**YDS Summer Course | June 2023 |** “The Letter to the Romans: Justice and Race in Antiquity and Today”

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Monday-Friday, 10.00-12.30 EST, 5-9 June 2023 | Zoom link:

**Course description**

Some scholars have argued that the letter to the Romans is so unclear that it must be a pastiche of letters or the product of a confused, contradictory writer. We will together make sense of the letter in its historical context as a Jewish Paul articulates (not entirely clearly) how it is that God’s justice and mercy extends to Jews and also to all the nations (*ethnē*, from which we get our term ethnicity). Special attention will be paid to themes of power and punishment, enslavement, sexuality, ethnicity and race, and justice, both in antiquity and today. Required reading is the letter to the Romans. Ancillary, optional readings will be provided.

**Syllabus**

I recommend that you use the [NRSVue edition](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+1&version=NRSVUE) and a study edition like the Harper Collins Study Bible. It’s fine if you don’t have access to the latter. You may wish to read [this entry](https://www.bibleodyssey.org/people/main-articles/paul) by Prof. Davina Lopez on Paul before we start our course together. I have listed the readings in order of importance to the class. What’s most important is to read the text of Romans for any given day.

**Monday** **Letter-writing and Romans**

Read Romans 1-4, 16 (I know! Yes, I want you to read the first four *and* the last chapter!)

Recommended Krister Stendahl, “Why I love the Bible” (pdf or listen to his son, Lutheran Pastor John Stendahl, read it [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1OzRCmNS-g))

[Video Introduction to Ancient Papyrus Letters with Prof. AnneMarie Luijendijk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8P0ZDtnCGK0)

**Tuesday** **Judaism(s) and Gentiles**

Read Romans 1-4 (again)

Recommended Paula Fredriksen, “Israel and the Nations,” chapter 1 of her *Paul: The Pagan’s Apostle*

**Wednesday** ***Dikaiosynē* of the Nations (Gentiles)**

Read Romans 5-8

Recommended Neil Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations: Rereading Romans in the Shadow of Empire*, preface.

**Thursday Jews, Gentiles, and *Sōtēria***

Read Romans 9-11

Recommended [Adele Reinhartz, “The Vanishing Jews of Antiquity”](https://themarginaliareview.com/vanishing-jews-antiquity-adele-reinhartz/)

**Friday A Living Sacrifice**

Read Romans 12-15

Recommended Martin Luther King, Jr., “Paul’s Letter to American Christians” (pdf or listen [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7p5iOhXumaQ))

Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul*, chap. 7 “On Time, Race, and Obelisks: Rome and the Letter to the Romans”

**Additional resources for you or your students/communities:**

-“Fly through” [these elite homes in Pompeii.](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/take-virtual-tour-these-newly-excavated-pompeiian-homes-180974654/?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=socialmedia&fbclid=IwAR0rB2e2-DFQyn7NQqBZ4OjjexeHR8wB8PIoDXLjUNtrj1tYzG85hcFSEic) While we have no extant first-century in-Christ writings from Pompeii, this gives you an idea of an elite lifestyle. How/does this tour help you to envision the lives of those enslaved who labored in the homes? The elites who enjoyed them? What about their religious lives and practices of the entire *oikos* or household, both free and enslaved?

-Explore <http://orbis.stanford.edu/>. Map the times it would take to move between Jerusalem, Pisidian Antioch, and Rome, through various means (sea, cart, walking). How does this exercise in mapping help you to think about ethnicity, the body, and space?

-[Bible Odyssey](https://www.bibleodyssey.org/default.aspx) has some excellent, quick to read resources by scholars of the Society of Biblical Literature. The site is intended as an accessible, clear teaching tool.

-Transcribe Greek papyri. <https://www.ancientlives.org/>.

-See the scholarly edition of the Greek New Testament (Nestle Aland 28). <https://www.academic-bible.com/en/online-bibles/novum-testamentum-graece-na-28/read-the-bible-text/>

-Explore Codex Sinaiticus, one of the early manuscripts of the Bible—and more. <https://www.codexsinaiticus.org/en/manuscript.aspx>

-[America’s Public Bible](https://americaspublicbible.org/). Scholar Lincoln Mullen has created a Digital Humanities Project that “scrapes” U.S. newspapers to see when they use biblical quotations. If you put in Romans 13:1 (“be subject to the governing authorities”), for instance, you’ll begin to see how key that use of this verse spiked in ca. 1855. How/was this used in relation to abolitionist work and in the context of the Civil War?

**Key terms for the course (all derive from Greek):**

*dikaiosynē* righteousness, justification, justice

*ethnē* = nations = non-Jews; sometimes translated Gentiles (from Latin *gens*)

*Ioudaioi* Jews, Judeans

*pistis* faith, trust, credit

prosopopoeia Greek rhetorical technique of speech in character (i.e., without marking it in the text with quotation marks or explicitly, the inclusion of another’s voice)

*sōtēria* salvation, healing