# PAUL EMORY PUTZ

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George W. Truett Theological Seminary
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## EDUCATION

**2018 Ph.D. Degree in History, *Baylor University***
**2012 M.A. Degree in History, *University of Nebraska-Omaha***
**2009 B.S. Degree in Secondary Education (history endorsement), *Grace University***

## POSITIONS HELD

**2026- Assistant Professor of Christianity and Sports / Holder of the Harold and Dottie Riley Chair as Director of the Sports Chaplaincy and Ministry Program / Director of the Faith & Sports Institute, *Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary***

**2024-26 Director of the Faith & Sports Institute / Program Director of the Master of Arts in Theology and Sports Studies, *Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary***
*Main responsibilities:* Providing oversight, vision, and direction for FSI; managing and leading a team; networking and collaboration; leading and developing online graduate degree program; teaching graduate courses; engaging in research, writing, and speaking on sports and Christianity.

**2022-24 Assistant Director of the Faith & Sports Institute / Program Director of the Master of Arts in Theology and Sports Studies, *Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary***
*Major Activities:* Developed and launched Truett's first online degree program; taught graduate courses; assisted with strategy and planning for FSI; designed and developed curriculum and content on sports and Christianity.

**2019-22 Assistant Director of the Faith & Sports Institute, *Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary***
*Major Activities:* Assisted with strategy and planning for the launch of FSI; developed and led FSI's Online Certificate Program; designed and developed curriculum and content on sports and Christianity.

**2018-19 Lecturer in History, *Messiah University***

## PUBLICATIONS

### In Progress

*Jesus and James Naismith: A History of Basketball and Christianity from Origins to the NBA* (forthcoming with Eerdmans)

### Books

*The Spirit of the Game: American Christianity and Big-Time Sports* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2024). Awarded the Frank S. and Elizabeth D. Brewer Prize from the American Society of Church History for outstanding scholarship in the history of Christianity by a first-time author.

### Book Chapters

"'O God We Must Win': The Midwest and the Integration of Religion and Sport," in *Oxford History of the Midwest,* edited by Jon Lauck (New York: Oxford University Press, 2025), 629-646.

"Sport," in *The Oxford Handbook of Christian Fundamentalism*, edited by Andrew Atherstone and David Ceri Jones (New York: Oxford University Press, 2024), 418-434.

"'There is Talk of Black Power': Christian Athletes and the Revolt of the Black Athlete," in *Religion and Sport in North America: Critical Essays for the Twenty-First Century,* edited by Jeffrey Scholes and Randall Balmer (New York: Routledge, 2022), 13-34.

### Selected Peer-Reviewed Publications

"Tracing the Historical Contours of Black Muscular Christianity and American Sport," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 39.4 (2022): 404-424.

"Introduction: Sport-Gender Orthodoxy and Muscular Christian Values," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 39:4 (2022): 343-349 [with Chad Carlson and Brian Bolt].

"Commercializing the Sacred Office: Sexual Revolution and the Scandal of the Modern Marrying Parson, 1895-1930," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 17.1 (January 2018): 56-76.

"Building a City on a Hill: Evangelical Protestant Men and Moral Reform under the Des Moines Plan, 1907–1916," *Annals of Iowa* 77.1 (Winter 2018): 1-40.

**Selected Book Reviews**

Randall Balmer, *Passion Plays: How Religion Shaped Sports in North America* (University of North Carolina Press, 2022). Reviewed for *Journal of Sport History* 50.2 (Summer 2023): 295-296.

Michael Hurd, *Thursday Night Lights: The Story of Black High School Football in Texas* (University of Texas Press, 2017). Reviewed for *Great Plains Quarterly* 38.4 (Fall 2018): 440-441.

Timothy B. Neary, *Crossing Parish Boundaries: Race, Sports, and Catholic Youth in Chicago, 1914-1954* (University of Chicago Press, 2016). Reviewed for *Journal of American Ethnic History* 37.3 (Spring 2018): 134-136.

Christopher D. Cantwell, Heath W. Carter, and Janine Giordano Drake, eds., *The Pew and the Picket Line: Christianity and the American Working Class* (University of Illinois Press, 2016). Reviewed for *Annals of Iowa* 76.1 (Winter 2017): 145-146.

Tekla Agbala Ali Johnson, *Free Radical: Ernest Chambers, Black Power, and the Politics of Race* (Texas Tech University Press, 2012). Reviewed for *Middle West Review* 2.1 (Fall 2015): 107-109.

**Online and General Interest Publications**

I have published over twenty articles on themes related to history, Christianity, and sports for publications including *Christianity Today, Slate, Washington Post, Religion News Service,* and *Religion & Politics.* A list of those publications with links is available at **paulemoryputz.com**.

## AWARDS AND HONORS

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| 2025 | Frank S. and Elizabeth D. Brewer Prize, American Society of Church History *(outstanding scholarship in the history of Christianity by a first-time author)* |
| 2025 | Guittard Book Award for Historical Scholarship, Baylor University History Department |
| 2012 | Outstanding History Graduate Student, University of Nebraska-Omaha |

## GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

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| 2025-26 | Principal Investigator, Leadership and Connection Grant, Forum for Theological Education *[$50K]* |
| 2024-25 | Principal Investigator, *"Preparing Champions: Strengthening the Integration of Faith, Character Formation, and Intercollegiate Athletics at Baylor (and Beyond)."* Awarded by the Educating Character Initiative, Wake Forest University's Program for Leadership and Character *[$50K]* |

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| 2016 | Research Fellowship, Presbyterian Historical Society |
| 2016 | Evangelism Research Grant, Billy Graham Center Archives |
| 2016 | University of Chicago Robert L. Platzman Memorial Fellowship |
| 2015-16 | Whayne Travel Grant, Kenneth Spencer Research Library at the University of Kansas |
| 2015-16 | State Historical Society of Iowa Research Grant |
| 2013-14 | Guittard Fellowship, Baylor University |
| 2012-13 | Nebraska State Historical Society Research Grant |

## SELECTED PRESENTATIONS AND INVITED TALKS

### 2025

"Religion and Sport New Book Panel." Panel presentation as part of the Religion, Sport, and Play unit at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion. November 2025.

"The Unique Centrality of Sports in the Midwest." Invited paper presented as part of the Lost Region Recovery Project Conference. November 2025.

"In The Arena: How Evangelicals Built a Lasting Movement in Sports—and What It Means for American Christianity." Invited paper presented at the Cultures of Evangelicalism Conference, hosted by the Center for the Study of Evangelicalism at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. November 2025.

"Sports and the Stories We Tell: Evangelical Identity and the Christian Athlete Movement in America." Invited talk, 2025 Archival Research Lecture at Wheaton College. October 2025.

"Selling Authenticity through Sports: How the Oxford Group Popularized the Gospel of Life Change" Academic paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Church History. January 2025.

### 2023

"The City Game On A Hill: The Dallas Mavericks, Evangelical Politics, and the Shape of Religion in the National Basketball Association." Academic paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion. November 2023.

"The Role of the Coach in Moral Formation: A Brief History." Academic paper presented as part at the Annual Conference of the Association for Moral Education. October 2023.

"Jesus and James Naismith: The Christian History of Basketball and its Lessons for the Church Today." Truett Seminary Sports Ministry Chapel. March 2023.

**2022**

"Jackie Robinson and the American Way." Invited lecture for an American history class at Baylor University. November 2022.

"Sports and Religion in American History." Invited lectured for an American history class at Baylor University. September 2022.

"Muscular Christianity and the Making of Tim Tebow." Invited lecture delivered virtually for a class on sports and Christianity at Vanderbilt University. March 2022.

**2020**

"Sports, Race, and the American 'Middlebrow' Project in the Twentieth Century." Paper presented at the U.S. Society for Intellectual History's virtual conference. November 2020.

"Sunday's Competition: Christian Ministry in a Sports-Obsessed World." Lecture delivered for the Baylor Department of Religion's Ministry Guidance Conference. March 2020.

"Mission-Driven Institutions with a New Mission: How Religiously Affiliated Universities are Using Athletics to Survive." Paper presented with Jordan Bass and Claire Zvosek at the Applied Sport Management Association conference. February 2020.

**2019**

"Christian Athletes and the Revolt of the Black Athlete." Paper presented at the Second Global Congress on Sport and Christianity. October 2019.

"The Rise of Sports Ministry." Invited lecture delivered to a class on sports and religion at Bucknell University. March 2019.

Participant in the "Five Slides in Five Minutes" Session for Early Career Scholars. Annual meeting of the American Historical Association. January 2019.

**2018**

"John Wooden, Jesus, and Me: Thinking Historically about the Intersection of Sports and Christianity." Invited lecture delivered at Messiah College. November 2018.

"'There is talk of Black Power…it is time somebody talked about God Power': Evangelical Sports Ministries and the Black Athlete in the Long 1960s." Presented at the winter meeting of the American Society of Church History. January 2018.

## TEACHING AND COURSE DESIGN

### Graduate Courses (Truett Seminary)

Sports and Christianity in Historical Context
Studies in Sports Culture: Pluralism and Belonging in Sports
Organizational Leadership in Sports *(in collaboration with Dr. Gene Habecker)*
Soul Care in Sports *(redesigned for online settings)*
Integration of Faith and Sports *(redesigned for online settings)*

### Undergraduate Courses (Messiah University)

The Meaning of Sports in American Life
Sports, Race, and Politics in American Life

### Continuing Education Courses (Faith & Sports Institute Online Certificate Program)

*Lead developer:* Sports & Theology; Sports & Race; The Christian Athlete
*Collaboration and assistance:* Mental Health in Sports; Sports Leadership; Sports Chaplaincy; Sports & Spiritual Formation; Bible & Sports

## EVENT ORGANIZING

Conference Director, 4th Global Congress on Sport and Christianity, Truett Seminary (2025)
Organizer, Youth Sports Summit, Truett Seminary (2025-26)
Co-Organizer, FIT Sports Leadership Summit, Baylor University (2025)

## MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

I have been interviewed as a subject matter expert on sports and Christianity for podcasts and publications including National Public Radio, the Associated Press, the *New York Times, The Ringer*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Christianity Today, Deseret News*, and *Religion News Service*. For a list of media interviews and appearances with links provided, visit **paulemoryputz.com**.

## PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

American Historical Association | American Academy of Religion | American Society of Church History | North American Society for Sport History