

Saint Louis Christian College
GPH201, 205n PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION
Jim Claycomb
3 Credit Hours

Fall Semester 2014

AIM class - Monday 6:00 to 8:00 pm

DAY class -Tuesday 6:30 to 8:20 pm

MISSION STATEMENT

Saint Louis Christian College pursues excellence in the Word and develops servant-leaders for urban, suburban, rural and global ministry.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introduction to philosophical discussion of some of the fundamental religious questions, such as the relation between faith and reason, the existence of God, the meaning of religious language, the possibility of miracles, the problem of evil, and other topics as time permits. Issues are addressed from the standpoint of a Biblical worldview, although competing views are presented.

COURSE RATIONALE

Good Philosophy must exist. Why? Consider the following challenge delivered by Charles Malik, distinguished academic and statesman at the dedication of the new Billy Graham Center on the campus of Wheaton College, the autumn of 1980. His challenge is fundamental to this course's rationale.

"We face two tasks in our evangelism, saving the soul and saving the mind" [by which he meant, converting people not only spiritually but intellectually as well--and the church, he warned, is lagging dangerously behind with respect to this second task.] I must be frank with you: the greatest danger confronting American evangelical Christianity is the danger of anti-intellectualism. The mind in its greatest and deepest reaches is not cared for enough. But intellectual nurture cannot take place apart from profound immersion for a period of years in the history of thought and the spirit. People who are in a hurry to get out of the university and start earning money or serving the church or preaching the gospel have no idea of the infinite value of spending years of leisure conversing with the greatest minds and souls of the past, ripening and sharpening and enlarging their powers of thinking. The result is that the arena of creative thinking is vacated and abdicated to the enemy. Who among evangelicals can stand up to the great secular scholars on their own terms of scholarship? Who among evangelical scholars is quoted as a normative source by the greatest secular authorities on history or philosophy or psychology or sociology or politics? Does the evangelical mode of thinking have the slightest chance of becoming the dominant mode in the great universities of Europe and America that stamp our entire civilization with their spirit and ideas? For the sake of greater effectiveness in witnessing to Jesus Christ, as well as for their own sakes, evangelicals cannot afford to keep on living on the periphery of responsible intellectual existence." (Charles Malik, "The Other Side of Evangelism," *Christianity Today*, November 7, 1980, p.40.)

Why must good philosophy exist? C.S. Lewis, in his essay, "Learning in Wartime," wrote: "*To be ignorant and simple now – not to be able to meet the enemies on their own ground – would be to throw down our weapons, and to betray our uneducated brethren who have, under God, no defense but us against the intellectual attacks of the heathen. Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered.*"

Good philosophy must exist for the reason that Biblically rooted Christians today no longer share a common epistemological foundation or worldview with the surrounding culture. 'In House' discussions within Christendom, must take into account possible differing presuppositions concerning the nature of Biblical Inspiration and Inerrancy. In like manner, dialogue with those outside the 'pale of Orthodoxy', must take into account pre-suppositional differences of epistemology and worldview.

Among these areas of presupposition, a partial listing includes:

- The Four Basic Epistemological Premises (assumed by Scripture)
- The relationship between Faith & Knowledge
- Natural Theology & questions of validity in the arguments for the existence of God
- Worldviews & applicable tests of coherence and consistency (internal & external)
- The problem of evil
- The question of meaning
- Biblical authority

The value of this course to the student's education cannot be overstated. For the Church in the West is largely made up of those, who while being saved, have minds that still think like non-believers. William Lane Craig, in an article entitled, "An Invitation to Christian Philosophy" offers the following analysis:

"Despite their Christian commitment, they remain largely empty selves. What is an empty self? An empty self is a person who is passive, sensate, busy and hurried, incapable of developing an interior life. Such a person is inordinately individualistic, infantile and narcissistic. Imagine now a church filled with such people. What will be the theological understanding, the evangelistic courage, the cultural penetration of such a church? If the interior life does not really matter all that much, why should one spend the time trying to develop an intellectual, spiritually mature life? If someone is basically passive, he will just not make the effort to read, preferring instead to be entertained. If a person is sensate in orientation, then music, magazines filled with pictures, and visual media in general will be more important than mere words on a page or abstract thoughts. If one is hurried and distracted, one will have little patience for theoretical knowledge and too short an attention span to stay with an idea while it is being carefully developed. And if someone is overly individualistic, infantile and narcissistic, what will that person read, if he reads at all? Books about Christian celebrities, Christian romance novels imitating the worst that the world has to offer, Christian self-help books filled with slogans, simplistic moralizing, lots of stories and pictures, and inadequate diagnoses of the problems facing the reader. What will not be read are books that equip people to develop a well-reasoned, theological understanding of the Christian faith and to assume their role in the broader work of the kingdom of God. Such a church will become impotent to stand against the powerful forces of secularism that threaten to wash away Christian ideas in a flood of thoughtless pluralism and misguided scientism. Such a church will be tempted to measure her success largely in terms of numbers--numbers achieved by cultural accommodation to empty selves. In this way, the church will become her own grave digger; for her means of short-term "success" will turn out in the long run to be the very thing that buries her." (*Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, William Lane Craig & J.P. Moreland, p.1-10)

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Course objectives are related to the following selected Divisional Objectives which are being addressed in this course:

1. Given instruction in the communication skills, the student will demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively and will be able to use a variety of research and documentation techniques.
2. Upon completion of the study of humanities, the student will be able to analyze major components of culture and will be able to understand the differences between Christianity and other worldviews.
3. With the completion of college-level mathematics and science courses, the student will demonstrate an understanding of mathematical and scientific concepts from a Christian perspective.
4. Given instruction in the social and behavioral sciences, the student will be able to identify and evaluate the interrelationships among individuals and organizations.

Upon conclusion of this course, the serious student should be able to:

1. Explain the Four Epistemological Principles as they relate to the prevailing cultural assumptions of our day.
2. Explain the relationship between Faith and Knowledge
3. Explain Natural Theology.
4. Compare and contrast the beliefs of alternative worldviews with the Biblical one.
5. Articulate and defend the nature and meaning of Biblical authority.
6. Articulate a Biblically sound response to the problem of pain.
7. Manifest both the “*letter and spirit*” of 1 Peter 3:15-16.

Textbooks required

Caner & Caner. *Unveiling Islam* (222 pages assigned)

Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity* (123 pages assigned)

Zacharias, Ravi. *Beyond Opinion* (assigned pages vary per DAY vs. AIM)

Textbooks non-required, yet readings are assigned:

Orr-Ewing, Amy. *Is the Bible Intolerant?* (31 pages assigned)

Geisler, Norman. *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (67 pages assigned). Copies of the sixteen articles making up the 67 pages assigned will be distributed the first Session.

Reading expectation: 759 pages required for AIM; 583 pages required for DAY

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Writing Assignments

Head, Heart & Hand Reflections

Students will turn in a HHH Reflection, each session, based on the reading assigned for that session. An HHH Reflection is due for each session; not one for each book assigned, but only one per session for the readings assigned that session. This is a **typed** response revealing what impact was made on you through the readings assigned for that session. How were you impacted on a **head** or intellectual level? How has your understanding of God’s Word been changed, made stronger or more firmly rooted? How were you impacted on a **heart** level? Was there a new conviction of sin or of duty in your life or your church? How has your position in Christ been solidified or your feelings/affections toward God intensified? How were you impacted on a

hand level; in other words, what behavioral change will you pursue as a result of the reading for this session? Be sincerely honest & transparent. I will assess your growth in this class largely through the Head Heart & Hand Reflections. The parameter for a Head Heart & Hand Reflection is one to two pages double-spaced. My intention & hope is this will involve no more than 20-30 minutes max per HHH Reflection. Multiple pages are to be stapled together.

FORMAT for all assignments: Identify the following in a header...

Class name & Session #

Student name

Date & Mailbox (if any)

Final Paper

Choose one of the following or if you desire another topic permission must be sought:

(1) *Postmodernism & a Christian Apologetic*

(2) *Atheism & a Christian Apologetic*

(3) *Islam & a Christian Apologetic*

A Rough Draft of your Final Paper is due Session 7. This is to be 2-3 pages in length containing the essential flow of your thoughts for your paper. Professorial feedback will be given per your Final Paper.

Good comprehension & documentation of resources required. You must use the appropriate chapter from *Beyond Opinion* as well as one other book chosen from the bibliography. Original analysis is mandatory. **Quotations must be minimal.** Show your own capacity for critical thinking, supporting with resources other than yourself. **No “surveys” or “interviews”** are to be used. **No internet sources** unless specifically approved by Professor. The paper shall be 8-10 pages in length, typed, using MLA style. The goal is good punctuation, spelling & grammar. The Final Paper is due the final session.

COURSE ASSESSMENT (1000 points possible)

100 points total are assigned to the HHH Reflections (11 points ea.)

200 points are assigned to the Mid Class Exam (Sessions 5, 6 or 7)

100 points are assigned to the Rough Draft of your Final Paper (Session 7)

350 points are assigned to the Final Exam (Session 11)

250 points are assigned to the Final Paper (due Session 11)

BONUS on FINAL GRADE of 20 points (2%)

Listen to the 15 minute radio presentation by Ravi Zacharias titled **Just Thinking** 5x weekly (your choice of what days). Then turn in one HHH Reflection, per week, citing the titles of each.

This Bonus Offer begins the week after Session One. This Bonus Offer has two levels:

(1) 4 weeks of listening, 5 days each week, with one Reflection per week is worth 1%;

(2) 8 total weeks of listening 5 days each week, with one Reflection per week is worth an additional 1% for a total of 2% on your final grade.

<http://www.rzim.org/just-thinking-broadcasts/>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Session Assignment

(Session One's HHH Reflection is due at the beginning of Session One)

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| One | Orr-Ewing, (chapters 1-5) Addendum to Course Pack - " <i>Why Philosophy Matters</i> " |
| Two | Orr-Ewing, (Chapters 6-7) Geisler, titled articles: "Derrida, Jacques" "Classical Apologetics" Geisler, titled articles: "Truth, Nature of" & "Morality, Absolute Nature of" |
| Three | C.S. Lewis, Books (introduction & BOOK I sub-chapters 1-5) Geisler, titled articles: "Faith & Reason" & "God, Evidence for" |
| Four | C.S. Lewis, (BOOK II sub-chapters 1-5 & BOOK III sub-chapters 1-12) Geisler, titled articles: "Moral Argument for God" & "Cosmological Argument" & "Kalam Cosmological Argument" |
| Five | Caner & Caner, (introduction, chapters 1-3) Geisler, titled articles: "Teleological Argument" & "Evil, Problem of" |
| Six | Caner & Caner, (chapters 4-9) Geisler, titled articles: "Islam" & "Muhammad, Character of" |
| Seven | Caner & Caner, (chapters 10-16) Geisler, titled articles: "Bible, Evidence for" & "Dead Sea Scrolls" Rough Draft of Paper DUE |
| Eight | Zacharias, (introduction & chapters 1 – 3) Geisler, titled articles: "Bible, Canonicity" |
| Nine | Zacharias, (chapters 4 – 6) |
| Ten | Zacharias, (AIM ONLY chapters 7 – 9) |
| Eleven | Zacharias (AIM ONLY chapters 11-14) |

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance: The expectation is that the student will be neither tardy nor absent. The course has five sessions. Attendance at each session is necessary. Tardiness or absenteeism will be dealt with in consultation with the Academic Dean.

Late Work not accepted. Assignments are due on stated dates at the start of the class. Student physical absence does not excuse required hard-copy due at start of class (due to extenuating circumstances, it must be emailed before class, and the professor notified of such by phone message or text).

DAY STUDENTS: Computers & electronic devices of any nature, including Bibles, are prohibited except as an audio recording device. This prohibition includes phones of any kind. An automatic zero for that session & work (turned in that session) is assessed the owner of an electronic device “manifesting itself”. A print bible, in one of the following translations, must be brought to class - (KJV, NKJV, NASV, ESV or HCSB).

AIM STUDENTS: Computers & other electronic devices are permitted with the following restrictions. During class time they are to be used exclusively for note taking purposes. Absolutely no ‘other than class usage’ is permitted. The professor reserves the right to ban all electronic devices immediately upon the suspicion of misuse by even one student. No video recording is permitted. Electronic Bibles are prohibited in class. A print bible, in one of the one of the following translations, must be brought to class - (KJV, NKJV, NASV, ESV or HCSB).

Incompletes: See college catalog for the conditions under which an incomplete may be granted. Special Circumstances – Students with a diagnosed learning disability will need to see The Hundred (Student Center for Success) to discuss strategies that would enhance the learning experience.

Academic Honesty: Dishonesty will result in a grade of F (zero) for the assignment involved. See the college catalog.

Disclaimer: The professor reserves the right to modify the course plan by changing topics, due dates, or even assignments so long as the change does not add to the student’s work load.

PROFESSOR CONTACT INFORMATION

Professor Claycomb
312 East E. St. Belleville, IL 62220
(618) 623-2396 cell
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Final Paper Criteria

Argument of the Paper

- ☐ Does the paper fulfill the assignment?
- ☐ Is there a clear, unified progression of thought, a central organizing thesis, and fluid transitions?
- ☐ Is it logically structured?

Content of the Paper

- ☐ Is the argumentation of the paper supported with the research/knowledge necessary?
- ☐ Is it thorough in its support of the argument?

Style and Clarity of Writing

- ☐ Is there clarity in the argumentation?
- ☐ Are the sentences constructed well?
- ☐ Is the grammar precise and appropriate?
- ☐ Is the paper thoroughly proofread?
- ☐ Is the paper creative in its presentation?

For the papers I will react to all the concerns addressed above and apportion a grade appropriate to how your paper handled these issues. Argumentation, content, and methodology of development of your thoughts are central factors in the grade assigned.

- A Thoroughly researched, insightful, creative, very well written and organized
- A- Thoroughly researched, insightful at times, very well written and organized
- B Detailed, perhaps some insights, solidly written and organized
- B- Insufficiently thorough, but satisfactorily written and organized
- C Perhaps partially detailed account, sufficiently written and organized to be understandable
- C- Insufficiently thorough, but satisfactorily written and organized
- D Unacceptable, but nonetheless effort exerted
- D- Insufficiently detailed, poorly written
- F Nothing submitted