduled meeting times, then up to 20% of meeting time can be foregone. Students missing scheduled meeting times should make every effort to inform the course professor prior to any time missed. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Semester-Based Courses

All students missing more than two full weeks of a particular course from registration to the last day of classes will receive an automatic fail (0%). A student may appeal a course failure due to excessive absences. Successful appeals will be granted only in rare cases where all absences are clearly beyond the student's control. Appeals must be made through the Academic Appeal Process.

Course Schedules

Modular classes begin at 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning and run a minimum of 30 hours through the course of the week. The schedule is determined by the course professor. Students should check the syllabus for specifics. When the syllabus does not state class times, students are responsible to check with the professor prior to making travel plans.

Assignment Submission

All assignments must be submitted no later than eight weeks after the last day of class as stated in the syllabus. The correct due dates will be clearly noted in the syllabus and each faculty member will state in their syllabus how assignments should be submitted. Assignments submitted within a week after the due date will be accepted with a 10 per cent penalty. For additional information refer to the late assignment policy or the extension policy in the [academic calendar](#).

Return of Graded Assignments

Professors are expected to return graded assignments within six weeks of the due date. If they fail to do so, students may submit an inquiry to the [Seminary](#). If an extension is granted, the professor is no longer obligated to meet this deadline.

Academic Honesty

As members of the Briercrest learning community, students have a responsibility to conduct themselves with integrity and honour. Students who cheat on exams, plagiarize, inappropriately collaborate, or use generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT) without instructor authorization in the preparation and/or submission of their assignments violate the trust placed in them by their instructors, fellow students, and the seminary. Any such actions constitute a breach of academic honesty and will result in serious consequences, such as failure of an assignment, failure of a course, or expulsion from the seminary.

Plagiarism, whether intentional or involuntary, is the submission of the work of others, published or unpublished, in whole or in part without acknowledgment or proper documentation. All information, ideas and/or direct quotations taken from other primary or secondary sources must be documented appropriately. Students are responsible to ensure they are using their sources with transparency and honesty. For more details, consult the [Seminary Calendar](#). In addition to being familiar with these pages, instructors assume that you have completed the Briercrest Academic Integrity course on [Canvas](#) and understand the information contained in it.

Academic Accommodations

Any student with a disability, injury, or health condition (mental or physical) who may need academic accommodations (permanent or temporary) should contact the ARC Coordinator in person (L234 in the Library), by phone (1-306-801-6159), or by email (arc@briercrest.ca). Documentation from a qualified practitioner will be required (i.e., medical doctor, psychologist, etc.). It is recommended that students meet with their professors to discuss the requirements of their accommodations (i.e., how the student will receive lecture notes, or how the professor wants to receive extension requests).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Note: Especially significant books are marked with an asterisk (*) and are on 'reserve' in the library.

Some Important Modern Commentaries on Romans

- *Achtmeier, Paul J. *Romans*. Interpretation. Atlanta: John Knox, 1985.
- *Barrett, C. K. *The Epistle to the Romans*. 2d ed. Black's New Testament Commentary. London: Black, 1991.
- *Barth, Karl. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Translated by Edwyn C. Hoskyns. London: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- *Bird, Michael F. *Romans*. Story of God. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.
- Black, Matthew. *Romans*. NCB. London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1973.
- Boers, Hendrikus. *The Justification of the Gentiles: Paul's Letters to the Galatians and Romans*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans: Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985.
- Bruner, Frederick Dale. *The Letter to the Romans: A Short Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021.
- *Byrne, Brendan. *Romans*. Sacra Pagina 6. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996.
- Campbell, William S. *Romans: A Social Identity Commentary*. London: T&T Clark, 2023.
- *Cranfield, C. E. B. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. 2 vols. ICC. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975, 1979.
- *Cranfield, C. E. B. *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985.
- Dodd, C. H. *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*. 1932. Repr. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1954.

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- *Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AB. New York: Doubleday, 1993.
- Garland, David E. *Romans*. TNTC. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021.
- *Gorman, Michael J. *Romans: A Theological and Pastoral Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022.
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- Hodge, Charles. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. 1886. Repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950.
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- *Hultgren, Arland J. *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011.
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- *Johnson, Luke Timothy. *Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary*. Reading the New Testament. Crossroad, 1997.
- *Käsemann, Ernst. *Commentary on Romans*. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.
- *Keck, Leander E. *Romans*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2005.
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- *Longenecker, Richard N. *The Epistle to the Romans*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015.
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- Blackwell, Ben C., John K. Goodrich, and Jason Maston, eds. *Reading Romans in Context: Paul and Second Temple Judaism*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015.
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Some Monographs on Romans

N.B. For additional studies on your passage consult ATLAS as well as the bibliographies in major commentaries.

Romans 1-4

- Bell, Richard H. *No One Seeks for God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 1:18-3:20*. WUNT 106. Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1998.
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Romans 9-11

- Abasciano, Brian J. *Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9:10-18: An Intertextual and Theological Exegesis*. New York: T & T Clark, 2011.
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Romans 12-16

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