



BLST 825 Romans Fall 2025

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Course Dates: 20-24 October 2025
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, theological argument, and 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."

SEMINARY-WIDE OUTCOMES

Students will graduate:

1. Describing and demonstrating evangelical faith and values.
2. Preparing to serve God's kingdom in its diversity. Describe God, God's kingdom, and your calling (vocational sensitivity) within it, including the types of contexts and people you feel best prepared to serve.
3. Participating in the action of our Triune God through formation of the soul (i.e., virtue and spiritual integrity), mind (academic rigour), and strength (vocation).



COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

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 you agree to 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

Gaventa, Beverly Roberts. *Romans: A Commentary*. NTL. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2024.

This text is available in store and online at the Briercrest Bookstore: <http://briercrest.ca/bookstore>.

Reserve Reading (on Canvas)

Barclay, John M. G. "Perfections of Gift and Grace." Pages 12–23 in *Paul and the Power of Grace*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020.

Dunn, James D. G. "The New Perspective on Paul." *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 65, no. 2 (1983): 95–122 (also online: <http://markgoodacre.org/PaulPage/New.html>).

Gorman, Michael J. "'Justified by Faith ... Crucified with Christ': Reconciliation with God through Participation in Christ." Pages 111–131 in *Reading Paul*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008.

Westerholm, Stephen. "Romans and the 'Lutheran' Paul." Pages 3–19 in *Preaching Romans: Four Perspectives*. Edited by Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019.

Wright, N. T. "Romans 8 in Context." Pages 1–26 in *Into the Heart of Romans: A Deep Dive into Paul's Greatest Letter*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2023.

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/>.

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

COURSE OUTLINE

Date	Class Topic & Primary Reading
Mon 20 Oct AM	Introducing Romans; Romans 1
Mon 20 Oct PM	Romans 2:1-3:20
Tues 21 Oct AM	Romans 3:21-4:25
Tues 21 Oct PM	Romans 5
Wed 22 Oct AM	Romans 6-7
Wed 22 Oct PM	Romans 8
Thurs 23 Oct AM	Romans 9-11
Thurs 23 Oct PM	Romans 9-11 (cont'd); Romans 12

Note: This course will extend through the afternoon of Friday 24 October. We will aim to conclude class on Friday by 4:00 p.m.

Date	Class Topic & Primary Reading
Fri 24 Oct AM	Romans 13; Romans 14:1-15:13
Fri 24 Oct PM	Romans 14-15 (cont'd); 15:14-16:27

ASSIGNMENTS

Please submit all written assignments to Canvas.

Note:

- Because I am interested in what *you* think and in your own learning—including learning to communicate effectively in writing—the use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Claude, Copilot, Gemini, Grammarly Pro, etc., is ***strictly forbidden*** in this course.
- All written assignments for this course must be your own work presented in your own words. Occasional quotations from 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).
- Students must be able to talk cogently about their written assignments and their research process. At the professor's discretion, an oral interview may be required before a grade is assigned for any assignment. Failure to participate in the interview process will result in a 0 on the assignment.

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. Commentary Reading & Theme Report (25%)

1. Gaventa Reading (10%): In preparation for class, read through Beverly Gaventa's important new commentary on Romans. Fill out the reading log on Canvas when you have completed the reading (*due in stages on 19 September, 3 October, and 17 October*).

2. Theme Report (15%): As you make your way through Gaventa's commentary, choose a theme that Gaventa emphasizes (e.g., "all," apocalypse, cosmic, Death, grace, freedom and slavery, human and divine agency, Phoebe, power, righteousness, salvation, Sin, worship), and track what she says about it. In a 3-5 pp. report, summarize what Gaventa says about the theme. Your summary should interact with major passages in the commentary where the theme is discussed and mention where in Romans the theme appears. Conclude your report with a brief evaluation: Do you find Gaventa's treatment of the topic compelling? Why or why not? More generally, how has your understanding of Romans changed as a result of reading Gaventa's commentary? Would you recommend it to others? **Due: Monday 20 October @ 9 a.m.**

Note: Please use parenthetical references instead of footnotes for this assignment.

- E.g., Gaventa labels the opposing groups in Romans 14 "lettuce-eaters" and "garbage-bellies" (108).
- E.g., When Paul writes, "the power of God is revealed" (Rom 1:16), he means that "God's righteousness is being revealed apocalyptically" (51).

In all other respects, follow the Briercrest Chicago-Style Format Guide (<https://www.mybriercrest.ca/college/documents/>).

C. Romans and Paul's Theology (10%): Read the assigned essays by Barclay, Dunn, Gorman, Westerholm and Wright before class begins, and (a) indicate completion of the essay on Canvas, and (b) submit one developed discussion question per essay that relates the essay to the text of Romans.

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. Book Review (20%): Choose a book from the list below or from the course bibliography and prepare a written book review (about 1500 words), and a 10-15-minute oral presentation that aims either to convince your fellow students to read the book or to explain why they should avoid it. In your review and presentation, provide an orientation to the book's content and structure, summarize its argument (typically chapter-by-chapter), evaluate the argument based on evidence from Romans, and assess its usefulness for understanding the letter. (Restrict your evaluation and assessment to approximately one third of the review.) You may use handouts, PowerPoint, or simply read your book review to the class and answer any questions. You may also consult published reviews of the book as long as (1) you have completed a draft of your own review prior to consulting them; and (2) you cite any and all ideas from such reviews (as well as any other sources) in footnotes that you incorporate into your own review. Oral presentations will be scheduled throughout the week, beginning with Monday's class.

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.

Gorman, Michael J. *Romans: A Theological and Pastoral Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022.

Keesmaat, Sylvia C., and Brian J. Walsh. *Romans Disarmed: Resisting Empire, Demanding Justice*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2019.

McKnight, Scot. *Reading Romans Backwards: A Gospel of Peace in the Midst of Empire*. Waco: Baylor, 2019.

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

Oakes, Peter. *Reading Romans in Pompeii: Paul's Letter at Ground Level*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009.

Westerholm, Stephen. *Justification Reconsidered: Rethinking a Pauline Theme*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013.

_____. *Understanding Paul: The Early Christian Worldview of the Letter to the Romans*. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

Wright, N. T. *Into the Heart of Romans: A Deep Dive into Paul's Greatest Letter*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2023.

**** Please consult me before making a final decision about the book you wish to review.**

Post-Course Assignment

E. 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
 The meaning of "God gave them over" in Rom 1:18-32
 The identity of the true Jew in Rom 2:28-29
 Paul's argument from Scripture in Rom 3:10-18
 The meaning of the "faith of Jesus Christ" in Rom 3:22
 The meaning of "propitiation"/"expiation" in Rom 3:25
 Boasting in Romans 4
 The meaning of Rom 5:12
 The significance of death with Christ in Rom 6:1-11

Resurrection with Christ in Romans 6
 The function of the Law in Romans 7
 The identity of the "I" in Romans 7
 The meaning of Rom 8:4
 The new creation in Romans 8
 The meaning of election in Rom 9
 The meaning of Rom 10:4
 The proclamation of the gospel in Romans 10
 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). More details will be provided in class.
- **The essay will be due on *Friday 19 December* at 11:59 p.m.**

Note: In lieu of the book review and theme report, 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.

Modular 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 without instructor authorization 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.

Generative AI is an umbrella term for a type of machine learning and a group of algorithms that can create new content, such as text, code, images, videos, music, or a combination of all these formats. Generative AI produces output in response to a query or prompt using generative models such as Large Language Models (LLMs) that rely on large datasets. Generative AI features are also often embedded within tools such as Grammarly, allowing these tools to generate new content, such as the rewriting, paraphrasing, or summarizing of existing text. The generated responses of these tools are probabilistic, which can result in errors and biases in responses.

The use of generative AI to create audio or visual media, to produce outlines, to generate partial or complete drafts of assignments, to answer questions on quizzes or exams, or to edit the grammar of assignment drafts is considered unauthorized unless it is explicitly permitted by the course instructor in writing. All use of generative AI tools must be properly documented.

Students are responsible for ensuring they are using their sources and completing their assignments with transparency and honesty. For more details, consult the [Seminary Calendar](#) and the Briercrest Format Guide. 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

- *Achteemeier, 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.
- *Dunn, James D. G. *Romans 1-16*. 2 vols. WBC. Waco, TX: Word, 1988.
- Eastman, Susan G. *Romans: An Interpretation Bible Commentary*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2025.
- *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.
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- *Gorman, Michael J. *Romans: A Theological and Pastoral Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022.
- Godet, Frederic Louis. *Commentary on Romans*. 1883. Repr. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977.
- Harvey, John D. *Romans*. EGGNT. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2017.
- Hodge, Charles. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. 1886. Repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950.
- Holland, Tom. *Romans: The Divine Marriage: A Biblical Theological Commentary*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011.
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- *Jewett, Robert. *Romans: A Commentary*. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006.
- *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.
- Keener, Craig S. *Romans: A New Covenant Commentary*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009.
- *Kruse, Colin G. *Paul's Letter to the Romans*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012.
- Lloyd-Jones, Martin. *Romans*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978.

- *Longenecker, Richard N. *The Epistle to the Romans*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015.
- *Porter, Stanley E. *The Letter to the Romans: A Linguistic and Literary Commentary*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015.
- *Matera, Frank J. *Romans*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010.
- *Moo, Douglas J. *The Epistle to the Romans*. NICNT. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018.
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- *Morris, Leon. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.
- *Murray, John. *The Epistle to the Romans*. NICNT. 1968. Repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
- *Pate, C. Marvin. *Romans*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013.
- *Sanday, William, and Arthur C. Headlam. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. ICC. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1955.
- *Schreiner, Thomas R. *Romans*. BECNT. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018.
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- *Stuhlmacher, Peter. *Paul's Letter to the Romans*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1994.
- *Talbert, Charles H. *Romans*. Macon, GA: Smyth&Helwys, 2002.
- *Thielman, Frank S. *Romans*. ZEGNT. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018.
- *Witherington III, Ben, and Darlene Hyatt. *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.
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Pre-critical Commentaries and the History of Interpretation

- *Bray, Gerald, ed. *Romans*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998.
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- *Luther, Martin. *Commentary on Romans*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977.
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Westerholm, Stephen. *Romans: Text, Readers, and the History of Interpretation*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2022.

Edited Volumes on Romans

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Hay, David M., and E. Elizabeth Johnson, Editor. *Pauline Theology: Volume III: Romans*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995. Repr. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002.

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Sumney, Jerry L., ed. *Reading Paul's Letter to the Romans*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012.

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.

Berkley, Timothy W. *From a Broken Covenant to Circumcision of the Heart: Pauline Intertextual Exegesis in Romans 2:17-29*. Atlanta: Society of biblical Literature, 2000.

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Romans 5-8

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- Lambrecht, Jan. *The Wretched "I" and Its Liberation: Paul in Romans 7 and 8*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992.
- Meyer, Nicholas. *Adam's Dust and Adam's Glory in the Hodayot and the Letters of Paul: Rethinking Anthropogony and Theology*. NovTSup 168. Leiden: Brill, 2016.
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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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