

BSTH 3213

The Ten Commandments

Professor	Daniel R. Driver, PhD	Course	Version 2.1
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1 COURSE DESCRIPTION

From the Academic Calendar: Explores the legal and cultic context of the Ten Commandments. The course will also address the significance of the Decalogue in Christian interpretation and the history of civilization. Students will become familiar with current scholarship on the Ten Commandments, especially in the context of Christian discourse. Prerequisites: BSTH 101, 102, 201.

2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course students should be able to: name the Ten Commandments in order; locate at least three biblical versions of the Ten Commandments; differentiate biblical versions by their contents; interpret each of the Commandments in their immediate literary context; integrate an understanding of the Ten Commandments with a broader view of biblical law; summarize the way different religious traditions count to Ten; compare the ways the Commandments have been interpreted in history; identify, evaluate, and report on contemporary connections with at least one of the Ten Commandments.

3 REQUIRED TEXTS & MATERIALS

All required textbooks are available in the Tyndale Bookstore.

- [1] Jeffrey P. Greenman and Timothy Larsen, eds. *The Decalogue through the Centuries: From the Hebrew Scriptures to Benedict XVI*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012. ISBN 978-0664234904.
- [2] Michael Coogan. *The Ten Commandments: A Short History of an Ancient Text*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. ISBN 978-0300178715.
- [3] Roger E. Van Harn, ed. *The Ten Commandments for Jews, Christians, and Others*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2007. ISBN 978-0802829658.

4 SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS

All supplementary textbooks are held in reserve in the Tyndale library. Other supplementary materials may be provided through the course website.

- [1] Carl E. Braaten and Christopher R. Seitz, eds. *I Am the Lord Your God: Christian Reflections on the Ten Commandments*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005 ISBN 978-0802828125.
- [2] Patrick Miller. *The Ten Commandments: Interpretation: Resources for the Use of Scripture in the Church*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009. ISBN 978-0664230555.

5 COURSE OUTLINE

Readings should be completed before the start of the class for which they are assigned. We will adhere to the schedule in Table 1 (below) as closely as possible, though I reserve the right to adjust it to suit the needs of the class.

Week. Primary Focus	Secondary Reading	Dates
1. Introductions	Syllabus, Coogan ix–49, TAL 332	4, 6 Jan.
2. Introductions	Coogan 50–93, Miller 1–12	11, 13 Jan.
3. First Word	Coogan 94–141, Van Harn 1–21	18, 20 Jan.
4. Second Word	Van Harn 23–45, Miller 13–62	25, 27 Jan.
5. Third Word	Van Harn 47–67, Greenman 1–27	1, 3 Feb.
6. Fourth Word	Van Harn 69–85, Greenman 29–46	8, 10 Feb.
— No Class: Reading Week		15–19 Feb.
7. Fifth Word	Van Harn 87–111, Greenman 47–66	22, 24 Feb.
8. Sixth Word	Van Harn 113–134, Greenman 67–96	29 Feb, 2 Mar.
9. Seventh Word	Van Harn 135–156, Greenman 97–133	7, 9 Mar.
10. Eighth Word	Van Harn 157–178, Greenman 135–167	14, 16 Mar.
11. Ninth Word	Van Harn 179–198, Greenman 169–196	21, 23 Mar.
12. Tenth Word	Van Harn 199–220, Greenman 197–227	28, 30 Mar.
☞ Final Exam (as schedule by the Registrar)		6–13 Apr.

Table 1: Schedule of Readings

See the Registrar's website for a list of other [important dates](#). The last day to add a class, or to drop one without penalty, is ordinarily the end of the term's second week.

6 EVALUATION

6.1 GRADE STRUCTURE FOR BSTH 3213

1. At various points throughout the semester I will announce **reading quizzes**. They are designed to ensure that you have read the assigned material carefully, and may be administered online (outside of class) or on paper (in class).
2. Working in groups of two or three, students are to make a **creative presentation** on one of the Ten Commandments in the week in which that Commandment is under investigation. Generally this will take place on Wednesdays.
3. A **review essay** on Coogan's *The Ten Commandments* will be due at the start of the first class after reading week (22 February).
4. A comprehensive **final paper** will give students an opportunity to explore one of the Ten Commandments in detail. It should be 10–12 pages in length and is due at the start of the final exam period. Students must present at 5 minute summary of their thesis to the rest of the class during the exam period.

The breakdown for the semester's total work is shown in Table 2 (below).

Reading Quizzes	25%
Presentations	15%
Review Essay	25%
Final Paper	35%

Table 2: Distribution of Grades

6.2 GRADING SYSTEM AT TYNDALE

Tyndale University College provides the following general benchmarks for summative assessment. I may furnish more detailed rubrics for particular assignments. Note also (at right) the percentage ranges and grade point values for letter grade designations.

		<i>percent</i>	<i>pts.</i>
A, B – Excellent, Good These grades are earned only when evidence indicates that the student has consistently maintained above average progress in the subject. Sufficient evidence may involve such qualities as creativity, originality, thoroughness, responsibility and consistency.	+	90–100	4.00
	A	85–89	4.00
	–	80–84	3.70
	+	77–79	3.30
C – Satisfactory This grade means that the student has fulfilled the requirements of the subject to the satisfaction of the instructor. These requirements include the understanding of subject matter, adequacy and promptness in the preparation of assignments and participation in the work of the class.	B	73–76	3.00
	–	70–72	2.70
	+	67–69	2.30
	C	63–66	2.00
D – Poor This grade indicates that the accuracy and content of work submitted meets only the minimal standards of the instructor. Consistent performance at this level is considered inadequate for graduation.	–	60–62	1.70
	+	57–59	1.30
	D	53–56	1.00
	–	50–52	0.70
F – Failing Work submitted is inadequate. Attitude, performance and attendance are considered insufficient for a passing grade.	F	0–49	0.00

7 POLICY ON ASSIGNMENTS & EXAMS

All policy in Sections 7, 8 and 9 of this syllabus applies to this course in addition to policy in the current [Academic Calendar](#). In some cases the syllabus underscores the general policy, while in other cases it supersedes it.

For all matters not covered in this syllabus, refer to the Academic Calendar, “University College Academic Policies, Procedures, and Notices.” Students are strongly encouraged to read this document carefully at least once in their career at Tyndale, and to review it every year they matriculate.

7.1 ASSIGNMENTS

This is a university course. All papers and other writing assignments should therefore be written at the university level. Submissions must be typewritten and double-spaced, should be free from error, and in this course should follow the *SBL Handbook of Style* (refer to the free, online [SBLHS Student Supplement](#).)

If you ever struggle with composition—anything from the relatively simple matters of spelling, grammar and proper citation to deeper-level issues of tone, structure and argument—then please make use of the Writing Centre (see Section 9.1). Experienced writers know that drafts and peer feedback are integral to the writing process. Inexperienced writers are often unaware that their surface-level errors create credibility problems with their readers. When you [misspell common words](#), fail to know [how to use an apostrophe](#), or do not bother to cite your sources correctly, why should your readers trust you with more important matters like the facts and ideas under discussion?

7.1.1 DEADLINES

Assignments *must* be submitted on time. Even if the work is rough or incomplete, you must turn in something by the due date to receive any credit whatsoever. Unless I specify differently in class, papers and take-home exams are due by 11:59 PM on the due date. All other work is due at the start of the day’s class.

Note that, because no late work is accepted in this class, there is no scale of penalty for unexcused late assignments. If a truly extraordinary event keeps you from doing your best work, then let me know so that we can make special arrangements. I am guided by the Academic Calendar in what counts as extenuation. “Extensions are not granted for what best could be described as ‘poor time management’ or ‘over-involvement’ in an extracurricular activity.”

7.1.2 SUBMISSION AS PDFS

Papers and some other assignments in this course are to be submitted electronically through the course pages (Section 8.3.2). To preserve formatting, formal writing assignments must be uploaded in Portable Document Format. There are many ways of creating PDFs; it is your responsibility to know how to do so on the computer platform you use, and to generate and submit your PDFs on time.

7.1.3 BACKUP

In the event of the loss of assignments post-submission—electronic systems fail, and my office has flooded before—students are required to keep backup copies of all assignments submitted.

Learning how to secure and preserve your work is a peculiar challenge of the digital age. Plan on the crash of your hard drive, and the theft of your laptop (the first is inevitable,

the second quite probable). If you do not have a backup strategy, I recommend that you start with a free account on [dropbox.com](https://www.dropbox.com).

7.2 EXAMINATIONS

My examination policy follows that outlined in the Academic Calendar, part of which is summarized below for emphasis.

1. Midterm exams will be held as scheduled by the instructor. If you miss the exam for a legitimate reason, you must write the exam within the same number of days that you were absent from school (possibly the next day).
2. Final examinations will take place during the exam period as scheduled by the Registrar. Students are responsible for noting the date, time and location of their final exam in this class. Students are also responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Registrar's examination policies.
3. Special rules apply when midterms and finals are held, including one that prohibits students from leaving their seats during the final fifteen minutes of the exam period. See the Academic Calendar for full details.
4. Provisions exist for students who are justifiably unable to write the final exam at the scheduled time. See the Academic Calendar for details, and make arrangements through the Office of the Registrar.
5. Normally, a final exam can only be reschedule in two circumstances: (a) a documented illness, or (b) a conflict with another exam (two at the same time, or three within 24 hours). [Apply to the Registrar](#) in either case.

8 STUDENT EXPECTATIONS & GUIDELINES

8.1 ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Integrity in academic work is required of all students. Academic dishonesty is any breach of this integrity. It includes such practices as cheating (the use of unauthorized material on tests and examinations), submitting the same work for different classes without permission of the instructors, using false information in an assignment (including false references to secondary sources), improper or unacknowledged collaboration with other students, and plagiarism.

Tyndale takes seriously its responsibility to uphold academic integrity, and to apply consequences for academic dishonesty. Consult the Academic Calendar for more information on the school's policy and its application to your work in this course.

8.2 ATTENDANCE

"Faithful attendance at classes is an important indicator of student maturity and involvement" (Academic Calendar). Remember, too, that you are responsible for everything that happens in every class. Your best policy is to attend and engage. Please do not ask me to repeat for your benefit anything I have said in a class you have missed.

Keeping a record of attendance is mandatory for faculty at Tyndale (in contrast to many other colleges and universities). The University College publishes guidelines for how attendance should bear on your final evaluation in a course, and I adhere to them. Note that four lates equals one absence.

What should you do if you miss an undue number of classes? First, if possible, arrange for a classmate to brief you on the material missed, or get my permission for a classmate

to make a recording for you (see Section 8.3.4). Second, promptly notify the Dean of Students in person or by phone. If illness is the cause you will need to submit a doctor's certificate upon return. The Dean of Students will notify your professors of the reason for the absence and suggest that they take this into consideration when assigning grades.

8.3 TECHNOLOGY

Technological innovation has brought students and educators a number of powerful new tools, and I encourage you to use them as you research, write, and collaborate. Some of these tools also call for disciplined use and management.

8.3.1 EMAIL

Email can be a chore, and you may prefer other channels of communication. As a matter of policy, however, students must use their myTyndale accounts for all course-related email correspondence. During term time you should check your school account at least once a day (optional on weekends). I myself aim to check my school email at the beginning and end of each workday. At other times my email client is often closed. I will try to answer your messages within 24 hours, though you should not expect replies on weekends.

Keep your messages topical and brief. I would vastly prefer to conduct any conversations of substance in person, or else over the phone. Please note and make use of my office hours. If these hours do not suit your schedule, I would happily receive an email from you requesting an alternate meeting time.

8.3.2 CLASSES.TYNDALE.CA

Tyndale's course pages are an efficient means of distributing articles, notes, slides, and other course-related materials. This is also where instructors log attendance and upload grades for assignments. Students are therefore required to check the site for updates about their classes as well as for any materials needed for lectures and assignments.

My own use of this platform varies from semester to semester, and from course to course. At times I may ask you to use the forums, quiz module, or other parts of the system. At a minimum I will use the site as a repository for course materials, and as a destination for your submission of PDFs (Section 7.1.2).

8.3.3 LAPTOPS AND OTHER DEVICES

Use of laptops is forbidden in my classroom, except to facilitate presentation. I implement this policy because of the cognitive costs of multitasking, with the aim of giving you and your peers the best chance of success. I also hope to foster a culture of keen intellectual engagement.

As [cognitive psychologists at McMaster and York Universities demonstrated in 2013](#), "laptop multitasking hinders classroom learning for both users and nearby peers." There is little new in their finding that the allegedly multitasking student does less well in class (11% worse on the quiz in their experiment). This effect has been shown many times. Rather, their novel discovery is that classmates *without* laptops who sat with a *view* of another student's screen did worse than the students who had a computer (17% worse than those with no laptop in sight).

Prohibiting laptops is not the only possible response to these findings. However, there is evidence that [writing by hand](#) brings a number of cognitive benefits, and a [2014 Princeton University study](#) "found that students who took notes on laptops performed worse on conceptual questions than students who took notes longhand." If you are a heavy laptop user then consider this an opportunity to experiment with different technologies in the classroom.

As for the myriad networked devices that many of us carry, it's a simple matter of professionalism to keep these things silent and out of sight. E-readers and tablets are permitted *only if they are used to display the assigned reading*. If this is how you choose to read, let me invite you to put the machine in airplane mode while class is in session.

8.3.4 RECORDING OF CLASSES

Students must request permission from the professor of any class that they would like to record. Where permission is granted, students are expected to supply their own equipment. In general I prefer *not* to have my classes recorded, and I am not at all friendly to being recorded without my knowledge. In cases where I grant permission, I stipulate that the recordings must be for personal use only. They should not be shared with other students, even with students in the same section, and they absolutely must not be posted online or otherwise distributed.

If a student is not able to attend a lecture and would like to have it recorded, it is the responsibility of the student first to obtain the professor's permission, and then to find another student to record the lecture. I will not make the recording for you.

9 STUDENT SUPPORT

9.1 THE CENTRE FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

The Centre for Academic Excellence has been established to help students achieve their potential as learners. Staffed by a team of skilled and approachable student assistants, the Centre for Academic Excellence offers two kinds of support: Academic Tutoring (for Tyndale Undergraduate students [excluding B.Ed.] in multiple areas of study) and Writing Consultation (for all students of Tyndale University College & Seminary).

Students at all levels of ability can profit from the Centre's free services by booking one-on-one sessions, attending workshops and group study sessions, and accessing resources both online and at the Centre. Those students who are interested in joining the team of academic tutors and writing consultants may contact the Academic Excellence Director for further details. To learn more about these services or to book an appointment, read below, drop by and speak to the staff, or visit the [Centre's website](#).

9.2 TYNDALE UC TUTORING PROGRAM

Tyndale University College is committed to helping its students achieve academic success. For this purpose, students in need of academic assistance may request peer tutoring, free of charge, in each academic department. This includes students on academic probation, students who have received failing grades in a course or courses, or students who have been referred for tutoring by their instructor.

For more information on scheduling tutoring appointments, or for those interested in becoming peer tutors, students may contact the Office of the Senior Vice President Academic or their respective University College department chairs.

9.3 ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Tyndale University College & Seminary is committed to creating an environment where students with disabilities are able to fully participate and integrate into the academic setting. Through accommodation and learning supports, Tyndale strives to allow each student to reach his or her academic potential.

Disabilities can be permanent, temporary, and/or episodic in nature and may include learning disabilities, sensory impairments, acquired brain injuries, attention-deficit disorders, mental health disabilities, medical, and mobility issues.

Students living with a disability are encouraged by the Accessibility Services Office to schedule a confidential registration appointment. The Accessibility Specialist will meet with each student, review documentation and collaboratively discuss and/or implement appropriate academic accommodations. To ensure that an accommodation plan is active when classes begin, this appointment must be arranged as soon as possible, preferably prior to the start of the semester.

Documentation is required and assessment must be conducted by a trained professional to diagnose the condition. For more information regarding documentation requirements, please contact the Accessibility Services Office.

10 COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

In addition to the required and supplementary texts listed above, see especially: Henning Graf Reventlow and Yair Hoffman, eds., *Decalogue in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies; New York: T&T Clark, 2010), which is [available online](#).