

NT 3XL3 – Dealing with a Difficult Church: A Study in 1 Corinthians

McMaster Divinity College
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Fall 2022
Tuesday 9:00–10:50am

COURSE DESCRIPTION

As all Christian leaders know, churches are hard to deal with—and Paul's congregation in Corinth was no exception. In this course, we will examine 1 Corinthians, in which Paul expresses his displeasure at a wide range of problems plaguing the community. By reflecting upon Paul's concerns and the way that he addresses them, we can learn about church leadership and better appreciate the complexities that emerge whenever the proclamation of the kingdom of God produces a community that needs to operate within an existing culture.

SPECIALIZATIONS

Biblical Studies (BS)

Students taking this as a Biblical Studies course will be encouraged to explore the historical and cultural setting of 1 Corinthians, as well as scholarly debates concerning the interpretation of its contents.

Church and Culture (CC)

Students taking this as a Church and Culture (CC) course will be encouraged to reflect upon the complexities of Paul's engagement with Corinthian culture and to consider the related difficulties that emerge when the Christian tradition engages with contemporary cultures today.

Christian History and Worldview (CW)

Students taking this as a Christian History and Worldview (CC) course will be encouraged to appreciate the historical complexities of the early Christian movement and to arrive at a clearer understanding of what it meant for Paul the Apostle to “evangelize” the nations.

Pastoral Studies (PS)

Students taking this as a Pastoral Studies (PS) course will be encouraged to explore how the ideas and exhortations in 1 Corinthians are relevant for Christian faith and practice in the 21st century, with special emphases on humble leadership and communal purity/integrity.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Through their active participation in this course, students will:

Knowing

- Know the basic outline of 1 Corinthians;
- Have familiarity with the historical setting of 1 Corinthians;
- Understand the major theological and ethical teachings found in 1 Corinthians;

Being

- Appreciate the importance of participating in critical and respectful discussions concerning biblical texts;
- Be sensitive to the historical and cultural environment in which the early church first communicated the gospel;
- Be more competent interpreters of Paul;
- Embody a more cruciform way of life;

Doing

- Read books that engage with 1 Corinthians in a careful and critical manner;
- Take time to reflect on the relevance of 1 Corinthians;
- Talk intelligently about 1 Corinthians;
- Discuss how 1 Corinthians is relevant to contemporary Christianity.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Note: You are required to complete all of the following assignments. No unfinished assignments are permitted. *Written assignments must be uploaded to Avenue to Learn either as Word documents (.doc, .docx) or in Rich Text Format (.rtf). A penalty of 2% per day will be applied to all late assignments, including assignments submitted in incorrect file formats. Assignments cannot be submitted after December 9th without written permission from the Office of the Registrar (strickpd@mcmaster.ca).*

Class Participation (0%)

During each class meeting, we will discuss three things: (1) what Paul's words likely meant in their *ancient* social and historical setting; (2) what Paul's message to the Corinthians reveals *in general* about the kingdom of God and the work of the Spirit in individuals and communities; and (3) how the kingdom and the Spirit are manifest (or might be made more manifest) in *contemporary* individuals and communities.

Attendance at weekly meetings is expected, because class discussions are a significant part of the overall learning experience. If an absence is unavoidable, please email me in advance.

Research Reports (20% each = 80% total)

The written assignments in this class will consist of a series of four reports, each of which will explore a specific passage in 1 Corinthians. You are free to choose which passages to study, but

you must pick from the list given in the Coursework Schedule below. Research reports are due according to the Coursework Schedule below.

Detailed instructions for the research reports will be supplied on A2L at the beginning of the semester. In summary, each research report will require you to:

1. Select one of the biblical passages listed in the Coursework Schedule.
2. Read the passage.
3. Search for academic resources that discuss the passage.
4. List and critically evaluate twelve resources (of varying types and representing varying theological persuasions) that you have found to be especially useful, explaining in a paragraph or two for each source how it has contributed to your understanding of the passage.
5. Answer four supplied questions in a paragraph or two each. The questions will help you to approach your passage from different interpretive perspectives in order to attune you to different facets of its meaning and significance.

The reports must be formatted according to the MDC Style Guide (i.e. standard page layout, appropriate citation formatting, proper spelling, etc.). They do not need to employ a formal essay style, however. The first part of the report will be a list of twelve sources, with a paragraph or two after each entry. The second part of the report will copy the four supplied questions, with a paragraph or two after each question. The reports should demonstrate that you have taken the time to read widely, to read carefully, and to think deeply. In the end, your report should be something that a committee might receive with confidence as a reliable basis for a lesson, sermon, leadership decision, etc.

The following paragraphs clarify how these reports further the goals of the course, focusing on each of the specializations.

❖ Exegetical Research (BS)

In keeping with the major emphases of biblical scholarship, the research reports will situate an assigned passage from 1 Corinthians within its various *ancient contexts*. By consulting a wide range of resources, you should be able to provide comments that explore the passage from text-critical, linguistic, literary, historical, sociological, philosophical, and theological perspectives. Your goal is to understand both what Paul is saying (i.e. the meaning of his words as language) and what Paul is doing (i.e. the function of his words as historical action).

❖ Historical/Theological/Cultural Research (CC/CW)

In view of the fact that Christian theology entails much more than simply good exegesis, the research reports will also reflect on 1 Corinthians with a view towards the (*re-*)*contextualization* of Paul's theological witness. You will consider what Paul's witness

reveals about the kingdom of God and the transforming work of the Spirit, keeping in view that Paul wrote in a specific context and that his subsequent readers have inhabited very different social and historical contexts. You will begin to draw connections between 1 Corinthians and other significant cultural “texts” or “messages” (both biblical and non-biblical, religious and non-religious, written and otherwise); you will ponder how Paul’s witness has been received, (mis)understood, integrated, and even challenged by later readers and reading communities; and you will compare Paul’s ideas and actions with those of others (both within the Christian community and outside of it, both in Paul’s own time and today).

❖ **Practical Research (PS)**

In the end, actions speak louder than words. This being the case, the research reports will propose contemporary words and actions that creatively re-instantiate the most significant aspects Paul’s theological witness, showing how that witness is relevant not only to situations very similar to Paul’s Corinthian mission but also to situations that in various ways look remarkably different.

Concluding Theological Reflection (20%)

At the end of the semester, you will reflect on how the course has impacted your understanding of 1 Corinthians and its significance for life today. You will then offer a 1,200-word response to the question: What is God saying to us today through 1 Corinthians? The concluding reflection is due according to the Course Schedule below.

GRADING SUMMARY

Class Participation	0%
Research Reports (4x)	80%
<u>Concluding Reflection</u>	<u>20%</u>
Total	100%

TEXTBOOKS

Students are required to possess the following:

An English translation of the New Testament.

All required textbooks for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the MDC chapel entrance. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, ON, M9A 3C3: phone 416.620.2934; mobile 416.668.3434; email books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Dates	Class Topics	Passages	Assignments Due (@ 11:59pm)
Sep 13	Welcome & Introduction		
Sep 20	The Historical Setting of 1 Corinthians	16:1–21	
Sep 27	Sophistication in a Culture of Arrogance	1:10–2:5	Report #1
Oct 4	Collaboration in a Culture of Competition	2:6–4:13	
Oct 11	Purity in an Impure Culture	4:14–6:20	
Oct 18	Cultural Institutions in the Shadow of Apocalypse	7:1–40	Report #2
Oct 25	Intensive Hybrid Week (No Class)		
Nov 1	Self-Sacrifice in a Culture of Rights and Privileges	8:1–9:23	
Nov 8	Fear in a Culture of Idolatry	9:24–11:1	Report #3
Nov 15	Dignity in a Male-Dominated Culture	11:2–16	
*Nov 22	Solidarity in a Culture of Inequality	11:17–34	Report #4
Nov 29	Love in a Culture of Self-Promotion	12:1–14:40	
Dec 6	Anticipation in a Culture of Instant Gratification	15:1–58	Concluding Reflection Due

* Professor Away

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY***Grammatical Guides (these require Greek)***

Brookins, Timothy A., and Bruce W. Longenecker. *1 Corinthians 1–9: A Handbook on the Greek Text*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016.

Brookins, Timothy A., and Bruce W. Longenecker. *1 Corinthians 10–16: A Handbook on the Greek Text*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016.

Ellingworth, Paul and Howard Hatton. *A Handbook on Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians*. UBS Handbooks. New York: United Bible Societies, 1995.

Commentaries (* indicates discussion of Greek)

- Barrett, C. K. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. HNTC. New York: Harper & Row, 1968.
- Blomberg, Craig L. *1 Corinthians*. NIVAC. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.
- Bray, Gerald L., ed. *Commentaries on Romans and 1–2 Corinthians*. ACT. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009.
- Bruce, F. F. *First and Second Corinthians*. NCB. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971.
- Campbell, Charles L. *1 Corinthians*. Belief. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2018.
- Ciampa, Roy E., and Brian S. Rosner. *The First Letter to the Corinthians*. PNTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.
- *Collins, Raymond. *First Corinthians*. SP. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007.
- *Conzelmann, Hans. *1 Corinthians*. Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975.
- *Fee, Gordon. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987. 2nd ed., 2014.
- *Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Yale Bible 32. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.
- Gardner, Paul. *1 Corinthians*. ZECNT. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018.
- *Garland, David E. *1 Corinthians*. BECNT. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.
- Harrisville, Roy H. *1 Corinthians*. ACNT. Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1987.
- Hays, Richard B. *First Corinthians*. Interpretation. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997.
- Horsley, Richard A. *1 Corinthians*. ANTC. Nashville: Abingdon, 1998.
- Johnson, Alan F. *1 Corinthians*. IVP NTC 7. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010.
- Keener, Craig. S. *1–2 Corinthians*. NCBT. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Lockwood, Gregory. *1 Corinthians*. ConcC. St. Louis: Concordia, 2000.
- Oropeza, B. J. *1 Corinthians*. NCCS. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017.
- Powers, B. Ward. *First Corinthians: An Exegetical and Explanatory Commentary*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008.
- *Robertson, A. T. and Alfred Plummer. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*. ICC. Edinburgh: Clark, 1911.

*Thiselton, Anthony C. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

Witherington, Ben, III. *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.

Wright, N. T. *Paul for Everyone: 1 Corinthians*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

So that you can benefit as much as possible from the class sessions, please note the following expectations.

1. Please respect the opinions of others, even if you do not agree with them. Extend courtesy by not ridiculing others' ideas, but feel free to respond to them logically and critically and in an orderly manner.
2. Students should be on time to class or be prepared to offer an explanation after class to the professor.
3. Students are expected to stay for the entire class session, unless arranged in advance.
4. Students may eat and drink in class so long as they do not distract others or leave a mess behind.
5. Students should not engage in anything during class time that prevents them from focusing and participating in class discussions.
6. Students are not to carry on private conversations in class. If something is unclear, the whole class will benefit by a question being asked out loud.
7. Cell phones and related devices are to be silenced during class. If a student must for some reason accept a phone call, he or she ought to discretely leave the class in order to do so.

Students who fail to respect these guidelines may be asked to leave the class.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty (<https://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>).

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) for plagiarism detection. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com can submit an electronic copy of their work via email in PDF format and no penalty will be assigned, but all submitted work is subject to normal verification standards in order to ensure that academic integrity has been upheld (e.g. online search).

STYLE

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses:

<https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class. The binding version of the syllabus is the one posted to Avenue to Learn (A2L).