

The Book of Romans: A Course Outline



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Teaching Assistant: TBA **Office Hours:** By Appointment

Location: ELB 303 **Time:** Wednesday 7:00 PM to 9:30 PM

Course Code: THEO3214/5951 **Chinese Title:** N/A

Course Description: Paul's letter to the Church in Rome is the longest and most theologically dense letter amongst his collection of letters. For this reason, scholars have poured over the details of Romans, with particular attention amongst protestant theologians regarding the issues of justification through faith. While considering those issues important, this course instead places emphasis on the imperial conditions of the letter, namely what the letter might mean in the context of the Roman Empire. In addition to the imperial conditions of the letter, the course also examines archaeological features of Christ groups in Rome, namely, what are the size of house churches in Rome? What were the material practices of common associations in the city of Rome? How do believers negotiate life in the geographical center of the Empire and how does this give us insight into the meaning of the letter?

Course Outcomes:

- 1) To examine the material conditions of peasant life in the city of Rome, paying particular attention to the role of common associations as a comparison for reconstructing Christ group(s) in the city of Rome as the time of Paul's letter.
- 2) To read the book of Romans in light of its relationship to the values of the Roman Empire, with particular interest paid towards themes of justice, fidelity, and righteousness in the context of Empire.

3) To critically reflect on how Romans might inform a contemporary political theology.

Course Syllabus (Weekly Mandatory Reading Schedule):

Week One (January 10th): Introduction: Paul and Ancient Letters

Week Two (January 17th): House Churches and Associations in Rome

Week Three (January 24th): Empire in Romans

Week Four (January 31st): Justice in Romans

Week Five (February 7th): Mercy in Romans

Week Six (February 21st): Faith, or Fidelity in Romans

Week Seven (February 28th): Virtue in Romans

Week Eight (March 13th): Spotlight: Romans 1 and Homosexuality in Paul's Letters

Week Nine (March 20th): Spotlight: Romans 13 and the Role of Government

Week Ten (March 27th): Spotlight: Tertius the Slave as Author of Romans

Week Eleven (April 3rd): Romans and Ritual (Guest Lecture)

Week Twelve (April 10th): Romans and Time

Week Thirteen (April 17th): Concluding Remarks

Course Textbooks (Readings Provided on Blackboard):



Elliott, Neil. *The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008.

Agamben, Giorgio. *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.

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

Course Components: Lecture, free writing exercises, guest lecture, tutorial discussions.

Blackboard Course Address:

Will be posted when available.

Assignments and Course Assessment

1. **Class Attendance (10% of Final Grade):** Students are expected to come to class and arrive on time. Students will use the Ureply app to log attendance at the beginning of class. Students may miss class due to medical or personal reasons but must consult with the instructor ahead of time. Given that there are 13 weeks of instructions, students may miss up to three (3) classes and still receive at full 10% grade on attendance.
2. **Class Participation (10% of Final Grade):** This course places an emphasis on weekly readings and interactions. Please come prepared to participate in classroom discussions,

both with the instructor and with your peers, as is appropriate for a senior level university course.

3. **Personal Reflection Paper (30% of Final Grade, 1000 words): Romans and Empire:** Reflect critically on one or two of the themes in the course (justice, piety, fidelity, roman house churches) and how it relates to the larger context of Empire in Paul's letter to the Church in Rome. Spend the second half of the assignment reflecting on how the letter is helpful for you, as you negotiate Empire in our contemporary world.
4. **Academic Essay (50% of Final Grade):** Students will be required to submit a 2500–3000-word essay on a topic of their choice, related to one of the topics listed below. Proper footnoting and bibliography are required according to the Chicago Manual of Style (17th Edition). Deadline will be negotiated at the beginning of the semester. Topics include, but not limited to:
 - 4.1 Paul and Slavery in Romans
 - 4.2 Sexuality in the Book of Romans
 - 4.3 Romans 13 and the Role of Government
 - 4.4 Women in the Book of Romans
 - 4.5 Associations in the Ancient World
 - 4.6 Fidelity in the Context of Empire
 - 4.7 Time, Apocalyptic Thought in the Book of Romans
 - 4.8 Another topic in consultation with the Professor

Structure of the Class: The class will begin with attendance, then follow with brief group discussions and free writing exercises. The bulk of the class will be lectures which combine primary text material from the weekly reading and additional sources provided by the instructor. There will be two, ten-minute breaks over the course of the lecture.

The course readings will generally be given on the Blackboard site, along with courses grades, Professor feedback, and written submission guidelines.

Academic honesty and plagiarism: Attention is drawn to University's policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>. With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines, and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration. For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

Grading: The grading follows the general grading policy of the CUHK outlined below (in short form):

Grade A / Excellent: Outstanding performance on ALL learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would surpass the normal expectations at this level and typical of standards that may be common at higher levels of study.

Grade A- / Very Good: Generally outstanding performance on all or almost all learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would fully fulfill the normal expectations at this level and occasionally reaches standards that may be common at higher levels of study.

Grade B / Good: Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance. Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a comprehensive manner that would sufficiently fulfill the normal expectations at this level.

Grade C / Fair: Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to partially apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would meet the basic requirement at this level.

Grade D / Pass: Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes. Addresses the task inadequately by meeting the basic requirement at this level only in some areas while responding minimally with possibly tangential content in others.

Grade F / Failure: Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements. Fails to address the task and likely does not understand the assignment, perhaps completely misses the point.

Excellent**Good****Needs Improvement****Unacceptable**

Thesis	A clear statement of what is being proposed or argued in the paper.	The thesis is easily detectable after reading the paper, but it is not presented in a single and clear statement.	The thesis is present, but a reader must work hard to reconstruct from the entire paper.	There is no thesis or central argument/proposal to tie the paper together, or the thesis is unclear.
Arguments	Each reason, support, or argument to follow the thesis is made clear, thorough, relevant and convincing. Proper references are consistently made to the	Arguments made to support the thesis are clear, but less thorough, relevant, and/or convincing. References are often made to the text in question (biblical	Arguments made to support the thesis are acceptable but sketchy or their relevance unclear. Some references are made to the text in question	Arguments to support the thesis are missing, irrelevant, or not convincing. The paper makes lots of claims or assertions that are not substantiated. There are few or no references to the text in

Organization	The paper's flow, from one paragraph to another, is consistently sensible, logical, and always with clear transitions. The movement from introduction to the body and then the conclusion is easy to follow and coherent.	The paper's flow, from one paragraph to another, is largely sensible and logical. Transitions are mostly appropriate. The movement from introduction to the body and then the conclusion is distinguishable if not easy to follow.	There are signs of sensible and logical organization, but these are mixed with abrupt or illogical shifts and ineffective flow of ideas. The movement from introduction to the body and then the conclusion is not clearly distinguishable.	The paper does not flow well in terms of organization or for the argument of the thesis. Transitions from paragraph to paragraph or from one idea to the next are missing. The movement from introduction to the body and then the conclusion is non-existent.
Style	The paper is written in complete and grammatically correct sentences. Word choice is precise; definitions are provided if and when needed. Paper has been spell-checked, proofread, and contains no errors.	The paper is written in complete sentence and grammatically correct sentences. Word choice is understandable, definitions are generally (though not always) provided if and when needed. Paper has been spell-checked, proofread, and contains only a few errors.	The paper contains some incomplete or grammatically incorrect sentences. Word choice is imprecise, at times not understandable, and/or not defined when needed. Not clear if the paper has been spell-checked and proofread because of the number of errors present.	The paper is written with many incomplete or grammatically incorrect sentences. Word choice is not understandable and definition of particular terms or words is not given even when needed. The paper has clearly not been spell-checked or proofread, and hence contains an excessive number of errors.
Documentation	Notes to indicate sources of information are given whenever they are needed. Both notes and bibliography use consistent and academically acceptable format.	Notes to indicate sources of information are generally given when they are needed. Notes and bibliography are generally but not always consistent or conform to required academic standard.	Sources of information are not consistently documented. If they are, format is inconsistent or does not conform to required academic standard.	Source materials are used without documentation.

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