DR1529 Christian Belief: Its Critics and Defenders (4 credits)

I.   COURSE CO-ORDINATOR

The Course Co-ordinator is:

Dr. Ian A. McFarland
Office: KCF1
Office telephone: 272629
Email: i.a.mcfarland@abdn.ac.uk
Office hours: Wednesdays, 2:00-4:30 pm, or by appointment

Lectures will also be presented by:

Dr. Francesca A. Murphy
Office: KCG12
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Tutorial groups will be led by the Course Co-ordinator and **Mr. William McAlpine** (who can be reached by email at <div260@abdn.ac.uk>).

II.   COURSE STRUCTURE AND MEETING TIMES

The course has two components: lectures and tutorials. The lecture schedule for 2002 is as follows:

Monday, 11:00-12:00, KCG7
Tuesday, 12:00-13:00, NK14
Wednesday, 12:00-13:00, NK14

Students will be divided into three tutorial groups. These groups will meet on alternate weeks, beginning the second week of term (n.b., tutorial sessions will resume the first week after the Easter break) at the following times and places:

Wednesday, 11:00-12:00, Taylor C24
Thursday, 2:00-3:00, NK11
Friday, 5:00-6:00, Taylor C28

III.   LEARNING OUTCOMES

A. Knowledge and Understanding
1. to understand the historical and contextual nature of all theological enquiry
2. to gain some awareness of the historically close relationship between theology and philosophy
3. to gain some awareness of the distinctiveness of Christian beliefs with respect to other world faiths
4. to gain some awareness of the debates that shape contemporary reflection on the three areas of theological reflection covered in the course
5. to gain some awareness of the relationship the use of language in religious and/or theological and everyday/scientific contexts

B. Discipline-specific Skills
1. to reflect critically upon three central doctrines of the Christian faith;
2. to begin learning the process of engaging theological positions different from one's own with sympathy and integrity
3. to gain a basic familiarity with different theological methodologies
4. to acquire a measure of precision in writing through evaluating a specific theological problem

C. Transferable Skills
1. to explore theological problems through collaboration and interaction with other students
2. to communicate effectively in writing through the completion of set assignments
3. to gain skill in gathering and analysing data in both primary and secondary theological literature
4. to be able to use IT for research and for keeping apprised of developments within the course
5. to acquire a measure of discipline in the organisation of one's time
6. to acquire some sense of the broad contours of a field of research

IV.   ASSESSMENT (WITH REFERENCE TO CORRESPONDING LEARNING OUTCOMES)

Attendance
Students are expected to attend all lectures and tutorials. In accordance with departmental regulations, class certificates will be refused to students who fail to attend at least 75% of class meetings without a medical or other approved excuse. Details of penalties for non-attendance, as well as late submission of work can be found in the document, "Student Attendance, Performance and Assessment", which is available in the departmental office (KCG11C). **CORRESPONDING LEARNING OUTCOME: *C5***

Students are also expected to consult the course website regularly in order to keep apprised of any changes in the syllabus or class schedule. **CORRESPONDING LEARNING OUTCOME: *C4***

Tutorial assignments
Each student will be assigned to a tutorial group and should consult the School noticeboard to find out to which tutorial group they have been assigned and its venue. Tutorials will meet six times during the course and attendance at all tutorials is compulsory. The work undertaken will provide an opportunity for students to collaborate in small groups. In preparation for tutorial, students will be asked to provide written answers to a set of questions (listed below) on the prescribed text. The six tutorial assignments will count 20% toward the final mark. **CORRESPONDING LEARNING OUTCOMES: *A3, A4, B1. B2, B3, B4, C1, C2, C6***

Essay
Students are required to submit one essay of approximately 2000 words in length and in *quaestio* format (see class handout "The *Quaestio*" for detailed instructions on how to follow this format). The essay should be submitted to the departmental office (KCG11C) by 4:00 pm on Friday, 22 March, 2002 and will count 25% toward the final course mark. Marks will be deducted at a rate of 1 for up to the first 3 days, and thereafter 2 for each week or part thereof that an essay is submitted late. Students must choose their topic from the list provided in section VII of the course outline. Recommended reading materials can be found either on heavy demand in the QML or in the Divinity Library. Students are encouraged to use any additional reading materials that they may find helpful, but these should be treated as a supplement to, rather than a substitute for, the recommended texts. Anyone who encounters difficulties in obtaining reading materials should speak with Dr. McFarland.
CORRESPONDING LEARNING OUTCOMES: *A1, A2, A4, A5, B1, B2, B4, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6*

Examination
There will be a two hour degree examination that will count 55% toward the final course mark. The exam will have three sections, corresponding to the three areas of God, Christ, and the world covered in the lectures. **CORRESPONDING LEARNING OUTCOMES: *A1. A2. A3. A4. A5, B1, B2, B3, B4, C2***

V.   WEBSITE

This course has its own website, which can be accessed at:

<http://info.abdn.ac.uk:8900/public/chriscrit/>

The web page contains the most current form of the course outline, along with lecture notes, a glossary of important terms, course bulletins, and other material relevant to the course. Students are advised to visit the web page on a regular basis in order to keep apprised of any changes to the curriculum and are responsible for any information posted there by the Course Co-ordinator.

VI.   LECTURES

Lectures will cover the following topics in Christian doctrine and philosophical theology. These will be delivered by Dr. Ian McFarland and Dr. Francesca Murphy.

SECTION I: Thinking about God (Dr. McFarland)
Week 1 (28/1-1/2): Religious Language
Week 2 (4-8/2): Arguments for the Existence of God
Week 3 (11-15/2): The Problem of Knowledge of God
Week 4 (18-22/2): The Doctrine of the Trinity

SECTION II: Thinking about Jesus (Dr. Murphy)
Week 5 (25/2-1/3): The Doctrine of the Person of Christ I
Week 6 (4-8/3): The Doctrine of the Person of Christ II
Week 7 (11-15/3): The Nature of Human Being
Week 8 (18-22/3): Christianity and the Claims of Other Faiths

Section III: Thinking about the World (Drs. McFarland and Murphy)
Week 9 (15-19/4): Creation and the Origin of the World
Week 10 (22-26/4): Creation and the Diversity of Species
Week 11 (29/4-3/5): Miracles
Week 12 (6-10/5): The Problem of Evil

VII.   TUTORIALS

Prescribed Text: Daniel L Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991) This book is the prescribed text for all tutorials and can be purchased in paperback (for £12.95) from Blackwells Bookshop in the High Street, Old Aberdeen. Additional copies are available for consultation in the Divinity Library. Since this textbook will also prove useful for second-level courses purchase is strongly recommended.

Students are required to write a 400 word paper prior to each tutorial session. These papers should be submitted to the tutor at the start of each meeting. Marks will be awarded on the basis of all six assignments and the student's overall contribution to the tutorial. Marks will be deducted for assignments which are either excessively brief or long.

In preparing the 400 word assignment students should *read the relevant section of the text carefully* and address the following questions. For back-up reading students should make use of the relevant entries in dictionaries and encyclopaedias. Other introductory textbooks should also be consulted. The following theological reference works are available in the Divinity Library and/or the QML (4th floor).

Encyclopedia of Religion
A New Dictionary of Christian Theology
New Dictionary of Theology
The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church
Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith
Dictionary of Christian Theology
Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement
Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought
Dictionary of Ethics, Theology and Society

Tutorial 1. The Task of Theology (pp. 1-18)
a) In what ways does Migliore see theology as a questionable enterprise? (5-9)
b) Describe **in your own words** the four questions that Migliore feels define the task of systematic theology (9-13)
c) How does Karl Barth's approach to theology differ from that of liberation theologians, according to Migliore? (14-16)
d) Describe why **you** think theology is an important discipline, and what you hope to get out of this course.

Tutorial 2. The Triune God (pp.56-79)
a) What is the difference between the economic and the immanent Trinity and how does Migliore believe these are related? (61)
b) What is the significance of each of Migliore's three interpretive principles (67-72)?
c) How are the traditional divine attributes set in a trinitarian framework?(72-74)
d) How helpful do **you** think the doctrine of the Trinity is for thinking about God?

Tutorial 3. The Person and Work of Jesus Christ (pp.139-164)
a) What do you think Migliore means when he claims that 'Theological reflection on any topic is *Christian* to the extent that it recognizes the centrality of Jesus Christ and the salvation he brings'? (139)
b) What 'working principles' should serve as guidelines for christology, according to Migliore? (142-145)
c) How does Migliore attempt to render the idea of Christ's death as being 'for us' as meaninful? (158-161)
d) How do **you** respond to his account of the sense in which Jesus Christ has 'finality' for the Christian? (164)

Tutorial 4. Humanity in the Image of God (pp. 120-138)
a) Why does Migliore prefer a 'relational' account of the image of God? (120-123)
b) Why is he critical of the notion that male and female are created in a definite and irreversible order? (127-8)
c) How is sin for Migliore both a 'condition' and a 'self-chosen act'? (134-5)
d) How adequate do **you** consider his account of the origin of sin to be?

Tutorial 5. The Good Creation (pp.80-98)
a) How does Migliore respond to the charge that the Christian doctrine of creation is ecologically problematic? (82-84)
b) Did God have to create the world, according to Migliore? (85-86)
c) In what sense does he consider the creation to be good? (87-89) Do **you** find this satisfactory?
d) How helpful do **you** find the 'metaphor of artistic activity? (93-95)

Tutorial 6. The Providence of God and the Mystery of Evil (pp.99-119)
a) Why is evil a problem for Christian theology? (100-104)
b) Describe in **your own words** the three traditional solutions outlined. (106-108)
c) Which of the four recent theodicies Migliore mentions do **you** find most plausible?
d) In what ways, if any, do **you** think that the theology of the cross enable Christians to cope with evil? (115-119)

VIII. *QUAESTIO* TOPICS AND RECOMMENDED READING

1. Whether God should be considered an 'objective' reality?

Cupitt, Don. *Taking Leave of God* (London: SCM, 1980) QML
Cupitt, Don. *Radicals and the Future of the Church* (London: SCM, 1989) QML
Freeman, Anthony. *God In Us* (London: SCM, 1993) QML
Harries, Richard. *The Real God* (London: Mowbray, 1994) QML & DL
Hebblethwaite, Brian. *The Ocean of Truth* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988) QML
Hick, John. *An Interpretation of Religion* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989) QML&DL
Kaufman, Gordon. *The Theological Imagination* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981) QML
Runzo, J. (ed.). *Is God Real?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993) QML
Thiselton, Anthony (ed.). *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994) QML
Ward, Keith. *Holding Fast to God* (London: SPCK, 1982) QML

2. Whether Christianity requires a literal interpretation of the doctrine of incarnation?

Baillie, Donald. *God Was in Christ* (London: Faber, 1948) QML&DL
Goulder. M. (ed.). *Incarnation and Myth* (London: SCM, 1979) QML
Gunton, Colin. *Yesterday and Today* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1983) QML
Heron, A. *A Century of Protestant Theology* (London Lutterworth, 1985) QML&DL
Hick, John. *The Metaphor of God Incarnate* (London: SCM, 1993) QML
Hick, John (ed.). *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM, 1977) QML
Hebblethwaite, Brian. *The Incarnation* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987) QML
Macquarrie, John. *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (London: SCM, 1990) QML

3. Whether the doctrine of the Trinity is relevant for the doctrine of creation?

Bauckham, Richard. *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995)
Gunton, Colin. *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Survey* (Edinburgh, 1998), especially chapters 7 and 9 QML
Hall, G. B. & P. McEnhill. *The Presumption of Presence* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1997)
LaCugna, C. M. *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, especially chapter 9 (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991) QML
Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (London: SCM, 1981), especially chapter 4 QML&DL
O'Donnell, J. *Trinity and Temporality* (Oxford: OUP, 1983) QML
Smail, T. *The Forgotten Father* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1980), especially chapters 5-7 QML
Tanner, Kathryn. *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), especially chapters 1-2 QML

IX.   BIBLIOGRAPHY

General reading suggestions for the course

Barth, K. *Dogmatics in Outline.* London: SCM, 1949.
Berkhof, H. *Christian Faith.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986.
Cone, James H. *God of the Oppressed*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997,
Davies, B. *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. Oxford: OUP, 1993.
Evans, J. H. *We Have Been Believers: An African-American Systematic Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.
Evans, S. *Philosophy of Religion.* Leicester: IVP, 1982.
Gunton, C. (ed.) *Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*. Cambridge: CUP, 1997.
Guthrie, S. *Christian Doctrine*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994.
Hanson, A. & R. *Reasonable Belief.* Oxford: OUP, 1980.
Hanson, B. *An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.
Hick, J. *Philosophy of Religion*. Englewood Cliffs. NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1983.
Lochman, J. *The Faith We Confess.* Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985.
McGrath, A. *Christian Theology: An Introduction.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.
Newlands, G. *God In Christian Perspective.* Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994.
Ruether, R. R. *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*. Boston: Beacon, 1983.
Sobrino, J. and I. Ellacuría. *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993.