ST 5400 : CHRISTIAN THOUGHT & PHILOSOPHY : DAVIS
Spring 2022
Reformed Theological Seminary, Atlanta, GA
Course Syllabus
***Please send questions to Prof. Davis at* davis@covenant.edu**

Texts: Baird & Kaufmann, *From Plato to Derrida*, 3rd ed., Prentice Hall 2000, ISBN 978-0131585377 . This is referred to as "B" in the schedule of readings. Any edition after the 2nd edition is fine. ABE Books is a good place to look first. Amazon seems to be discouraging use of older editions.
Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (the schedule below refers to the Vintage International/Random House, 1983 version; ISBN 978-0679733737, but the edition is not crucial).
Smith, Stout & Minkema (eds.), *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*, Yale University Press 1995, ISBN 978-0300098389 (SSM in the schedule)
Supplemental Readings (posted in CANVAS)

Exam: **Final Exam** distributed during the final weekend of and due (postmarked or e-mailed) two weeks after the last class meeting.

Papers: **Christian Thought Essay.** A careful look at the devotional writing of one Christian thinker in light of the intellectual climate of the writer's age. In addition to summarizing the principal features of the writer's work, the essay's thesis will concern the writer's success at managing the philosophical currents of his or her age along Biblical lines. See below for details. A Prospectus for this essay is due during the second weekend of meetings; a Rough Draft of this essay is due during the fourth weekend of meetings. The Final Draft is due (postmarked or e-mailed) three weeks after the final weekend of meetings. See below for a full description of this assignment. Final draft due April 30, 2022. Rough drafts received by April 2, 2022 will be assured of receiving commentary, with revisions not due until 10 days after receiving instructor comments (if that is later than April 30, 2022).

Reading Responses. At the beginning of each Friday session students will be required to submit one-page responses for one of the questions for the assigned readings for the weekend. Responses may answer either a "Summary" question or an "Analytical" question, but over the course of the semester at least one of each kind must be attempted. The lowest grade for one of these responses for the semester will only count half as much as the other three.

Grading: Grades will be calculated using the following percentages:

Final Exam……..	40%
Christian Thought Essay Prospectus……..	10%
Christian Thought Essay Final…….	30%
Reading Response (average)……..……	20%

Schedule of Readings & Assignments:

Note: Reading assignments may be undertaken jointly by groups of two or three students provided that all group members agree to provide some kind of report on their portions to others in the group.

Jan. 28-29:

The Nature of Philosophy

Ancient Philosophy*:*

Plato, Aristotle, Stoics

Readings: Plato, *Euthyphro* (B 8-20)*, Apology* (B 21-38), *Republic* VI-VII (B 129-141)
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I-II (B 184-207) *Physics* II (B 151-162)
Epictetus, *Encheridean* (B 257-268)

Feb. 18-19:

Early Church Fathers & Neo-Platonism*:*

Justin, Tertullian, Plotinus, Augustine, Boethius

Readings: Justin, *First Apology* (selections) [in CANVAS]
Tertullian, *Prescription Against Heretics* [in CANVAS]
Plotinus, *Enneads* I,6, (B 270-276)
Augustine, *Confessions* VIII, XI, *City of God* XII.1-9 (B 286-310)
Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* V.6 (B 313-316)

Medieval Philosophy*:*

Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, Ockham, Molina, Calvin

Readings: Anselm, *Proslogion* and with Gaunilo (B 319-325)
Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (selections) (B 337-366 and handout on analogy)
Ockham*, Summa Logicae* I.14-16 (B 369-374)
Flint (on Molina), *On God's Providence* [in CANVAS]
Calvin, *Institutes* I.i-x [in CANVAS]

March 11-12:

Early Modern Philosophy*:*

Descartes, Hobbes, Pascal, Locke

Readings: Descartes, *Meditations* (B 387-430)
Hobbes, *Leviathan* I.12-15 (B 447-459)
Pascal, *Pensees* (B 476-482)
Locke, *Of Civil Government* [in CANVAS]

Leibniz, Edwards, Hume

Readings: Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* 1-14 (B 595-605)
Edwards, "On Being, "Religious Affections," "Original Sin" (SSM 9-13, 137-171, 223-243)
Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* II-VII, X (B 703-733, 746-757)

***Late Modern Philosophy**:*

Kant, Hegel

Readings: Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* §40-§56 (B 817-830)
Kant, *Foundation for the Metaphysics of Morals* I-II (B 852-882)
Hegel, from *The Phenomenology of Spirit* B.IV.A (B 898-903)

Kierkegaard, Marx, Mill

Reading: Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling, Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (B 953-971)
Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, Communist Manifesto* (B 975-993)
Mill, *Utilitarianism* II (B 912-925)

Apr. 8-9:

Contemporary Philosophy:

Existentialism

Readings: Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* I.1-3, *Twilight of the Idols*, *The Anti-Christ* I.1-7, 62 (B 1006-1027)
Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, "The Myth of Sisyphus" (pp. 119-123) and "An Absurd Reasoning" (pp. 1-65)

Analytic Philosophy, Postmodernism

Readings: Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (B 1101-1117)
Ayer, from *Language, Truth and Logic* (B 1122-1130)
Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity?" [in CANVAS]
Taylor, "Postmodern A/Theology" [in CANVAS]

Apr 23: Final Exam due (midnight by e-mail or postmarked)
Apr 30: Christian Thought Essay (midnight by e-mail or postmarked)

Extension Policy

All assignments and exams are to be completed by the deadlines announced in this syllabus or in class.

Extensions for assignments and exams due within the normal duration of the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. Extensions of two weeks or less beyond the date of the last deadline for the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. A grade penalty may be assessed.

Extensions of greater than two weeks but not more than six weeks beyond the last deadline for the course may be granted in extenuating circumstances (i.e. illness, family emergency). For an extension of more than two weeks the student must request an Extension Request Form from the Student Services Office. The request must be approved by the Professor and the Academic Dean. A grade penalty may be assessed. (RTS Catalog p. 42 and RTS Atlanta Student Handbook p. 14)

Any incompletes not cleared six weeks after the last published due date for course work will be converted to a failing grade. Professors may have the failing grade changed to a passing grade by request. (RTS Catalog p. 42)

CHRISTIAN THOUGHT ESSAY : Full description:

Purpose of this essay: Christian thinking about the faith and the relationship between faith and life unavoidably reflects the intellectual climate of its time period. If only because thinking takes place in human language, concepts and idioms, even the most careful Christian writers have had to wrestle with uncritically adopting the world's categories, assumptions and values at the very heart of their devotional lives. This essay will give the student the opportunity to join in this struggle as a concerned spectator, reading a renowned author focusing attention on the author's success in dealing with the influence of their own intellectual climate.

Target Length: Eight pages is the approximate target for the Final Draft, but the nature of the topic demands that this not be thought of as a maximum. If the paper exceeds 10 pages it should be obvious that the length was necessary. Because it is likely that the Rough Draft will suggest fruitful lines of development, a draft between six and eight pages will be acceptable.

Style: Chicago Style (footnotes, bibliography, etc.) is greatly preferred.

Reading Requirement, Length: In order to comment seriously on an author's success in using without falling prey to the limitations of their intellectual environment, it will be necessary to read *at least* 100 pages of an author's work. (Because some editions have very small or large print, the minimum might be more clearly specified as 30,000 words. The idea is for comments to be based on an adequate foundation. Err on the side of reading too much, not too little.)

Reading Requirement, Content: Although systematic academic writing must struggle with philosophical currents and baggage, it is self-consciously written for an intellectual audience and thus it is often difficult to determine whether the author adopted biblically suspect concepts and idioms for the sake of the audience. The same can't be said, however, for devotional writing and works prepared exclusively for other believers (letters, prayers, sermons, diaries, journals, devotionals, etc.). In order to simplify the task of analysis, it will be important that the readings be clearly intended for an exclusively Christian audience. (The best data will come from writing intended for a small audience of intimate friends or parishioners, or even written only for the author's edification.)

Topics: The choice of the Christian author is left to the student, but students would be advised to choose an author who worked in an intellectual climate with which the student has some familiarity. (For example, a student with little knowledge of the intellectual climate of 18th century New England shouldn't attempt to assess Jonathan Edwards' success at managing the problems posed by the prevailing worldview.) Here is a short list of suggestions that purposely omits some obvious possibilities:

Augustine's *Confessions* (the early books)
Anselm's *Monologion*;
Teresa of Avila's *The Life of Teresa of Avila*
Blaise Pascal's *Pensees*
Samuel Rutherford's *Letters*
Soren Kierkegaard's *Training in Christianity*
Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship*
Billy Graham's *Angels*

Thesis Requirement: Even though the focus is on personal writings, every essay must have a thesis *about the author's success at using without being used by the available conceptual resources*. It will be necessary to do more than summarize. You will be arguing for a conclusion about the author's success.

Prospectus: One to two paragraphs identifying (a) the author to be considered, (b) the content basis for the analysis, (c) a justification for believing that the content basis will be adequate for the analysis attempted, and (d) the reason for selecting this author and content basis.

Rough Draft: A very serious six to eight page draft of the essay turned in by April 11 would give the instructor time to provide comments and suggestions. While it is acceptable to leave one or two sections of the draft incomplete, the draft must have a thesis and any gaps in the text should be accompanied by an explanation of what the author expects to have happen in the section. The more complete the draft is, the more helpful and focused the comments can be, so aim for a draft that isn't very drafty. If a solid rough draft is submitted, the Final Draft of the essay is not due until ten days after the instructor returns the draft with comments, or April 25, *whichever is later*.

Late Work: Unlike students in college or even in a residential seminary program, RTS/Atlanta students have many demands on their time (work, family, ministry, etc.) that deserve higher priority than the deadlines for this course. All requests for extension on the basis of unforeseen complications outside the student's control will be granted until such requests establish a pattern for any particular student. If you need more time, please ask for it.

Reading Response Questions Sets:

Feb. 18-19 Set : One question from EITHER the Summary and Analytical sets using 200-300 words; due at the start of class on Feb 19:

1. Summary Questions

    a. Explain how Epictetus would have you counsel a grieving mother whose child has just died of cancer.
    b. Compare and contrast the use that Justin and Tertullian make of non-Christian (pagan) philosophers in their arguments.
    c. Explain what Augustine and Boethius mean by "time" and how they understand God's relationship to time.
    d. Explain one of Gaunilo's objections to Anselm's treatment of the fool's rejection of God's existence and Anselm's reply to the objection.
    e. Explain Thomas Aquinas' answer to the question, "Can man attain happiness by his natural powers?"
    f. Explain Ockham's position on the problem of "universals."

2. Analytical Questions

    a. Respond to the claim that Calvinism shares with Stoicism a fatalistic attitude about the future: since all is determined ahead of time, we should only concern ourselves with our attitude about the inevitable.
    b. To what extent should a Christian today imitate Justin's practice of insisting that Christian doctrine is very similar to doctrine's espoused by the broader culture?
    c. Assess the strength of Augustine's reasons for concluding that time can't be the measure of the motion of heavenly bodies.
    d. Assess the success of Anselm's argument *given* the purpose he hopes he it will meet.
    e. Critique Molina's "middle knowledge" solution to the problem of providence and human freedom.
    f. Critique Calvin's position on the non-Christian's knowledge of God.

March 11-12 Set : One question from EITHER the Summary and Analytical sets using 200-300 words; due at the start of class on Mar 12:

1. Summary Questions

a. Explain the final position that Descartes reaches concerning the relationship between his mind and his body and concerning *what* he is.
b. Explain what Hobbes means by a "law of nature" and the status of moral obligations in his account of "natural law."
c. Explain Leibniz's account of how miracles are possible (in the *Discourse*).
d. Explain Edwards' answer to the problem of finding a mark that distinguishes the believer from the unbeliever (in *The Religious Affections*).
e. Explain Hume's analysis of the origin of our idea of the necessary connection between cause and effect.
f. Explain Kant's solution (in §53-54) to the antinomy of freedom and determinism.
g. Explain what Kant means by insisting that we must always treat humanity *as an end* and never *as a means*.
h. Explain why Kierkegaard focuses on the story of Abraham in *Fear and Trembling*.
i. Explain two of the senses in which capitalism *alienates* the laborer (according to Marx in his "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts").
j. Explain how Mill handles any two of the criticisms of his Utilitarianism that he treats in *Utilitarianism*.

2. Analytical Questions

a. Critique either of the arguments that Descartes develops for God's existence (in the third and fifth meditations).
b. Respond to the claim that Hobbes and Calvin share the same pessimistic view of human nature.
c. Critique Leibniz's reasoning to the conclusion that this is the best of all possible worlds.
d. Critique Edward's explanation of the change that befell Adam (& Eve) as a result of the first sin (in Part IV of *Original Sin*).
e. Respond to Hume's conclusion that it would never be reasonable to believe that a miracle had occurred.
f. Critique Kant's treatment of God.
g. Assess the usefulness of Kant's "Categorical Imperative for making moral choices.
h. Critique Kierkegaard's reasons for claiming the "Truth is Subjectivity."
i. Respond to the claim that America is really a Communist country because all of Marx's substantial predictions for the Communist utopia have been realized in America's welfare state.
j. Critique Mill's account of "individuality" as an ideal.

Apr. 8-9 Set: One question from EITHER the Summary and Analytical sets using 200-300 words; due at the start of class on March 21:

1. Summary Questions

    a. Explain Nietzsche's theory about the role of *ressentiment* in the development of the concept of "evil."
    b. Explain what Camus means by "absurdity" and how Sisyphus illuminates his contentions about the human condition.
    c. Explain the "verification" criterion that Ayer settles on (in *Language, Truth & Logic*) for determining whether a statement is nonsensical or not.
    d. Explain why Rorty insists that he *isn't* a relativist. (Write this so that it would be intelligible to a Sunday School class that thinks "relativism" is the main threat to Christian truth today.)

2. Analytical Questions

    a. Respond to Nietzsche's complaint that Christian morality is an anti-natural, diseased morality.
    b. Write a letter to a non-Christian friend who has expressed deep appreciation for Camus' tough-minded working out of the implications of God's non-existence.
    c. Identify and explain the single most significant departure from orthodoxy in Taylor's "Erring: A Postmodern A/theology" and justify your choice.
    d. Respond to the claim (typical of Rorty) that the evangelical church has willingly allowed the pursuit of "Truth" to become a fetish that leads us to sacrifice community for the sake of a modernistic myth.

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
SYSTEM

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Christian Thought & Philosophy (ST5400)
Professor: William C. Davis
Campus: Atlanta
Date: Jan. 27, 2022 (course begin date); completed November 29, 2021

MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes *In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.* **As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.*		**Rubric** ➢ Strong ➢ Moderate ➢ Minimal ➢ None	**Mini-Justification**
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Strong	Christian Thought Essay analyzes, assesses, and articulates historical, theological, and culturally significant concepts and presuppostional/framework commitments. Readings of primary sources in bot philosophical classics and the Christian intellectual tradition. Ora and written reports about readings required.
Scripture	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.)	Strong	Classroom discussion and lectures focus on the impact of philosophical developments on the production and on-going interpretation of Scripture.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Readings and classroom activities include focused attention on the sources and voices that shape the development of Reformed orthodoxy and orthopraxis.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	Reading responses call on students to assess the extent to which theological and philosophical developments impact their love for God and others, and their ability to love rightly as well as think clearly.
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Strong	Assignments and classroom strategies focus persistently on

			worldview questions and self-consciously hold every major claim and recommendation to the standard of God's Word.
Winsomely Reformed	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.)	Strong	Lectures, readings, and discussions survey both Christian and non-Christian thought, searching out and openly appreciating truth wherever it is found. Contempt or dismissal of non-Reformed voices i aggressively discouraged.
Pastoral Ministry	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both churched and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading, and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Xns.	Moderate	Assignments and classroom activities aim to develop the ability to "read" the worldview (heart and mind) commitments of others and to discern the currents that shape the worldviews of our contemporaries (both Christian and non-Christian) in order to minister to them.