ST504 – History of Philosophy and Christian Thought
Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte
Spring 2016

I. Details
A. Times: Wednesdays, 8:30–12:00 (including half-hour break for coffee fellowship)
B. Instructor: Dr. James N. Anderson
C. Contact: janderson@rts.edu
D. Availability: If you wish to discuss some aspect of the course, please either arrange (via email) an appointment or knock on the door of my office (in E building) if it’s open.

II. Goals
A. To familiarize the student with some of the major movements, figures, and texts in the history of Western philosophy, both Christian and non-Christian.
B. To introduce the student to the “big ideas” that have dominated philosophical debates over the centuries and their significance for Christian theology and apologetics.
C. To encourage the student to analyze the history of Western thought in terms of conflicting worldviews; and more specifically, in terms of deviations from the biblical worldview.
D. To develop the student’s critical thinking skills through the close reading and analysis of primary sources.
E. To help the student to appreciate the importance and utility of philosophical thinking.

III. Course Overview
A. Introduction: What is Philosophy? Why Does It Matter?
B. Context: The Biblical Worldview
C. All Greek to Me: Ancient Philosophy
D. Platonic Relationships: Early Christian Philosophy
E. Lights in the Dark Ages: Medieval Philosophy
F. Revolutionary Times: Renaissance and Reformation
G. From Theism to Deism: Early Modern Philosophy
H. From Deism to Atheism: Late Modern Philosophy
I. From Atheism to Nihilism: Postmodern Philosophy
J. God Strikes Back: 20th-Century Christian Philosophy

IV. Course Requirements
A. Class attendance and thoughtful participation.
   1. As per seminary policy, you are required to attend all the lectures. If you know that you will be unable to attend class on a particular date, please inform me in advance, otherwise you may be penalized for your absence.
   2. There will be opportunity for class participation and questions during the lectures.
   3. You will be expected to use the Internet in the classroom only for appropriate class-related activities, and you will be asked to sign an honor pledge to that effect.
4. A proportion of your final grade (see below) will depend on your attendance record and your participation in the classes (thoughtful interaction with the professor and other students).

B. Reading assignments.
   1. A proportion of your final exam mark (and thus your final grade) will depend on your acknowledgment that you have completed the required reading (see below).
   2. You will be penalized for each uncompleted reading assignment.
   3. A reading schedule will be provided at the start of class.

C. Writing assignment.
   1. You should write a critical research paper (3500–4500 words, excluding footnotes) that discusses one of the thinkers covered in class who took a distinctive position on one major philosophical issue. Here are some examples, but feel free to formulate your own:
      i. Leibniz, Hume, or Plantinga on the existence of God
      ii. Aristotle, Aquinas, or Descartes on the nature of the soul
      iii. Hobbes, Locke, or Berkeley on the reality of matter
      iv. Plato, Ockham, or Derrida on the reality of universals
      v. Augustine, Hegel, or Marx on the goal of history
      vi. Kant, Van Til, or Rorty on the possibility of knowledge
   2. Your paper should include detailed interaction with at least one primary source from your chosen thinker. It should also make use of a good number of secondary sources.
   3. Your paper should include all of the following:
      i. A concise explanation of the philosophical issue in question.
      ii. An exposition of the position on the issue taken by your chosen thinker and his reasons for taking that position, with reference to your primary sources. You should also indicate how this thinker’s views were influenced by his historical context.
      iii. A critical evaluation of that position in light of both reason and Scripture.
      iv. An explanation of your own position on the issue (compared and contrasted with that of your chosen thinker).
      v. A brief discussion of the significance of the philosophical issue in question for Christian doctrine or practice.
      vi. A standard bibliography (see below on sources and citations).
   4. Your paper will be graded according to the following criteria, in no particular order: responsible use of Scripture, responsible use of sources, extent of research, creativity, clarity, structure and coherence, cogency of argument, evidence of critical thinking, and good writing style (inc. grammar, spelling, and punctuation).
   5. The paper should cite at least 8 scholarly sources.
      i. For the purposes of this paper, a scholarly source is a book or article by a recognized expert in the field (and not aimed at a popular level for a general audience)—ideally one that has been peer-reviewed.
      ii. Wikipedia is clearly not a scholarly source.
      iii. That said, with sufficient discernment, Wikipedia can be a useful pointer to scholarly sources and is generally reliable for fact-checking on uncontroversial issues.
iv. Please consult me if you have any doubts about whether a source is scholarly.

v. You should not rely heavily on Internet sources. Use the library!

6. The paper should be word-processed, not hand-written.
   i. Use a 12-point font and double line-spacing for the main text.
   ii. Use section headings where applicable to improve readability.
   iii. Use footnotes (10-point font) rather than endnotes.
   iv. Use a recognized scholarly style for citations (e.g., Chicago, Turabian, SBL).

7. The paper should be submitted with a title page containing all of the following: the name and year of the course; your name; the professor’s name; the title of the paper; and the exact word count for the main text of the paper (obtained from your word processor’s word-count feature).

8. You will be penalized if you do not observe the requirements and guidelines above.

9. Your paper is due on May 10. It should be submitted on or prior to this date. Ensure that the paper is stamped with the date of submission. Late submissions will be penalized.

10. Your paper will be returned to you after grading with limited feedback. Consult the document “Guide to Annotations on Graded Papers” to crack the code. If you wish to receive more detailed feedback, please email me to arrange an appointment.

D. Midterm exam.
   1. The midterm exam will be taken during the week March 21–25. Please note that you will need to make prior arrangements with Kim Macurda (kmacurda@rts.edu) to obtain the exam paper.
   2. The exam will consist of multiple-choice questions based on the class material covered to date. You will have one hour to complete it (in the library) and you will not be allowed to refer to any class notes or other study resources.

E. Final exam.
   1. The final exam will be taken in exam week: May 12–17.
   2. The exam will consist of three short-essay questions based on all of the class material and all of the required readings. You will have three hours to complete it.
   3. You may refer to an English translation of the Bible (but not one with study notes, etc.). You may not refer to any class notes or other study resources.
   4. You will be asked to sign a declaration that you have not discussed the content of the exam with anyone who has previously taken the exam.
   5. You will also be asked to indicate which of the required reading assignments you have completed and to sign a declaration to that effect.

V. Course Documents
   A. Instructions for accessing course documents.
      1. Log in to the RTS Canvas website (https://rts.instructure.com).
      2. Select “History of Philosophy & Christian Thought” under Courses & Groups.
      3. All of the course documents will be accessible from the Modules page.
   B. Course outline.
      1. Other than the syllabus, the course outline is the most important document. You will need a copy (either electronic or printed) in front of you throughout the class.
      2. You are strongly encouraged to supplement the outline with your own notes.
      3. The outline will be uploaded to the course website the week before class.
C. **Supplementary documents.**
   1. The reading schedule and one of the required reading items (see below) will be available on the course website.
   2. You should also consult the documents “Research Paper Checklist” and “Guide to Annotations on Graded Papers”.

VI. **Grading**
   A. Class attendance and participation — 10%
   B. Midterm exam — 20%
   C. Final exam (including credit for reading assignments) — 30%
   D. Writing assignment — 40%

VII. **Required Reading**
You should obtain copies of both items below. You are also required to read a selection of primary source texts, which will be discussed in class. These will be available on the course website at the start of class (along with the reading schedule).


VIII. **Recommended Supplementary Reading**
You are not *required* to read any of the items below, but you may find them useful to consolidate the course material and for further study as your interests dictate. For many of these, the table of contents can be viewed on Amazon.com or Google Books.

   [Written for seminarians, the authors have aimed to focus on those philosophical issues of greatest relevance to Christian theology, although often the relevance to evangelical Reformed theology is hard to discern. Not exactly a page-turner.]
   [A fine introduction to the history of philosophy from a broadly Reformed perspective.]
   [Covers figures and movements from the pre-Socratics to Kant that have influenced Christian thought.]
   [A helpful little reference book for deciphering those ‘isms’ and other ten-dollar words.]
   [A very thorough history of Western thought by a Roman Catholic (Thomist) philosopher. The set published by Continuum in the UK has two additional volumes.]
[A topically-arranged introduction to philosophy (not a history of philosophy) by two Calvinist philosophers. It follows the recent trend in Christian philosophy books toward encouraging worldview awareness. Chapter 9 on aesthetics is particularly good.]

G. James Fieser and Bradley Dowden, eds., Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. [A free, online, peer-reviewed encyclopedia of philosophy; contains good articles on many of the figures and concepts discussed in the course. http://www.iep.utm.edu]


I. Anthony Kenny, An Illustrated Brief History of Western Philosophy (Blackwell, 2006). [A reliable one-volume history of philosophy from a highly respected Oxford scholar. Wittgenstein gets a whole chapter, while Heidegger doesn’t even get a mention, which tells you something about the author’s biases—although I can’t help but sympathize. Nice glossy pictures.]


K. J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview (IVP, 2003). [A comprehensive systematic introduction to philosophy (not a history of philosophy) from a conservative Arminian/Molinist perspective. It follows the recent trend in Christian philosophy books toward encouraging worldview awareness.]

L. Ronald H. Nash, Life’s Ultimate Questions (Zondervan, 1999). [A clear and engaging introduction to philosophy by an evangelical philosopher and apologist (former RTS/O professor) that attempts to blend topical, historical, and worldview/system perspectives. Good illustrations of philosophical concepts and a helpful glossary.]


O. Samuel Enoch Stumpf and James Fieser, Socrates to Sartre and Beyond (McGraw-Hill, 2007). [A popular and well-written introduction to the history of philosophy, now in its 8th edition. The main downside is the price!]

P. Steve Wilkens and Alan G. Padgett, Christianity & Western Thought, Volume 2 (IVP, 1990). [Sequel to Brown’s book (see above); extends the survey to the turn of the 20th century.]

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

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<tr>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>1. Critical review/application paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>2. Final exam tests knowledge and articulation of course topics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>3. Class discussion questions testing understanding and application</td>
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<tr>
<th>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
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<tr>
<td>Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.</td>
<td>1. Critical review/application paper</td>
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<td>2. Final exam tests knowledge and articulation of course topics</td>
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<td>3. Class discussion questions testing understanding and application</td>
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<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
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<td>Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)</td>
<td>1. Evaluates philosophical ideas and movements in light of Scripture</td>
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<td>2. Influences on modern hermeneutics</td>
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<td>3. Discusses different approaches to Scripture in history of Christian thought</td>
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<th>Reformed Theology</th>
<th>Minimal</th>
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<tr>
<td>Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</td>
<td>1. Evaluates philosophical ideas from Reformed perspective</td>
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<td>2. Discusses Reformation as intellectual/cultural movement</td>
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<th>Sanctification</th>
<th>Minimal</th>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.</td>
<td>1. Encourages application of Matthew 22:37 (“with all your mind”)</td>
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<th>Desire for Worldview</th>
<th>Strong</th>
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<tr>
<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
<td>1. Emphasizes understanding and application of biblical worldview</td>
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<td>2. Discusses philosophical implications of biblical worldview</td>
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<td>3. Christian worldview contrasted with non-Christian worldviews</td>
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<th>Winsomely Reformed</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
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<td>Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)</td>
<td>1. Appreciation for insights from non-Reformed traditions and non-Christian philosophies (common grace)</td>
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<td>2. Application of philosophical criticism to apologetics and evangelism</td>
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<th>Preach</th>
<th>Minimal</th>
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<td>Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</td>
<td>1. Understanding modernism and postmodernism aids preaching and teaching in 21C</td>
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<th>Worship</th>
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<td>Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.</td>
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<th>Shepherd</th>
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<td>Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.</td>
<td>1. Understanding modernism and postmodernism helps diagnose intellectual problems for 21C Christians</td>
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<th>Church/World</th>
<th>Minimal</th>
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<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
<td>1. Appreciation for breadth of Christian philosophical tradition</td>
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