

Fall 2025Paul: Life and Letters Section 081

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Class Schedule

Course	Meet Days	Meet Time	Location	Instructor(s)
RCS 236 / JS 236 081 [LEC]	Online			Amanda Witmer a3witmer@uwaterloo.ca

schedule data automatically refreshed daily

Instructional Team

Use the LEARN Course Discussions forum to communicate with your instructor and classmates. Discussion topics can be accessed in LEARN by clicking **Connect** and then **Discussions** on the course navigation bar.

For questions of a personal nature, please email your instructor.

Instructor: Amanda Witmer

a3witmer@uwaterloo.ca

Course Description

Calendar Description for RCS 236 / JS 236

The career and thought of the apostle Paul, at once a Jew, a Graeco-Roman, and a Christ believer, living within the Roman Empire. Attention is given to issues such as spirit, Jewish Law, grace, freedom and slavery, Christ, church, politics, gender, and sexuality.

RCS 236: [View requirements for RCS 236](#)

JS 236: [View requirements for JS 236](#)

There are several major components of the course. First, the course will deal with some background material on the formation of biblical documents. This will help you, whether or not you have had an introductory course in New Testament in the past, to get on board with the assumptions behind many of the questions raised and conclusions drawn in the course of study. Second, we will then deal with the nature of the sources for Paul's life and thought, and, third, glean from those sources what information we can about Paul and his life. The fourth component is really a number of in-depth studies of the letters that bear his name. That will make up the bulk of the course. In the process you will learn to see them as real correspondence from the very first decades of what became Christianity, reflecting the dynamics of life in the ancient Greco-Roman Mediterranean world. Paul's ideas will be discussed within the context of his letters, rather than as a systematic body of thought or theology. It will become quite apparent why that is important. At the conclusion of the course, I will briefly address two of the most popularly contentious issues in relation to Paul, namely, his views on homosexuality and the status of women. In particular, the issue of the status and role of women will give you an excellent opportunity to test your learnings, to try out your skills as biblical scholars and interpreters.

Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes of this course are as follows:

The first and most important objective of this course is, obviously, to learn about the important figure of antiquity who continues to have an enormous impact on our present time—Paul the Apostle.

The second objective is to learn to read and analyze the relevant New Testament documents as historical sources of information both on Paul's life and his thought.

The third objective is to pay particular attention to what it meant for Paul as a Jew to have a mission to non-Jews, and what effect that had on his thought, his hopes, and also his troubled relationship with fellow Jews.

The fourth objective is to keep in mind throughout what it meant for Paul to work, preach, teach, and form communities within the context of Roman imperial reality.

The fifth objective is a bit fuzzy, since it is one you yourself will shape in a wide variety of ways, given that you as students have very different kinds of religious investment (or perhaps none at all) in this subject matter. I very much hope that this study will nudge you to "go deep" in wrestling with the implications of Paul's thought—whatever that might mean for you personally.

Tentative Class Plan

Please see the **Course Schedule** in LEARN for complete details.

Week	Content Module	Activities and Assignments
1	Module 01: Sources for the Study of Paul	Introduce Yourself
		Discussion Posting #1 (Initial and Response Posts)
2	Module 02: Greco-Roman and Jewish World	Quiz #1 (Modules 01-02)
3	Module 03: Paul's Life as Seen in His Letters and in Acts	Discussion Posting #2 (Initial and Response Posts)
4	Module 04: Paul the Letter Writer: 1 Thessalonians & Philemon	Virtual Office Hour: Check-in (Focus: Thesis Statement)
		Quiz #2 (Modules 03-04)
5	Module 05: Galatians: Faith vs. Law?	Book Study Assignment (Part 1: Thesis Statement/Outline)
		Critical Analysis Workshop
6	Module 06: 1 Corinthians: Problems in the Life of a New Congregation	Discussion Posting #3 (Initial and Response Posts)

7	Module 07: 2 Corinthians: Paul in Trouble with His Own Movement?	Quiz #3 (Modules 05-07)
8	Module 08: Philippians: Christ and Wisdom — A Study of an Early Hymn	Discussion Posting #4 (Initial and Response Posts)
		Virtual Office Hour: Check-in (Focus: Book Study Part 2)
9	Module 09: Romans: A Manifesto of God's Peace and Justice	Quiz #4 (Modules 08-09)
		Book Study Assignment (Part 2: Final Essay)
10	Module 10: Paul After Paul? Pseudepigraphy: 2 Thessalonians and Colossians	
11	Module 11: Ephesians: "Gathering Up All Things in Christ"	Discussion Posting #5 (Initial and Response Posts)
12	Module 12: Introduction to Pastoral Letters and Concluding Assessment of Paul	Virtual Office Hour: Check-in (Focus: Final Assignment)
		Quiz #5 (Modules 10-12)
13		Discussion Posting #6 (Initial and Response Posts)
		Final Assignment: Letter of "Paul"

There is no final examination for this course.

Required Materials & Technologies

Note: Any prices provided in course outlines are best estimates based on recent online prices and do not include shipping or taxes. Prices may vary between retailers.

This course has additional costs to students (listed in sections below).

Readings

Title / Name	Notes / Comments	Required	Used Versions Allowed	Price (CAD)
A Bible	See information provided below this table.	Required	No	\$14.00 - \$31.00

You will need access to the **Old Testament/Hebrew Bible** for your final assignment, so make sure you have what you need or are okay getting this information online or at the library.

There are many Bible translations. Many students will already be in possession of a Bible. They all translate the same original Hebrew and Greek (Greek for the New Testament). You may use any of the following (listed alphabetically, not in order of priority or quality of translation):

Good News Bible (GNB, also known as *Today's English Version* [TEV])

Net Bible (available free online or in printed format)

New American Bible (NAB)

New American Standard Bible (NASB), or the older *American Standard Version* (ASV)

New International Version (NIV), or the recent *Today's New International Version* (TNIV)

New Jerusalem Bible (NJB), or the older *Jerusalem Bible* (JB)

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVUE), *New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition* (NRSVCE), *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV), or the older *Revised Standard Version* (RSV); see also the recent revision of the RSV called the *English Standard Version* (ESV)

Revised English Bible (REB), or the older *New English Bible* (NEB)

Note #1: Paraphrases such as *The Living Bible* (and *New Living Bible*) or *The Message* are not suitable for this course.

Note #2: Students who are very familiar with the Bible and are used to reading it always in a particular translation may wish to choose a different one in order to catch a fresh glimpse of a particular passage (see Additional Online Resources section below for information on access to alternative translations on the web).

Additional Online Resources

The Internet allows easy access to various translations of the New Testament. One portal is the [New Testament Gateway](#). Check there under Bible Translations and many other valuable resources. For numerous versions of the Bible available online see [Online Translations of the Bible](#). Check also at [BibleGateway](#).

The following Study Bibles of the NRSV are all recommended and available from online bookstores.

The HarperCollins Study Bible: Fully Revised & Updated (New Revised Standard Version), HarperCollins, 2006. This textbook can be purchased through Amazon.

The New Interpreter's Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version With the Apocrypha, Abingdon, 2003.

The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha (New Revised Standard Version), Augmented Third Edition, Oxford University Press, 2007.

For assistance, please email wstore@uwaterloo.ca.

Technology

Name of Technology	Notes / Comments	Required	URL (student access)	Price (CAD)
LEARN		Required	https://learn.uwaterloo.ca	No cost

Assessments & Activities

Component / Activity	Date or Due Date	Location / Submission Method	Weight (%)
Introduce Yourself	Due: Friday, September 5, 2025 at 11:55 PM	LEARN Discussions	Ungraded
Discussion Postings (6 at 5% each)	<p>Discussion 1 (Initial Post) due: Monday, September 8, 2025 at 11:55 PM</p> <p>Discussion 1 (Response Post) due: Thursday, September 11, 2025 at 11:55 PM</p> <p>Discussion 2 (Initial Post) due: Monday, September 22, 2025 at 11:55 PM</p> <p>Discussion 2 (Response Post) due: Thursday, September 25, 2025 at 11:55 PM</p>	LEARN Discussions	30%

	<p>Discussion 3 (Initial Post) due: Monday, October 6, 2025 at 11:55 PM</p> <p>Discussion 3 (Response Post) due: Thursday, October 9, 2025 at 11:55 PM</p> <p>Discussion 4 (Initial Post) due: Monday, October 27, 2025 at 11:55 PM</p> <p>Discussion 4 (Response Post) due: Thursday, October 30, 2025 at 11:55 PM</p> <p>Discussion 5 (Initial Post) due: Monday, November 17, 2025 at 11:55 PM</p> <p>Discussion 5 (Response Post) due: Thursday, November 20, 2025 at 11:55 PM</p> <p>Discussion 6 (Initial Post) due: Friday, December 5, 2025 at 11:55 PM</p> <p>Discussion 6 (Response Post) due: Sunday, December 7, 2025 at 11:55 PM</p>		
Quizzes (5 at 3% each)	<p>Quiz 1 due: Tuesday, September 16, 2025 at 11:55 PM</p> <p>Quiz 2 due: Tuesday, September 30, 2025 at 11:55 PM</p> <p>Quiz 3 due: Tuesday, October</p>	LEARN Quizzes	15%

	28, 2025 at 11:55 PM Quiz 4 due: Tuesday, November 11, 2025 at 11:55 PM Quiz 5 due: Tuesday, December 2, 2025 at 11:55 PM		
Book Study Assignment — Part 1: Thesis Statement/Outline	Sunday, October 5, 2025 at 11:55 PM	LEARN Dropbox	5%
Book Study Assignment — Part 2: Final Essay	Sunday, November 9, 2025 at 11:55 PM	LEARN Dropbox	15%
Final Assignment: Letter of "Paul"	Sunday, December 14, 2025 at 11:55 PM	LEARN Dropbox	35%
Bonus Option: Virtual Check-in Participation (3 at 1% each)	Check-in 1: Wednesday, September 24, 2025 at 11:00 AM Check-in 2: Wednesday, October 29, 2025 at 11:00 AM Check-in 3: Wednesday, November 26, 2025, at 11:00 AM	Virtual Classroom	Maximum of 3% bonus mark

Late / Missed Content

Late Written Assignments

There are sometimes exceptional circumstances in which students are unable to get their written assignments in by the due date (illness, emergencies, etc.). If you anticipate a problem, please contact the instructor as soon as possible. If no arrangements have been made, a late penalty of 5% per day will normally be applied up to a maximum of 15%. The late penalty for papers submitted more than 10 days late, and for which no extension or arrangements have been made, will be determined by the instructor, but will be no less than 20%. No assignments will be accepted after two weeks late except with prior permission from the instructor.

Late Discussion Postings

Both the initial post and the follow up post must be posted by one week from the due date to receive partial credit. Partial credit will be given for late postings up to one week past the due date. Late postings will receive a 50% deduction (3.5% becomes 1.75%, and 1.5% becomes 0.75%). This does not include any deductions for quality.

Assignment Screening

Text matching software (Turnitin) will be used to screen assignments in this course. This is being done to verify that use of all material and sources in assignments is documented. In the first week of the term, details will be provided about the arrangements for the use of Turnitin and alternatives in this course. See Administrative Policy below for more information and links.

Generative AI

This course is designed to help you develop and practice specific skills, such as critical thinking and analysis, writing skills, and the ability to synthesize and incorporate information from biblical texts. In order to help you improve these skills over the term, this course takes a mixed approach to the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) like Chat GPT, DALL-E, or GitHub CoPilot to produce text, images, music, or code.

In most assignments for this course, you will be asked to complete your work without the use of GenAI tools so that you can hone your own skills and develop your own knowledge and abilities. Unless an assignment specifically indicates that the use of GenAI is allow, please assume that it is not.

For some assignments, specific uses of GenAI may be helpful and conducive to learning. In such cases, you will be given specific instructions about using GenAI if you so choose. Please note, however, that the use of GenAI is not a requirement to complete any assignments in this course—if you prefer not to use these tools at all you are welcome to avoid them completely.

General use of GenAI for the purposes of studying, review, or seeking clarification on key concepts or ideas is typically allowed for this course as long as you do not submit GenAI responses as your own work. However, please note that **you may not put course materials from this course into any GenAI tool without expressed**

authorization. Please also be careful with the responses you may receive from GenAI as they are not always reliable or accurate.

Throughout the course, you should be prepared to show your work. To demonstrate your learning, you should keep your rough notes, including research notes, brainstorming, and drafting notes. You may be asked to submit these notes along with earlier drafts of their work, either through saved drafts or saved versions of a document. If the use of GenAI is suspected where not permitted, you may be asked to meet with your instructor or TA to provide explanations to support the submitted material as being your original work. Through this process, if you have not sufficiently supported your work, academic misconduct allegations may be brought to the Associate Dean.

In addition, you should be aware that the legal/copyright status of generative AI inputs and outputs is unclear. More information is available from the Copyright Advisory Committee's page on [Generative artificial intelligence](#).

Students are encouraged to reach out to campus supports if they need help with their coursework including:

[Student Success Office](#) for help with skills like notetaking and time management

[Writing and Communication Centre](#) for assignments with writing or presentations

[AccessAbility Services](#) for documented accommodations

[Library](#) for research-based assignments

When in doubt, remember above all that using AI tools, ChatGPT, or similar tools that generate text, code, or visual images for content generation and submitting it as one's own original work is a violation of the [University of Waterloo's Policy 71 \(Student Discipline\)](#). You can always reach out to your TA or instructor with questions about specific uses of GenAI and to talk through any uncertainty about a particular tool or use case.

Administrative Policy

Plagiarism

The very nature of the assignments makes plagiarism less of a temptation than it otherwise might be. As you know, there is hardly a more serious academic sin. University of Waterloo's policy is clear. Plagiarism is

The act of presenting the ideas or words of another as one's own. The use of other people's ideas or words must be properly acknowledged and referenced. This applies to all written materials such as essays, laboratory reports, work term reports, design projects, statistical data, computer programs and research results. The properly acknowledged use of sources is an accepted and important part of scholarship. Use of such material without acknowledgement, however, is contrary to accepted norms of academic behaviour.

If plagiarism is discovered it will lead to a failing grade in the course and possible further disciplinary action by the university. I am obligated to make this clear to you, and to report infractions to the Associate Dean of Arts, Undergraduate Affairs.

Territorial Acknowledgement

With gratitude, we acknowledge that Renison University College is located on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Hodinohsyó:ni, and Attawandaran (Neutral) Peoples, which is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land granted to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River from mouth to source. Our active work toward reconciliation takes place in all corners of our campus through research, learning, teaching, community building and outreach. We are guided by the work of our Reconciliation and Re-storying Steering Committee and Anti-Racism and Decolonization Spokescouncil, as well as the University of Waterloo's Office of Indigenous Relations.

Accommodating religious and spiritual observances

[Applies only to students taking undergraduate courses]

The University of Waterloo has a duty to accommodate religious, spiritual, and other creed-based beliefs and practices under the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2015) Policy on preventing discrimination based on creed. Students may seek accommodations for missed course components on religious, spiritual, or other

creed grounds. In such cases the students should please consult the instructor within two weeks of the announcement of the due date for which the accommodation is being sought. Students also may request accommodations for temporary absences from classes or other course-related activities to engage in prayer or other daily spiritual practices. Instructors are expected to make reasonable arrangements to respectfully accommodate such requests. The University of Waterloo has a number of [multi-faith spaces](#) that students can use for faith-based practices.

Declaring absences

[Applies only to students taking undergraduate courses]

Please see the [Academic Regulations](#) section of the Undergraduate Calendar for more details. Regardless of the process used to declare an absence, it is the student's responsibility to contact their instructor so that the instructor can determine how to accommodate the missed work.

Absences due to religious, creed, and spiritual observances

Beginning Fall 2024, students can submit a [Religious Observance Self-Declaration Form in Quest](#). This form allows the student to register dates of potential conflicts with coursework. Students are expected to record their absence within two weeks of announcement of the due date or scheduled examination date for which academic accommodation is being sought. Submission through Quest will notify your instructors of your absence.

Absences due to verified illness

For absences due to illness that are not pandemic-related, students need to obtain a [Verification of Illness or Extenuating Circumstances Process](#). Submission through the [Absence Verification System](#), once registered, will notify your instructors of your absence. Students should not submit their VIF or any other medical documentation to your instructors, teaching assistants, or other course personnel. To request and arrange accommodations, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor within 48 hours of the date of any missed course component, or as soon as the student is able to given their health condition.

Absences due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., bereavement)

For absences due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., bereavement, serious family illness), students submit a request for absence due to extenuating circumstances to the Absence Verification System for processing. Students use the form to submit supporting documentation, which will be considered in a comparable manner to a VIF. Official documentation is necessary before any action can be taken. Examples are plane/train/bus tickets, court documents, police reports, death certificates/obituaries/letters from funeral directors. To request and arrange accommodations, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor within 48 hours of the date of any missed course component, or as soon as the student is able to given their circumstances.

Self-declared short-term absences for any reason

Students can self-declare one short-term absence per term on Quest for any reason. A short-term absence covers two calendar days, and no documentation is required. The student has only one self-declared short-term absence per term and this absence can only be used during the formal lecture period. Self-declared absences cannot be applied to Laboratory (LAB), Clinic (CLN), or Studio (STU) course components. Submitting the self-declaration through Quest will notify your instructors of your absence. It is the student's responsibility to contact their instructors within the first 24 hours after submitting their self-declaration to discuss accommodations for missed course components.

Recording lecture

Use of recording devices during lectures is only allowed with explicit permission of the instructor of the course. If allowed, video recordings may only include images of the instructor and not fellow classmates. Posting of videos or links to the video to any website, including but not limited to social media sites such as: Facebook, Twitter, etc., is strictly prohibited.

University Policy

Mental Health: At the University of Waterloo, we are dedicated to supporting your mental and emotional well-being. Our Counselling Services offer confidential support, including individual counselling, workshops, and crisis intervention. If you're struggling, please reach out for help at 519-888-4096 or visit [their website](#) for more information.

Academic integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. [Check the [Office of Academic Integrity](#) for more information.]

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read [Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4](#). When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department's administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. [Check the [Office of Academic Integrity](#) for more information.] A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate associate dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71, Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties, check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under [Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances](#) (other than a petition) or [Policy 71, Student Discipline](#) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to [Policy 72, Student Appeals](#).

Note for students with disabilities and disabling conditions: The University of Waterloo recognizes its obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code to accommodate students with known or suspected disabilities and disabling conditions (e.g. medical conditions, injuries, impacts of trauma such as from violence or discrimination) to the point of undue hardship. To support this obligation, [AccessAbility Services](#) (AAS) collaborates with all academic departments and schools to facilitate academic accommodations for students with disabilities and disabling conditions without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you believe you may require academic accommodations (e.g., testing accommodations, classroom accommodations), register with AAS as early in the term as possible by completing the [online application](#). Students already registered with AAS must activate their accommodations for each of their courses at the beginning of each term using AAS' online system. If you require assistance, contact AAS by phone (519-

888-4567 ext. 35082), email (access@uwaterloo.ca) or in-person (Needles Hall North, 1st Floor, Room 1401).

Turnitin.com: Text matching software (Turnitin®) may be used to screen assignments in this course. Turnitin® is used to verify that all materials and sources in assignments are documented. Students' submissions are stored on a U.S. server, therefore students must be given an alternative (e.g., scaffolded assignment or annotated bibliography), if they are concerned about their privacy and/or security. Students will be given due notice, in the first week of the term and/or at the time assignment details are provided, about arrangements and alternatives for the use of Turnitin in this course.

It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor if they, in the first week of term or at the time assignment details are provided, wish to submit alternate assignment.

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