

CM 493/819 THEO 493/759: Paid Gospel Work in the New Testament
Winter 2026

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Course Dates: February 16-20, 2026
Course Delivery Method: In-Person Modular

3 Credit Hours



COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the dominant assumption that early church leaders lived off the generosity of Christian church members. Exploring social context, New Testament writings, and early church sources, students will discover that most religious leaders, including Jewish teachers and early Christian elders were self-supporting landowners, artisans, and labourers. The course concludes by addressing the “so what?” question for pastors and churches in contemporary culture.

COURSE INTEGRATION

This course provides students with an exciting opportunity to participate in a living, breathing, and somewhat unfinished research project. What began as a professor’s curiosity about the history of paid pastoral work in the late fall of 2022, has resulted in this course and a book project filled with new insights about how early church leaders worked and served without remuneration. Students will have an opportunity to influence the future research trajectory of this largely unexplored area of study.

COURSE TEXTS

Culpepper, R. Allan. *The People of the Parables: Galilee in the Time of Jesus*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2024.

Hock, Ronald F. *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 2007.

Mills, Jason. *Funding Preachers in the New Testament: Rethinking paid Christian work in the First Century and Today*. Manuscript in preparation and is currently unpublished. Students will be given links to chapters on Canvas.

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.briercrestseminary.ca/seminary-life/documents>.

These texts are available in store and online at the Briercrest Bookstore: <https://www.briercrestseminary.ca/seminary-life/bookstore>.

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

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 OUTCOMES

1. Gain a fuller appreciation for the social context of ministry in the New Testament and early church (SO 2, MATS PO 1, MDiv PO 3)
2. Discover how to approach biblical and other primary sources with suspended assumptions and new ideas as a form of spiritual and theological formation (SO 3, MATS PO 3, MDiv PO 1)
3. Consider alternative paradigms for how Jesus, the disciples, and early church leaders functioned (SO 2, MATS PO 1, MDiv PO 3)
4. Wrestle with contemporary vocational implications for the church and one's own ministry calling (SO 2, SO 3, MATS PO 2, MDiv PO 3)

COURSE OUTLINE AND CONTENT

Monday – Building like Jesus and fishing like his disciples

Tuesday – Households, Hospitality and dismantling Paul's apparent case for paid preachers and the New Testament church: Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians and the Corinthians

Wednesday - Paul's apparent case for paid preachers and the New Testament church continued: Paul's Letters to the Philippians, Galatians, and Timothy

Thursday - Landowners, Settling Craftsmen, and Leadership Plurality: Pastoral Vocation during the Apostolic Period

Friday – An ancient paradigm for today's church?

ASSIGNMENTS

Please submit all written assignments to Canvas.

Pre-Course Assignments:

Compare and Contrast Writings in books and chapters – 30% (15% each)

Read chapters 1-3, 5, 9-13, 15, and 17-18 from *People of the Parables* alongside chapter 1 of Mills' project. Then read chapters 1-3 from *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry* alongside chapter 2 of Mills' project. Write two 3-page papers (College) or two 5-page papers (Seminary), one comparing what is

written about the overlapping subjects in Culpepper's book and Mills' chapter 1 and the other comparing the overlapping subjects in Hock's book and Mills' chapter 2. How do Mills' findings about vocation and settings compare to the background described in the other two works? Using headings such as "Pharisees," "Tentmaking," "Hospitality," etc. describe areas of similarity and areas of divergence.

Due: Sunday Evening before the course begins (February 15, 2026)

Mid-Course Assignments:

Facilitating In-Class Discussion - 30%

Students will be assigned a Gospel text or one from the Pauline Epistles that addresses the issue of vocation and pay for gospel workers. Students will be invited to facilitate a 20-minute classroom discussion about what their text says about vocation and pay in its original context *and* what it means for us in the 21st century. The discussion should include background on how to approach and understand the text as well as implications for a specific church (when CM students lead the discussion) or for ecclesiology generally (when THEO students lead the discussion). Time should be roughly balanced between contextual issues and implications for the present.

Examples of texts to be assigned for discussion are as follows:

Matthew 10:5-15

Luke 8:1-3

2 Thessalonians 3:6-10

1 Corinthians 9:1-18

1 Timothy 3:17-18

CM Students: lead an in-class discussion with classmates taking on the role of a hypothetical church board. The board is wondering about embracing a co-vocational ministry paradigm for their congregation.

THEO Students: lead an in-class discussion with fellow theology students wrestling with questions about historical and contemporary ecclesiology.

Students will be evaluated on their preparation for the discussion, questions posed to the class for discussion, and ability to present the tensions both in the text and in the application (CM: a local church and THEO: broader ecclesiology).

Due: Day of the presentation.

Post-Course Assignments:

Write the Last Chapter – 40%

Draw together course readings, lectures, and discussion notes to write the final chapter of Mills' project. The 12-page (College) or 15-page (Seminary), double-spaced, chapter will be titled "So what? A vocational ecclesiology for the 21st Century." Those taking this course for a Theology credit will

write from a theological perspective, addressing how the nature of the church should be understood and enacted, and in particular how finances and church leadership should be viewed. Students taking this course for CM credit will write from a ministry perspective, addressing how pastoral leaders today should understand the pastoral vocation, with particular attention given to financial matters. All papers should reference current academic literature to support arguments made and conclusions drawn.

Due: April 17, 2026

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](#).

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.

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).