

## **RELI 3231 Paul of Tarsus**

Paul of Tarsus is arguably a more critical object of study for the historian of earliest Christianity than even Jesus. There are three reasons for this: 1) we have writings from Paul, but none from Jesus. 2) Those writings comprise a significant portion of the New Testament (by word count and counting only the undisputed letters: 18%); 3) Paul radically transforms the earliest Jesus-movement from being a rural Judean movement that upheld Jewish law to an urban movement that jettisoned Jewish law in order to attract Gentiles. The current shape of Christianity therefore owes more to Paul than to Jesus. This course seeks to understand Paul by situating him in his ancient historical and cultural context.