Department of Theology

GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: Spring 2015
Instructor: Dr. Michael Cover
Course #: THEO 8317, 101
Course Title: Letter to the Romans

Content:

Paul’s letter to the Romans, according to N. T. Wright, “bestrides the narrow worlds of scholarship and church like a colossus.” It follows, then, that any doctoral seminar on this letter cannot help but stand as a kind of living footnote to generations of commentary and theology drawn from this epistle. The purpose of this course is to (re)read Romans with attention to the Greek text; to rehearse and engage the classic questions and problems which have been raised of its various argumentative subsections; and to begin to (re)formulate an account of the rhetorical and theological aims of the epistle as a whole. The majority of the semester will be spent reading the letter sequentially, with the aid of commentaries and other secondary treatments. Specific aims include (but are not limited to): (1) investigating the various versions of the letter, particularly the text-critical questions besetting its ending; (2) uncovering the rhetorical shape of the letter as a whole and in its various movements; (3) assessing Paul’s use of the Old Testament and engagement with other Jewish literature, Greco-Roman philosophy, and Roman imperial propaganda; (4) testing various hypotheses concerning the recipients of the letter and the first-century Roman church; (5) positioning Romans as it relates to studies of Pauline chronology, the development of Paul’s theology, the New Testament canon, and the formation of early Christian doctrine; and (6) tracing major “moments” in the letter’s reception from its earliest interpreters to the present.

Format:

This will be a largely student-driven seminar, although the instructor will provide occasional context, overview, and summary.

Assignments and/or Examinations:

- One final paper of publishable quality (or the equivalent, depending on students’ degree programs); occasional book reviews and in-class presentations; Greek reading group for JCA students and other interested parties.

Language Pre-requisites:

- None. NB: Although Koine Greek is not required, all students must be willing to learn the Greek alphabet. Previous study of Greek, German, and French are strongly encouraged.