



On-Campus/Hybrid Course Syllabus

PHI 502

Philosophy of Religion

Fall 2023

Class Information

Day and Time: Wednesday, 1:45-4:30 pm

Room Number: E 209

Contact Information

Instructor Name: Dr. Steve Lemke

Instructor Email: slemke@criswell.edu

Instructor Phone: 504-458-6724

Instructor Office Hours: [available by appointment](#)

Course Description and Prerequisites

[An advanced study of historical and contemporary worldviews and philosophical issues relevant to Christian ministry, such as religious pluralism, the problem of evil, and the relationship between faith and reason.](#)

Course Objectives

The objectives of this course are for the successful student to be better prepared to minister to persons with doubts about the Christian faith by:

- mastering the basic vocabulary of philosophy.
- improving the student's ability to express his/her thoughts clearly, concisely, and logically.
- gaining knowledgeable acquaintance with the major philosophical movements and thinkers.
- thinking through the student's own presuppositions to achieve a more cohesive Christian worldview.
- applying one's knowledge and comprehension of the fundamental religious beliefs and concepts of the Christian faith to their own lives.
- comprehending and articulating coherently the fundamental religious beliefs and concepts of Christianity.
- increasing the student's ability to defend the faith once delivered to the saints.
- improving the student's skill in witnessing effectively to persons from other world religions and other non-Christian perspectives.
- gaining greater confidence in the reasonableness of their own faith, to love Christ with all their minds.
- valuing things such as intellectual accountability in relation to issues of ultimate concern to Christian faith.

Required Textbooks

James K. Dew and Paul M. Gould, *Philosophy: A Christian Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019. ISBN 9780801097997. Paperback (used is fine) or ebook.

Louis P. Pojman and Michael Rea, eds. *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology*, 7th ed. Mason, OH: Cengage. 2014. ISBN 9781285197326. Paperback (used is fine) or ebook. You may find a less expensive used copy on Amazon.com.

Steve Lemke, *A User-Friendly Guide to Philosophy of Religion*. New Orleans: Criswell College 2023. The *User Friendly Guide* is available to be accessed or downloaded free from the class Canvas pages. You are welcome to print out a copy personally, but please do not share with others without my permission.

Recommended Reading

Students should choose one of the following for their book review:

- Allen, Diogenes, and Eric Springsted. *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*, 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.
- Brown, Colin. *Miracles and the Critical Mind*. Los Angeles: Fuller Seminary Press, 2006.
- Craig, William Lane. *The Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom*. Ada, MI: Baker, 1998.
- Dew, James K. Jr., and Chad Meister. *God and Evil: The Case for God in a World Filled with Pain*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2013.
- Dew, James K., Jr., and Stewart Kelley. *Understanding Postmodernism: A Christian Perspective*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017.
- Erickson, Millard J. *What Does God Know and When Does He Know It? The Current Controversy over Divine Foreknowledge*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003).
- Erickson, Millard J. *Truth or Consequences: The Promise and Perils of Postmodernism*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002.
- Evans, C. Stephen. *Faith beyond Reason: A Kierkegaardian Account*. Reason and Religion Series. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Forlines, F. Leroy. *The Quest for Truth: Answering Life's Inescapable Questions*. Nashville: Randall House, 2001.
- Gaarder, Jostein. *Sophie's World—A Novel about the History of Philosophy*, translated by Paulette Møller. New York: Berkley Books, 1991.
- Groothuis, Douglas R. *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity against the Challenges of Postmodernism*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2000.
- Kenneth Keathley, J. B. Stump, Joe Aguirre, eds. *Old Earth or Evolutionary Creation?: Discussing Origins with Reasons to Believe and Biologos*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017.
- Laing, John D. *Middle Knowledge: Human Freedom in Divine Sovereignty*. Nashville: Kregel, 2018.
- McCall, Thomas H. *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism? Philosophical and Systematic Theologians on the Metaphysics of Trinitarian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.
- McCann, Hugh J. *Creation and the Sovereignty of God*. Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012.
- Moreland, J. P. *Christianity and the Nature of Science: A Philosophical Investigation*. Ada, MI: Baker, 1999.
- Moreland, J. P. *Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul*, rev. and updated. Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 2012.
- Pearcey, Nancy, and Charles Thaxton. *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy*. Ada, MI: Baker Books, 1994.

- Roberts, J. Deotis. *A Philosophical Introduction to Theology*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2000.
- Terrance Tiessen, *Providence and Prayer: How Does God Work in the World?* Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Reading Notes, 10 points each for 15 assignments, 150 points (1.67% each assignment; 25% of final grade)

Write a summary in 1-3 pp., single spaced, for each of the reading assignments noted with an asterisk. Sometimes a book has (*) – that means it goes with the other readings in that week. Some weeks there are two asterisks; that means write two separate reports (because of the length of the readings). The reading notes do NOT include the *User-Friendly Guide to Philosophy of Religion*; just the other two texts. Your notes should include important definitions, insights, and a summary of the content. You can use bullet points or a narrative. This is to not only assist you in learning the course content, but to be a resource to you after the course. Turn each assignment in on the day it is noted in the Course Schedule. **Due: most weeks, as marked by *.**

Three Unit Texts, 100 points, each, 300 points (16.7% each of final grade, 50% of final grade total)

Each test is focused on the material in that unit; it is not cumulative. Guidance will be given in advance concerning the material to be covered and the direction of the questions asked. The exams will both test mastery of content (significant thinkers and their contributions, summaries of models presented in class, philosophical vocabulary, etc.) and critical thinking skills (the ability to articulate and defend a position in an essay. There will be three types of questions on the tests: (a) multiple choice, fill in the blank, & matching questions in the more objective questions, (b) essays summarizing specific content in the class, & (c) essays in which the student argues for a position. **Due: 9/20, 11/1, 12/13**

Book Review, 50 points (8.3% of final grade)

Choose a book from the list of possible books in the syllabus to read & review. Write a 5-page book review of the book you choose. Students should spend no more than 1 page summarizing the book. The remaining 4/5 pages of the review should critically interact with the content of the book. Students do not need to get approval for any books listed on the book review book list. **Due: October 22**

Research Project, 100 points (16.7% of final grade)

Each student will choose to do one of the following. Submit your proposal by email to Dr. Lemke the track and topic you prefer before starting it, by October 4. Before you start your assignment, read again carefully over the assignment description in this syllabus and review the grading rubric before you start your assignment, so you'll know what to focus on in your work. **Due: November 15.**

- Academic Track* -- The student will research and write a paper on a topic in the area of philosophy of religion. The paper should be approximately 10-15 pages, typed double spaced in proper Turabian form. A research paper should show adequate research in books and scholarly journals reflected in footnotes and bibliography. Plagiarism, as stated in the Criswell catalog, is strictly prohibited. About two-thirds of the paper should be descriptive, and at least one-third should be evaluative, reflecting the student's own perspective on the issue. The paper would ordinarily address one specific issue. You might survey several positions on an issue, and then argue for which position you find most convincing.
- Ministry Track* -- The student will prepare a seminar dealing with one of the major topics covered in

class that can be taught in four to six one-hour sessions in a church or discipleship group setting. All teaching materials should be included that would make for an effective presentation, including a full outline of lesson plans and all teaching materials (handouts, PowerPoint, and materials for activities). It may be focused on youth or adult aged pupils. A premium is placed on accuracy and depth of the material presented, as well as the attractiveness and usability of the materials.

Course/Classroom Policies and Information

Class Attendance

Students are responsible for enrolling in courses for which they (1) anticipate being able to attend every on-campus class session on the day and time appearing on course schedules, or (2) participating in academically related activities as identified in online-course schedules including synchronous class sessions conducted remotely by video, and then making every effort to do so. When unavoidable situations result in absence or tardiness, students are responsible for acquiring any missed information. Professors are not obliged to allow students to make up missed work. Per their independent discretion, individual professors may determine how attendance affects students' ability to meet course learning objectives and whether attendance affects course grades. Professors apprise students of such information in course syllabi.

Students receiving grants, loans, or scholarships must meet specified requirements of various departments at the college and should consult relevant sections of the *Academic Catalog*. To ensure such funds will not be forfeited, students are responsible for contacting the proper departments to ascertain any specific course participation requirements and consequences of not meeting such requirements. Students receiving grants, loans, or scholarships should consult the Financial Aid office.

While Criswell College is a non-attendance taking institution, it nevertheless must demonstrate that students begin their courses in order to comply with Federal Aid regulations. Accordingly, students must participate in academically related activities during census periods. Failure to meet this requirement will result in students being administratively dropped from courses.

Academically related activity is defined as any course-related activity that may be used as evidence of attendance. Examples include:

- physical presence in a classroom during a class session with the instructor present,
- participation in a synchronous remote video class session with the instructor present,
- submission of an academic assignment, quiz, or exam,
- participation in an interactive tutorial or computer-assisted instruction,
- participation in a study group or discussion board that is assigned by the instructor,
- documentation showing that the student and a faculty member corresponded about the academic subject of the course.

NOTE: Logging into a Canvas course alone and logging into a Synchronous Online class session without active participation or with the camera off are not considered attendance.

NOTE: A census period begins on the first day of a semester/term and runs through the end of the last day to drop courses. During the census period, attendance data is collected in order to demonstrate compliance with Federal Aid regulations. There is no census period for winter terms since there is no last day to drop courses.

Campus Closure

To ensure the health and safety of students and employees, college administrators may decide it is necessary on rare occasions to close the campus. Once this decision is announced, instructors will contact students to provide further details regarding the campus closure’s impact on those courses. Students are responsible to watch for communication from their instructors and respond appropriately. (Unless otherwise specified by the instructor in this syllabus, this communication will be sent to the student’s Criswell College e-mail account.)

In order to make progress toward the courses’ objectives, instructors have the freedom during most campus closures to require students to participate in activities as alternatives to meeting on campus. An instructor may, for example, hold class remotely (through Zoom) at the scheduled time, provide a recording of a class or presentation for students to watch independently, or assign other activities that students are to accomplish before returning to campus. Students are responsible for accomplishing these alternative activities as well as any course requirements listed in this syllabus during the period of the campus closure. If, during the period of the campus closure, personal circumstances prohibit a student from accomplishing these alternative activities or course requirements and assignment listed in the syllabus during the campus closure, the student is responsible for communicating with the instructor as soon as possible. Instructors will not penalize students who do not have the means to accomplish the alternative activities during the period of the campus’s closure and will work with students whose circumstances during the campus closure prohibited their timely completion of course requirements and assignments in the syllabus.

Grading Scale

Assigning grade definitions (i.e., above average, average, below average) is optional. Please delete the last column below if not assigning definitions. Additionally, delete these instructions when completing syllabus.

			Grade Definitions (optional)
A	93-100	4.0 grade points per semester hour	
A-	90-92	3.7 grade points per semester hour	
B+	87-89	3.3 grade points per semester hour	
B	83-86	3.0 grade points per semester hour	
B-	80-82	2.7 grade points per semester hour	
C+	77-79	2.3 grade points per semester hour	
C	73-76	2.0 grade points per semester hour	
C-	70-72	1.7 grade points per semester hour	
D+	67-69	1.3 grade points per semester hour	
D	63-66	1.0 grade point per semester hour	
D-	60-62	0.7 grade points per semester hour	
F	0-59	0.0 grade points per semester hour	

Incomplete Grades

Students requesting a grade of Incomplete (I) must understand that incomplete grades may be given only upon approval of the faculty member involved. An "I" may be assigned only when a student is currently passing a course and in situations involving extended illness, serious injury, death in the family, or employment or government reassignment, not student neglect.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructors prior to the end of the semester, plus filing the appropriate completed and approved academic request form with the Registrar's Office. The "I" must be removed (by completing the remaining course requirements) no later than 60 calendar days after the close of the term or semester in which the grade was awarded, or the "I" will become an "F."

Academic Honesty

Absolute truth is an essential belief and basis of behavior for those who believe in a God who cannot lie and forbids falsehood. Academic honesty is the application of the principle of truth in the classroom setting. Academic honesty includes the basic premise that all work submitted by students must be their own and any ideas derived or copied from elsewhere must be carefully documented.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- cheating of any kind,
- submitting, without proper approval, work originally prepared by the student for another course,
- plagiarism, which is the submitting of work prepared by someone else as if it were his own, and
- failing to credit sources properly in written work.

Institutional Assessment

Material submitted by students in this course may be used for assessment of the college's academic programs. Since programmatic and institutional assessment is done without reference to specific students, the results of these assessments have no effect on a student's course grade or academic standing at the college. Before submitting a student's work for this type of assessment, the course instructor redacts the work to remove anything that identifies the student.

Institutional Email Policy

All official college email communications to students enrolled in this course will be sent exclusively to students' institutional email accounts. Students are expected to check their student email accounts regularly and to respond in an appropriate and timely manner to all communications from faculty and administrative departments.

Students are permitted to setup automatic forwarding of emails from their student email accounts to one or more personal email accounts. The student is responsible to setup and maintain email forwarding without assistance from college staff. If a student chooses to use this forwarding option, he/she will continue to be responsible for responding appropriately to all communications from faculty and administrative departments of the college. Criswell College bears no responsibility for the use of emails that have been forwarded from student email accounts to other email accounts.

Disabilities

Criswell College recognizes and supports the standards set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and similar state laws, which are designed to eliminate discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities. Criswell College is committed to making reasonable accommodations for qualifying students, faculty, and employees with disabilities as required by applicable laws. For more information, please contact the Student Services Office.

Intellectual Property Rights

Unless otherwise specifically instructed in writing by the instructor, students must neither materially nor digitally reproduce materials from any course offered by Criswell College for or with the significant possibility of distribution.

Research and Writing Standards

The default writing style for written assignments in Criswell College Courses is the latest edition of *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations* by Kate Turabian. However, instructors are free to require alternative writing styles in their courses. These styles include but are not limited to the American Psychological Association (APA), Chicago Manual of Style, Modern Language Association (MLA), and Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) writing guides.

Resources and Supports

Canvas and SONIS: Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based learning tool and SONIS for student data. Students needing assistance with Canvas should contact the Canvas Help Support line at (844) 358-6140. Tech support is available at this number, twenty-four hours a day. Students needing help with SONIS should contact the Campus Software Manager at studenttechsupport@criswell.edu.

Student Services: The Student Services Office exists to foster and encourage success in all areas of life—physical, intellectual, spiritual, social, and emotional. Students are encouraged to reach out for assistance by contacting the office at 214.818.1332 or studentservices@criswell.edu. The Student Services Office also works with local counseling centers to ensure that every student has access to helpful mental health resources. More information is located on the college website at [Criswell College Mental Health Resources](#), and students may contact the Director of Student Services if they have any questions.

Wallace Library: Students can access academic resources and obtain research assistance by contacting or visiting the Wallace Library, which is located on campus. For more information, email the Wallace Library at library@criswell.edu. Login credentials are emailed to students near the beginning of the semester.

Tutoring Center: Students are encouraged to consult with tutors to improve and enhance their skills and confidence in any subject matter taught at the college. Tutors have been recommended by the faculty to ensure that the tutor(s) are qualified to serve the student body. Every tutor brings experience and expertise in an effort to provide the proper resources for the subject matter at hand. To consult with a tutor, students can schedule an appointment through Calendly (<https://calendly.com/criswell-tutoringcenter>) or by visiting the Tutoring

Center located on the second floor in room E203. For questions, call 214.818.1373 or email at tutoringcenter@criswell.edu.

Course Outline/Calendar

UNIT 1: LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR MINDS: DEVELOPING A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW		
Date	Class Discussion Topic	Assignment
8/23	Introduction to the Class	
	Introduction to Philosophy and Apologetics	UFG 1-12, PCI 1-10
8/30	The Relation of the Church to the World	UFG 13-23
	Idealism	UFG 25-26, 29, 44; PCI 89-103 *
9/6	Naturalism	UFG 27, 44; PCI 93-96,103-115 *
	Realism	UFG 28-29, 44; PCI 116-130 (*)
9/13	Existentialism/Postmodernism	UFG 30-45, 111-121
	Pragmatism	UFG 28, 44
9/20 A	Test over Unit 1	Test over Unit I See study guide at UFG
UNIT 2: UNDERSTANDING GOD: EVIDENCE FOR BELIEF IN THE ONE TRUE GOD		
Date	Class Discussion Topic	Reading Assignment
9/20 B	Faith and Reason and Epistemology	UFG 61-66; PCI 15-56; PRA 508-568, 587-597, 609-634 *
9/27	A Primer in Logic	UFG 67-71
	Arguments for the Existence of God A	UFG 73-80; PCI 165-177; PRA 153-227 *
10/4	Arguments for the Existence of God B	UFG 73-80; PCI 165-177; PRA 393-456, 569-586 *
	Arguments against Belief in God	UFG 73-80; 177-221; PCI 178-189, PRA 228-253, 288-297, 383-392, 598-608 * Research project proposals due
10/11	The Nature and Attributes of God	UFG 47-63; PRA 1-60 *
10/18	The Christian Worldview	UFG 46-50, 84-99; PRA 78-152 *
10/22	Western Religious Worldviews	UFG 84-99 Book reviews due
10/25	Eastern Religious Views of God	UFG 100-121; PRA 61-77, 710-713 *
	Exclusivism and Pluralism	UFG 118-121; PRA 635-672 (*)
11/1 A	Test over Unit II	Test over Unit II Study guide at UFG

UNIT 3: UNDERSTANDING GOD'S CREATION: ANSWERING CHALLENGES TO THE FAITH		
Date	Class Discussion Topic	Reading Assignment
11/1 B	The History of Cosmology	UFG 124-131
11/8	The Relation of Faith and Science	UFG 132-135; PCI 57-87; PRA 487-507 *
	Creation and Evolution	UFG 143-148 (*)
11/15	Anthropology and Freedom	UFG 201-214; PCI 144-161, 198-205, 206-221; PRA 673-709 *
11/15	Ethics	UFG 193-200; PCI 223-254 * Research Projects Due
11/29	The Problem of Evil	UFG 215-229; PCI 178-189; PRA 228-287 *
	The Problem of Evil	UFG 215-229; PRA 298-392 *
12/5	Miracles	UFG 136-142, 162-163; PCI 190-198; PAR 457-486 *
12/13	Test over Unit III	Test over Unit 3 See study guide in UFG

Selected Bibliography

See Bibliographies for various subject areas in the *User-Friendly Guide for Philosophy of Religion*.