History of Philosophy and Christian Thought: 6ST504
Summer 2014, Reformed Theological Seminary, Washington D.C.

Instructor: Stephen J. Nichols
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Home: 717-445-4102
June 9-13, 2014; 8:30 am – 5:30 pm

I. Description of the Course

This course introduces the main schools and figures in the history of philosophy and Christian thought. As a survey, it begins with the Greco-Roman period and stretches to the contemporary scene. The course intends to enable the student to critically evaluate ideas of the past and present as they impact culture and the church.

II. Assessment Information and Due Dates

1. Examination: Essay Questions, 40%.

You will be given a set of essay questions in a take-home format that cover the reading and class discussions.

Due: to be announced in class

2. Reading Journals and Class Participation, 20%.

A blank copy of a reading journal may be found on the last page of this syllabus. You will need to fill out one of these for each of the required books for the class, four in total.

Due: to be announced in class

3. Paper, 40%.

Write a seven-page (or so) paper on a philosopher or theologian of your choice with my approval. Your paper should include 1) a very brief biographical sketch; 2) a discussion of the person’s main idea(s) and contribution to contemporary thought—this could be a discussion of one of the person’s books or essays; and 3) a very brief application to church life today. The person’s “contribution” should be the bulk of the paper.

Due: to be announced in class

III. Bibliography and Required Texts

Required Texts:
ISBN: 9780812972955


ISBN: 9780687355471

IV. Schedule

Day One: Greco-Roman Period

Lectures:
- Jerusalem & Athens, Faith & Reason: introduction to the course
- early Greek thought
- the intersection of theology and philosophy
- Augustine

Reading:
- Sproul, Consequences, pages 1-63.
- Kerr, Readings, pages 13-77. Some things to look for in these readings: the early church’s view of church government and the role of bishops; the interaction with Greek philosophy and the rise of heresies; Augustine; the development of early church Christology which eventually leads to the creeds (pp. 74-77).

Day Two: Middle Ages

Lectures:
- introduction to medieval philosophy and theology
- Anselm
- Aquinas
- metaphysics and arguments for God’s existence

Reading:
- Sproul, Consequences, pages 65-77.
- Kerr, Readings, pages 79-133. Pay attention to the differing methods of the scholastics (as exemplified in Aquinas) and the mystics in these writings. Also, look for the increasing role of tradition in these readings.

Day Three: Reformation

Lectures:
- introduction to the philosophical thought and context of the Reformation
- Luther and Calvin

Reading:
- Collinson, The Reformation: This explores the philosophical and cultural context and contribution of the Reformation by a rather capable social historian. Please read as much of it as you are able, esp. chapters 1-4 and 9-11.
- Kerr, Readings, 135-185. We’ll explore Luther and Calvin in a little more depth and breadth than here, but this is a good start.

Day Four: Modern Age

Lectures:
- Descartes, Locke, Hume, and Kant and the rise of modern philosophy
- Jonathan Edwards

Reading:
- Please supplement Kerr by reading Edwards’s sermon “God Glorified in the Work of Redemption,” available online and in various in print editions.

**Day Five: More Modern Age (and a Little Postmodernism, Too)**

Lectures:
- 20th century theological developments: modernism, liberalism, fundamentalism, and the rise of evangelicalism
- Bonhoeffer
- the so-called “linguistic turn” and the end of metaphysics and modernity; postmodern developments

Reading:
- Sproul, *Consequences*, pages 159-197.
- Kerr, *Readings*, 222-357, skim a lot here, but pay particular attention to Strauss, Ritschl, Bushnell, James, Barth, and Bultmann. Get to the others as you have time.
- Nichols, *Bonhoeffer*, read as much as you are able.

V. Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: History of Philosophy and Christian Thought  
Professor: Nichols  
Campus: Washington, D.C.  
Date: June 9-13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em><em>MDiv</em> Student Learning Outcomes</em>*</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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</table>
| Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. | Strong | 1. Students write a paper and answer exam questions.  
2. Students participate in class discussion. |
<p>| 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.) | Minimal | 2. Offers students theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives for their hermeneutic. |
| Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards. | Strong | 1. Students read classic texts in the Reformed tradition, including selections from the Westminster Standards. |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Deity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sanctification</td>
<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>1. Reflecting on sanctification by reading of the examples of others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desire for Worldview</td>
<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>1. Reflecting on one’s worldview by reading of the examples of others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winsomely Reformed</td>
<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>Moderate</td>
<td>1. Students read from other traditions and engage ideas and perspectives from other traditions.</td>
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<td>Preach</td>
<td>Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>1. Some readings engage the worship practices in previous eras of the Christian tradition.</td>
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<td>Shepherd</td>
<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>Minimal</td>
<td>1. Students read of the pastoral work/perspectives in previous eras. 2. Paper requires a brief application to church life today.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Church/World</td>
<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>1. Students read broadly in other traditions. 2. Students engage Islam.</td>
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Reading Journal - Name:

Book Title & Author:

Percentage of Book Completed: ____%
Main Thesis/Main Point of Book:

List five strengths of the book, significant points, contributions, or ideas:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What questions did the book raise you think were left unanswered or not answered deeply enough? (write answer on back of sheet)