

TESP 4, The Christian Tradition

Department of Religious Studies

Spring 2015: MWF 8.00 - 9.05

Office Hours: MWF 10.30-11.30; by appt

Office: 313 Kenna, x 3186

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Area Description

Courses in Area 2 deal with three dimensions of "faith seeking understanding," a phrase that has classically described theology as a discipline. **T**heology seeks to articulate the truth of faith; **E**thics, the implications of faith in human life and activity; and **S**pirituality, the practice and understanding of the experience of faith. All three dimensions are pursued in dialogue with culture

in its various forms of discourse, and all three aim specifically to situate the Jewish or Christian faith tradition within contemporary approaches to the study of religion.

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to both the study and the practice of Christian theology. We will do this in two major stages. The first will cover the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, and the second will cover the New Testament. That is, using the lens of the Bible, we will investigate the **meaning of salvation** which is reflected in the materials that we encounter. The intention of this course is to make available to each student a foundation in Christian theology which will be adequate both for personal faith and for subsequent theological activity.

Course Objectives

The overall learning objective of this course is to understand how Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity understood their relationship to God, and as a derivative, to other human beings, both individually and corporately.

More detailed learning objectives are included within each major "chapter" of the course.

RTC 1 Objectives: Students will

1.1 Describe and compare the central religious ideas and practices from several traditions or within one, and from at least two globally distinct regions. (Global Cultures, Critical Thinking, Complexity)

1.2 Use critical approaches to reflect on their own beliefs and the religious dimensions of human existence. (Critical Thinking; Complexity, Religious Reflection)

(Note: these objectives are enumerated below in each "chapter's" Learning Objectives **in red**.)

Required Texts

The Bible (any modern translation; if you do not own one, purchase the New Revised Standard Version in the bookstore). Or, if you prefer, use the Bible Gateway in the sidebar.

Other texts as assigned.

Exams

All exams will be multiple essays. The exam questions are located in the "Calendar" section. The actual exam questions will be randomly selected from among these. The exams will be handwritten in greenbooks, available in the Bookstore.

Grading Policy

Each of the exams is weighted equally (50 pts.) except for the final which counts for 100 points (250 pts. total). Class participation is expected. Exams must be taken at the specified time unless you have a university excuse or an excuse from me. If they are not, your grade may be lowered.

Class Environment

This is a professional context and will reflect values and behaviors that you are likely to encounter in your subsequent careers. We will stand towards class time as though it is a company meeting. Food and drink are allowed provided that they do not interfere with your or others' ability to concentrate and participate. Cell phones must be off or silenced; the first violation will be met with a frosty glare from me and subsequent ones will be treated as absences. Sleeping in class will be treated as an absence. Phones may not be used in class for any purpose that has not previously been cleared with the instructor. Text messages may be sent the old-fashioned way (provided that they not interfere with class attentiveness) but not digitally. Untimely arrivals and departures must be unobtrusive. Civil discourse is expected and condescension, cynicism or inappropriate sarcasm will be called out.

Attendance Policy

Because this is a professional environment, you are required to attend every class. Untimely arrivals and departures must be explained to the instructor after class or they will be treated as absences. After three absences you will be dismissed from the course with a failing grade. Please do not ask to be excused from class on days adjacent to university holidays; such requests will be granted only for authenticated emergencies.

Et cetera

The use of laptops and tablets in class will be discussed during the first class day. Many instructors ban them altogether because they are used for extraneous purposes during classtime. This is persuasive, effective and draconian. The preferable alternative is for students to contract with each other and the instructor not to use them nefariously. This is what we will do in the course. Violations will be treated as absences.

I am more than happy to speak of matters of interest to you, whether theological or otherwise. Please feel free to contact me, to see me in my office, or else to make an appointment. I use social media ([Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Google+](#)), but not for class purposes. Feel free to follow / friend me, but please don't ask course-specific questions here. Use email or IM instead.