

Theology in the Modern West

TH2373

Wednesdays and Fridays, 10:00-11:20

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A. Course Objectives:

This course will introduce several of the major thinkers who influenced Christian thought in the West through the 17th and 18th centuries. One theme of the course will be how Enlightenment understandings of “reason” influenced and interacted with Christian faith and theology.

Questions addressed will include: how we know things, on what basis people profess religious belief, if religious faith is compatible with reason, the status of religious experience, the grounding of morality, and what role “feeling” plays in Christianity. We will read both critics and supporters of Christianity and investigate their attempts to defend, discredit, or distance religious belief in relation to reason.

Readings for this course include only primary texts by brilliant thinkers. We will approach these texts both appreciatively and critically: learning from the insight of great minds and exploring their limitations. Particular attention will be paid to issues of race, class, and gender.

Student learning outcomes of the course include:

1. Increase familiarity with pivotal texts of the modern period and the Christian tradition.
2. Hone skills of academic writing, such as summarizing the salient points of an argument and making a theological argument.
3. Practice identifying theological components of cultural, political, and philosophical claims.

B. Requirements:

1. Read assigned texts. The readings are not very long, because close and careful reading is expected.
2. Attend lectures. Lectures will address readings AND present material not found in readings.
3. Actively participate in discussion. This is an important component of the course that will allow further exploration of the primary texts and instruction on how to analyze philosophical and theological works.
4. Submit two papers, each 4-5 pages in length. Specific guidelines for each paper will be handed out in class.
5. Complete an open-book, take-home midterm exam.
6. Complete an open-book, take-home final exam.

Papers are due under by door at 200 Schlegel by 5 PM on the due date. Papers may not be submitted by email without prior permission, which will normally only be granted to commuters. Students with serious medical problems or major family emergencies may contact me BEFORE a paper is due to discuss extensions. Late papers (without extension granted) will be marked

down one third of a grade (for example, A- to B+) every 24 hours for three days. Without an extension granted, papers turned in more than 72 hours after the due date will not be accepted.

Exams are due under my door at 200 Schlegel by 5 PM on the due date. Students with serious medical problems or major family emergencies may contact me BEFORE an exam is due to discuss extensions. NB: Late exams (without extension granted) will not be accepted.

C. Grading:

Grades will be determined in the following way: paper #1 (15%); midterm (25%); paper #2 (25%); final exam (25%); participation in discussion (10%).

D. Books: The following books are available for purchase at the bookstore
Rene Descartes, Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy
John Locke, Reasonableness of Christianity
David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion
Blaise Pascal, Pensees
Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman
Immanuel Kant, Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone
Friedrich Schleiermacher, On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers

There are additional readings on CAMS.

E. LPTS Classroom Policies:

Inclusive Language:

In accordance with Seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities.

Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. See for further assistance:

http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp. 3.

Academic Honesty:

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism: it will have consequences and may result in

failure of the course. Multiple occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary.

Students unfamiliar with issues relating to citation practices and academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For the Seminary policy, see The Code of Student Conduct 6.11; *Student Handbook*, p. 19.

Special Accommodations:

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (kmapes@lpts.edu) during the first two weeks of a semester and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

Citation Policy:

Citations in your papers should follow the Seminary standard, which is based on these guides:

Kate Turabian. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

Attendance Policy:

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify one of the instructors of their absence from class, either prior to the session, when possible, or within 24 hours of the class session. Multiple unexcused absences may count negatively in grading, and missing 4 or more class sessions is grounds for failure in the course.

In case of absence, it is the responsibility of the student to find out what was said in class, especially concerning modification of assignments, ordering of class sessions, etc.

F. Reading assignments and due dates:

F. September 7, Introductory lecture

W. September 12, Descartes, Discourse on Method

F. September 14, Descartes, Meditations 1-3, Westminster Confession, CAMS

W. September 19, Pascal, Pensees, ##1-222, 418-450, 734, 821, 835, and The Memorial p.285-6

F. September 21, Fox, Journal excerpts and Fell, "Women's Speaking," CAMS

Monday, September 24, First Paper Due

W. September 26, Locke, Reasonableness of Christianity, chapters 1-8

F. September 28, Locke, Reasonableness of Christianity, chapter 9

W. October 3, Locke, “Of Faith and Reason” and “Of Enthusiasm,” from Essay Concerning Human Understanding, both in packet, and part of “A Third Letter Concerning Toleration”

F. October 5, Voltaire, Philosophical Letters, Letters 1-4 “On the Quakers,” Letter 5 “On the Church of England,” Letter 6 “On the Presbyterians,” Letter 13 “On Mr. Locke,” Letter 14, “On Descartes and Newton,” Letter 25 “On the *Pensees* of M. Pascal” CAMS

W. October 10, Edwards, “Personal Narrative” and “Religious Affections,” from Representative Selections, in packet. Recommended reading, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” from Representative Selections, CAMS

F. October 12, Rousseau, “The Creed of a Priest of Savoy,” CAMS

Tuesday, October 23, Midterm Exam Due

W. October 24, Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Parts I-V

F. October 26, Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Parts VI-XII

W. October 32, Hume, “Of Miracles” and “Of Particular Providence and a Future State,” from An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding, CAMS

F. November 2, God Struck Me Dead, excerpts; Phillis Wheatley, “On Being Brought from Africa to America,” “On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield. 1770,” “Thoughts on the Works of Providence,” “An Address to the Atheist,” and “An Address to the Deist,” CAMS

W. November 7, Lessing, “On Proof of the Spirit and of Power,” “The Education of the Human Race,” “The Religion of Christ,” CAMS

F. November 9, Declaration of Independence, Rousseau, Emile, 384-397, CAMS

W. November 14, Wolstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, 1-136

F. November 16, Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, Prefaces and Book 1

Monday, November 19, Second Paper Due

W. November 21, Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, Book 2

W. November 28, Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, Book 3

F. November 30, Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, Book 4 and general observation

W. December 5, Schleiermacher, Speeches, First and Second Speech

F. December 7, Schleiermacher, Speeches, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Speeches

Tuesday, December 12, Final Exam Due