Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Course Profile

Course # and Title  RHS 419 - Pauline Letters and Revelation
Instructor:  Barbara Rossing  Semester/Year:  Fall 2019, Thursday 8-11 am

Course Rationale and Description
(Why do we offer this course? Which of LSTC’s degree program learning outcomes does it address?):

This is a core survey course in the curriculum designed to introduce students to New Testament epistles, especially the letters of Paul. The first ten weeks will focus on critical examination of the Paul’s letters in the cultural and religious context of the first century. We will study Paul’s letters as documents of a movement in which Paul, a Jew, and many co-workers were organizing a network of communities embodying the gospel of Jesus Christ in their communal life. Particular attention will be given to interpreting the distinctive message of each letter as a response to particular issues and circumstances in the Pauline communities of Christ. The focus will be on the distinctive way Paul and his co-authors reiterate the story of Christ in each letter, and how that interfaces with the story of the community implied in the letter.

The final two weeks will study Revelation, looking at how apocalyptic texts functioned to mobilize communities in Asia Minor (Turkey) for faithfulness to God in the face of empire. We will briefly consider other New Testament epistles.

Students will learn a variety of exegetical skills and hermeneutical strategies to interpret Paul’s letters and Revelation in their ancient historical context, and to relate the message of each letter to contemporary life and ministry. This course addresses M. Div. learning outcomes 2, 3, 4 & 5).

Course Learning Outcomes (Learners will be able to):
(What difference will this course make to students’ knowledge, skills, attitudes, and practices?)
Students will be able:

1) To interpret Paul’s letters in relation to their Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts, within the first-century Roman Empire.
2) To identify the distinctive theological issues and themes in each of Paul’s letters and be able to articulate important differences among the diverse communities of followers of Jesus.
3) To interpret the rhetorical strategy of each letter, that is, how it was designed to shape the beliefs and practices of the communities of Christ.
4) To strengthen skills in using exegetical tools for the study of Paul’s letters.
5) To strengthen skills in interpreting Revelation’s literary and theological themes, including contextualizing Jewish and Christian apocalyptic imagery and traditions;
6) To relate Paul’s letters (and Revelation) to contemporary preaching, theology, ministry, life, community organizing, and debates within the church.

Strategies for Learning):
(How shall we go about achieving these outcomes?)
1) Regular attendance and class participation.
2) Careful reading of Paul’s letters and Revelation, required textbooks, and other assigned readings.
3) Students are expected to work through weekly exegetical exercises, building skills in concordance studies of Greek words (English tools permitted for those who do not know Greek).
4) One exegesis paper 12-15 pages, on a particular passage or theme from one of Paul’s letters (topic to be approved by the professor).
5) An in-class final exam.

Assessment:
(How shall we know if we—students and instructors—have been successful in achieving the outcomes?)

1) Regular attendance and participation in class
2) Completion and discussion of exegetical exercises assignments
3) Exegesis paper of a select passage from one of Paul’s letters that demonstrates the use of interpretive skills and strategies learned and the ability to relate the passage to contemporary contexts
4) Exam that demonstrates the ability to integrate and communicate what was learned over the course of the semester

Bibliography:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>ISBN# (Required)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paul: Apostle to the Nations: an Introduction</td>
<td>Walter Taylor</td>
<td>978-0800632595</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Was Not a Christian</td>
<td>Pamela Eisenbaum</td>
<td>978-0-06-134991-1</td>
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<td>Journeys Through Revelation Bible study</td>
<td>Barbara Rossing</td>
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<td>(available for purchase from instructor for $5)</td>
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Additional information:
One additional book may be assigned.
Other essays and articles will also be assigned
Translating Greek: Students who know Greek will need a Greek New Testament (Nestle-Aland 27th edition or UBS Greek New Testament; others will compare multiple English translations.
NRSV Study Bible (preferably either the Harper-Collins or Oxford Annotated)
Strongly recommended: Accordance or other Greek language concordance