



# On-Campus Course Syllabus

## THS 203: L1

### Systematic Theology I

### Spring 2024

#### Class Information

**Day and Time:** Tuesday/Thursday 9:30am-10:45am

**Room Number:** E 208

#### Contact Information

**Instructor Name:** Dr. Ty Kieser

**Instructor Email:** tkieser@criswell.edu

**Instructor Phone:** (214) 818-1306

**Instructor Office Hours:** Mondays 3–4 PM; Tuesdays 1–2 PM; Wednesday 1–2 PM; Thursday 3–4 PM

Sign up [here](#)

#### Course Description and Prerequisites

Introductory discussions to Theological Method (Prolegomena), Scripture (Bibliology), God (Theology Proper), Creation, Providence, Angels (Angelology), Humanity (Anthropology), and Sin (Hamartiology), defining the scriptural views and showing the arguments for them, refuting other views, and emphasizing the relevance of theology to the Christian life and witness. (Prerequisite: BIB 105)

#### Course Objectives

At the end of the course, the student should be able to:

- Articulate a survey-level understanding of Christian doctrines—including their biblical, historical, cultural, and theological components—with attention to the distinctives of the evangelical tradition.
- Defend theological commitments with clarity, charity, and coherence.
- Formulate nuanced questions regarding theology and theological inquiry.
- Apply Christian doctrinal content toward its ecclesiological, cultural, and devotional ends.

We will pursue these objectives under the assumption that rigorous theological learning is an act of Christian discipleship that will, prayerfully, bring us into closer communion with Jesus Christ and his Holy Spirit.

#### Required Textbooks

Erickson, Millard J. *Introducing Christian Doctrine*. Edited by L. Arnold Hustad. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015. (ISBN: 9781441222541)

Kapic, Kelly M. *Embodied Hope: A Theological Meditation on Pain and Suffering*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017. (ISBN: 9780830851799).

McLaughlin, Rebecca. *Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World's Largest Religion*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2019. (ISBN: 9781433564260).

## Course Requirements and Assignments

**Quizzes** (40% — 2.85 pts each): Each week will culminate with a quiz consisting of multiple-choice, true/false, and short answer questions over material from the reading and lectures. Each quiz will be approximately nine questions. You are allowed to use your notes and books during the quiz, although the quiz must be taken alone and you may *not* Google answers. Quizzes will be posted at the end of the week (i.e., by Thursday at 5 PM) and must be taken before the beginning of the next class (i.e., by Tuesday at 9:30 AM). Each of the fourteen quizzes is worth 2.85% of your final grade (40% total).

**Letter to a Skeptical Friend** (17% — 15 + 2 pts): To help you think more critically about key doctrines, questions, readings, and the world that you live in, you will be asked to write one 2,000+ word paper as a “Letter to a Skeptical Friend.” The specific topics of these papers will largely be up to you, but you can see example topics listed below and you will submit your initial outline of the paper about a week before the paper is due. Papers should be saved as a PDF or Docx and submitted via Canvas. The outline is worth 2% and the paper is worth 15% of your final grade (17% total).

Optional: You can submit your paper early to receive feedback and a preliminary grade. If you are happy with your preliminary grade, you don’t need to submit another draft. If, however, you make revisions based on the feedback, your grade will improve (n.b., your grade cannot get worse).

**Biblical-theological Journal Entries** (15% — .5 pts each ): Since Scripture is the ultimate source of theology and reading Scripture well is one of the main goals of theology, students theologically engage Scripture in preparation for every class. For each class session, students will submit “biblical-theological observations” on the biblical text(s) named in the schedule. For the requirements and examples, see below. These should be submitted on Canvas before each class. Each entry is worth .5% of your final grade (15% total).

**Reading Reflection Questions** (28% — 1 pt each): Before every class you will prepare reading reflection questions and submit them on Canvas by 8 AM on the day of class. For most weeks this will be focused on chapters in Erickson. However, there are exceptions, so please see the schedule below and prepare questions for every reading marked with an \*. Every \* = at least 1 question — so you will submit 2+ total questions per week. These questions are designed to serve your learning and your formation. So the content is largely up to you, however, there are details and examples below. Your participation will be included in this grade. So if you submit a question, but do not attend/participate in class, your grade will drop. Likewise, a failure to submit questions will cause your grade to drop.

**Podcast days/prep:** On “podcast days” you will NOT prepare any questions on the readings, but will instead prepare notes (from the readings and additional research) on the topics at hand—as though you were going on a podcast to discuss them. You will submit these notes on Canvas before class. On podcast days, randomly selected students will discuss the topics listed for the day. If selected you will

have a chance to ask and answer questions related to that topic, tell stories, and encourage your classmates with the word of God.

## Course/Classroom Policies and Information

**Late work:** For all assignments except your reading reflection questions and Biblical-theological observations, your grade will be reduced by 10% for each calendar day an assignment is late. If your questions are late (even by a few minutes), you can only receive 50%. However, any/all missed assignment may be submitted before the end of the semester for up to 50% credit.

**Extra Credit:** Extra credit is already built into the class. No additional credit will be offered.

**Technology:** Cell phones should *not* be used during class time. Additionally, laptops inherently have several negative consequences on classes that prioritize discussion.<sup>1</sup> However, I recognize that computers also have several advantages and that some of the assigned reading will be originally accessed digitally. Therefore, computers may be allowed under the condition that they are used properly. However, I reserve the right to deduct grades for misuse of any technology or designate particular periods of time as laptop-free.

### 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

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the potentially distracting nature of computers for the user and their neighbors, the negative consequences can include adverse effects: (A) Interpersonally: they create a physical barrier between humans in dialogue. (B) Mentally: your brain does not function as sharply when it is subconsciously aware that you could access the answer in two seconds with less effort than you could by simply thinking; plus you more quickly forget the content retrieved this effort-less way (see *Make it Stick; The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains; "Is Google Making Us Stupid?"*). (C) Teleologically: computers inherently prioritize efficiency; whereas a discussion is a gradual process oriented toward intellectual formation (and, therefore, is often superficially inefficient).

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

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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:tutoringcenter@criswell.edu).

## Course Outline/Calendar

### Prolegomena Module

January 16<sup>th</sup> — Introduction

January 18<sup>th</sup> — What is Theology

Erickson, Ch 1<sup>2\*</sup>

1 Tim 1:5; Prov 8:9–11

**Week #1 Quiz<sup>3</sup>**

January 23<sup>rd</sup> — How we do Theology

Erickson, Ch 2\*

Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Book 1 (chs 1–5, 35–40)\* [\[link\]](#)

Prov 11:14; 18:2; 19:2

January 25<sup>th</sup> — Knowing God

Packer, *Knowing God* [PDF]\*

Romans 11:33–12:2

McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, Introduction and Ch 1

**Week #2 Quiz**

January 30<sup>th</sup> — Revelation

Erickson, Chs 3 & 4\*

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<sup>2</sup> Readings in standard font

<sup>3</sup> Assignments in bold

Romans 1:19:23

February 1<sup>st</sup> — Character of Scripture

Erickson, Ch 5\*

2 Tim 3:16–17

McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, Ch 6

**Week #3 Quiz**

February 6<sup>th</sup> — Character of Scripture & Hermeneutics

Erickson, Ch 6 & 7\*

2 Peter 1:19–21

February 8<sup>th</sup> — Podcast

Gonzalez, “Reading the Bible in Spanish” [pdf]

[Pick a biblical text that is relevant to your podcast topic and make observations on it]

Prepare Podcast topics\*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Why should we study theology?                     | 7. Is Scripture inerrant and why does it matter?               |
| 2. How should we study theology?                     | 8. How does Scripture’s authority relate to other authorities? |
| 3. Can we know God in nature and why does it matter? | 9. How can we read Scripture wisely?                           |
| 4. (Why) should we trust Scripture?                  | 10. ??????????????????   |
| 5. What is the nature of Scripture?                  |  |
| 6. What is inspiration and why does it matter?       |  |

**Week #4 Quiz**

**Doctrine of God Module**

February 13<sup>th</sup> — Models of God

Erickson, Ch 8\*

Isaiah 40:28–31

February 15<sup>th</sup> — God's Existence

Anselm, *Proslogium*, Chs II–XX [\[link\]](#)\*

Exodus 3:14–15; John 8:56–59

McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, Ch 3

**Week #5 Quiz**

February 20<sup>th</sup> — God's Perfections: Incommunicable Attributes

Erickson, Ch 9\*

Psalms 139:1–12

February 22<sup>nd</sup> — God's Perfections: Communicable Attributes

Erickson, Ch 10\*

1 John 4:7–12; Psalm 119:68

Soskice, “Calling God ‘Father’” [pdf]



## **Week #6 Quiz**

### February 27<sup>th</sup> — God's Triunity in Scripture

Erickson, Ch 11\*

Isaiah 44:6; Revelation 22:13; John 10: 25–30

### February 29<sup>th</sup> — God's Triunity in history

McGrath, “The Doctrine of the Trinity” [pdf]\*

Galatians 4:4–7; Philippians 2:9–11; Hebrews 1:1–3, 8–9

## **Week #7 Quiz**

### March 5<sup>th</sup> — God's Actions

Erickson, Ch 12\*

John 5:19–20; Romans 5:8

### March 7<sup>th</sup> — Podcast

Swain, “The End of God’s Triune Work” [pdf]

[Pick a biblical text that is relevant to your podcast topic and make observations on it]

Prepare Podcast Topics\*

1. Which model of God is most accurate?
2. What does it mean to call God “simple,” and why does it matter?
3. (Why) should we believe that God is/has incommunicable attributes?
4. (Why) should we believe that God is/has communicable attributes?
5. How can we see the Trinity in the Old Testament (when read with the NT)?
6. How can we see the Trinity in the New Testament?
7. How has the church historically understood the Trinity?
8. How have people historically misunderstood the Trinity?
9. Why does it matter that God is triune for salvation and revelation?
10. ??????????

## **Week #8 Quiz**

### March 12<sup>th</sup> — Spring Break (no class)

### March 14<sup>th</sup> — Spring Break (no class)

## **Doctrine of Creation Module**

### March 19<sup>th</sup> — Creation and Scripture

Erickson, Ch 13\*

Genesis 1:1–2:25

### March 21<sup>st</sup> — Goodness of creation

Aquinas, Light of Faith [pdf]\*

1 Tim 4:3–5; Genesis 1:31

McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, Ch 7

## **Week #9 Quiz**

March 26<sup>th</sup> — Providence

Erickson, Ch 14\*

Isaiah 46:8–11; Acts 17:26–27

March 28<sup>th</sup> — Evil and suffering

Erickson, Ch 15\*

John 9:1–5; Psalm 130:1–8

Kapic, *Embodied Hope*, Prelude & Ch 1

McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, Ch 11

**Week #10 Quiz**

April 2<sup>nd</sup> — Angels, Demons, and Culture

Chatraw and Swallow Prior, *Cultural Engagement* [pdf]\*

Erickson, Ch 16

Heb 1:13–14 & Jer 29:4–14

April 4<sup>th</sup> — Podcast

Cone, “Divine Liberation and Black Suffering” [pdf]

Kapic, *Embodied Hope*, Ch 2 & 3

[Pick a biblical text that is relevant to your podcast topic and make observations on it]

Prepare Podcast topics\*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Why does non-human creation matter?                   | 5. Why does a good God let bad things happen?      |
| 2. Why does creation from nothing matter?                | 6. The logical problem of evil                     |
| 3. How should we read creation in Genesis 1 & 2?         | 7. How should we respond to suffering?             |
| 4. How is God involved in the world? Why does it matter? | 8. Why do angels/demons matter?                    |
|  | 9. How should Christians relate to our culture(s)? |
|  | 10. ?????????????????????????????????              |

**Week #11 Quiz**

**Humanity Module**

April 9<sup>th</sup> — Image of God

Erickson, Ch 17 & 18\*

Genesis 1:27 & James 3:9

Kapic, *Embodied Hope*, Ch 4

April 11<sup>th</sup> — Human constitution & Race and Ethnicity

Erickson, Ch 19\*

Matthew 22:37 & Revelation 7:9

McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, Ch 10

McCaulley, *Reading While Black* [pdf]

**Week #12 Quiz**

**Outline of Letter to a Skeptical Friend (April 12<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 PM)**

April 16<sup>th</sup> — Sex, gender, and sexuality

McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, Ch 8 & 9\*

Eph 5:21–33

April 18<sup>th</sup> — Sins

Erickson, Ch 20 & 21\*

Matthew 15:11-20 & Romans 3:9–20

**Week #13 Quiz**

**Optional early submission of your Letter to a Skeptical Friend (April 19<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 PM)**

April 23<sup>rd</sup> — Original Sin

Erickson, Ch 22\*

Rom 5:12–21

April 25<sup>th</sup> — Podcast

Kapic, *Embodied Hope*, Ch 5

Prepare Podcast topic\*

[Pick a biblical text that is relevant to your podcast topic and make observations on it]

1. What is the meaning of the image of God?
2. What is the nature of the body and soul?
3. What is the purpose of life?
4. What is the nature of marriage?
5. How should we think about homosexuality?
6. How should we think about gender? Why does it matter?
7. How should we think about race & ethnicity? Why does it matter?
8. What is the nature of sin?
9. What is original sin?
10. ????????????????

**Week #14 Quiz**

April 30<sup>th</sup> — Catch up Day

TBD reading\*

TBD biblical text

May 2<sup>nd</sup> — Catch up Day

TBD reading\*

TBD biblical text

May 7<sup>th</sup> — Final Meeting

**Letter to a Skeptical Friend (due May 9<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 PM)**

**Late work due May 9<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 PM**

## Reading Reflection Questions

Our class will be structured around engaging the questions that you draw from the readings. Therefore, you will write 1+ questions per class (i.e., two per week). These questions should be engaged with the readings (including Scripture) and thoughtful. They should have two parts: (1) the question itself; (2) the evidence and explanation of the question.

**The question itself:** This should be a brief, precise, and genuine question.

- Questions can be of a variety of different kinds:
  - *Clarifying* questions: “When the Erickson says “X,”<sup>4</sup> does he mean Y or Z?”
  - *Evaluation* questions: “If the book says ‘X,’ but Scripture says Y, is X really true?”
  - *Interpretation* questions: “If X is true, then how should we read and understand Y biblical text?”
  - *Extension* questions: “If X is true, then is Y also true, since Y seems to follow from X?”
  - *Coherence* question: “I’ve always been taught Y, but the book says X. Do these contradict?”
  - *Applications* questions: “If it’s true that X, then does that mean the church should do Y”
- Notice that the above questions are (A) engaged with the readings and (B) engaged with your own knowledge. Minimally, they are not “lazy” questions. For example, “What does X mean?” and “is X true” are lazy questions. But the above are not lazy because they engage the reading or your own knowledge.

**The evidence and explanation of the question:** This may include some of the relevant evidence to consider when answering your question (e.g., biblical passages to consider), it may include the significance of answering one way or another, it may include clarity on definitions in the question, etc.

### **Reading Reflection Examples**

**The question itself**<sup>1</sup>: When Dumbledore says, “There are things much worse than death” (6:814), is he specifically referring to a life with a lack of love?

**Evidence and explanation**<sup>1</sup>: The order of the Phoenix (i.e., a “resurrection bird”) insists that death (or, a kind of death) must be embraced on the way to a life of love. Sacrificial love is regularly considered the most potent form of magic, as Harry was protected by the love of his mother from Quirrell (HP, 1:216) and as it is studied in the department of ministries as “a force that is at once more wonderful and more terrible than death” (HP, 6:843). Since love is greater than death, a failure to love, or a betrayal of love, is worse than death. Sirius Black tells Peter Pettigrew that he should’ve “died rather than betray [his] friends” (3:375). Not only is a betrayal of love worse than death, but an absence of love is likewise worse than death. Dumbledore tells Harry, “Do not pity the dead, Harry. Pity the living, and above all, those who live without love” (7:722). So what is worse than death? According to Dumbledore, in my opinion: a life without love.

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<sup>4</sup> X, Y, and Z are simply variables (like in algebra), so they refer to any idea/term/argument in the reading.

**The question itself**<sup>2</sup>: If Dumbledore is right to suggest that “There are things much worse than death,” then should Christians be (like Dumbledore) courageous in the face of death and not fear it (see Hebrews 2:15)?

**Evidence and explanation**<sup>2</sup>: While the narrative of resurrection is not as explicit as I would like in HP, I think that there is a connection between Dumbledore’s claim about death and the power of resurrection if we accept the premise that Christ has died, was raised, and will one day raise us to new life. Apart from the resurrection, death is indeed the victor and the greatest power (see 1 Cor 15:13–15; see James and Lily’s tombstone). Yet because Jesus has been raised from the grave, he can promise us, “whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it” (Matt 16:25). While Voldemort tried to save his own life from death, it is only through resurrection that we find true life. We have hope in the face of death because the “resurrection stone” (HP, 7:416) has been “rolled away” from the tomb of Christ (Matt 28:2). Because there are things worse than death, I can embrace death to my own flesh, desires, preferences and instead “walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up [unto death] for us” (Eph 5:2). Knowing that if we have “died with him, we also will live with him” (2 Tim 2:11).

## **Podcast Preparation**

In preparation for the podcast discussion, you’ll submit a doc. or PDF to Canvas containing each of the following elements. Podcasts will either be recorded in individual groups OR conducted in front of class with a randomly selected set of students. Your grade will be based on your preparation and participation. However, if you don’t formally participate (e.g., you’re not randomly selected), you can still receive full marks through your preparation.

**For your question** of each podcast day, you should have:

**3+ biblical text** you’re prepared to discuss.

**3+ theological concept** that you’re prepared to discuss, alongside their significance for your conclusion

**3+ sub-question** you’re prepared to discuss. — this, especially, might relate to the practical significance of your conclusion.

### **Podcast Preparation Example**

For example, if the topics were (unrelated to theology): “Why the Bears are going to win a playoff game” my preparation would look like:

- a. Texts
  - i. “.....” — Mina Kimes, ESPN.com
  - ii. “.....” — Domonique Foxworth, The Domonique Foxworth Show
  - iii. “.....” — Mel Kiper Jr., ESPN.com
- b. Concepts

- i. Dual-threat quarterback — the ability of Justin Fields to throw and gain yards with his feet. Last season he broke the single-game rushing record for a QB and amassed over 1,500 yards.
  - ii. Parity in the NFC north — with Rodgers out, the Lions poor defense, and the Vikings likely regressing to the mean, the NFC north lacks a clear favorite, which gives them a good chance to have a good division record and get a high seed in the playoffs.
  - iii. Twelve Personnel — a formation with one running back and 2 tight ends that could fit the Bears well as Khalil Herbert, Cole Kmet, Robert Tonyan Jr. are each very capable of pass-catching and blocking, providing a good run/pass option.
- c. Sub-questions
- i. Can the bears Rookie defensive tackles, Gervon Dexter and Zacch Pickens, bring pressure and support the defense?
  - ii. Will the Montez Sweat contract be worth the money that they put into him?
  - iii. If the Bears miss the playoffs, should they draft a QB?

## **Biblical-Theological Journal Entries**

Each entry should contain 9 biblical-theological observations on the biblical text(s) listed in the schedule—if more than one biblical text is mentioned, you still only need 9 observations total. These should be thoughtful engagement with the text combined with theological awareness and wisdom.

### **Structure**

3+ literary observations

3+ theological observations

3+ devotional observations

### **Examples**

#### **Lazy Observations—i.e., observations that are NOT good**

- Bare textual facts: John 1 talks about the Word as God
- Broad facts: John 1 talks about the Word
- Obvious evaluations: John is right about the Word
- Unengaged with the text: I like the book of John, but it's hard to understand
- [basically any observations that you could make WITHOUT reading the text closely or WITHOUT thinking about the text thoroughly]

#### **Helpful Kinds of Observations and examples:**

Literary observations

- Rhetorical function: How is this passage/text functioning in the surrounding context/book?
- Linguistic definitions: How are the key terms in this passage being used? What do they mean?
- Canonical connections: What other biblical texts shed light on this passage?

- Argumentative connections: How do the various claims in this text relate to what comes before and after.

#### Theological observations

- Theological assumptions: What theological commitments must the author of Scripture hold in order to say what they say?
- Theological support: What theological positions/claims/truths does this text support and WHY?
- Theological critique: What theological positions/claims does this text seem to challenge/critique and WHY?
- Theological connections: How do less-than-obvious doctrines/claims relate to this text?

#### Devotional observations

- What is this text calling you to “do?”
- What is this text calling you to “think?”
- What is this text calling you to “feel?”
- How is this text calling you to “relate?”
- What is this text calling your community to?
- If you believed this text more fully, how would your life be different?

## Letter to a skeptical friend

This 2,000+ word paper is intended to be formatted as a letter to your friend who is asking questions about the Christian faith and doctrine addressed this semester—this can be a real friend/question, a made-up friend/question, or a letter to yourself. You will get to choose the specific question that they are asking and then provide a clear and charitable response. This paper should provide a clear response, thoroughly engage (and cite) the readings, theologically support your position, and do so while retaining a charitable tone. As a “letter” this can be as personal and relational as you would like. However, if you use a lot of words making it sound relational, I strongly recommend that you exceed the word count so that you can include important content.

The question that you choose can be closely related to one of McLaughlin’s questions, but it does not ‘need’ to be. Further, the more specific your question, the more likely you are to provide a clear, coherent, and charitable answer. Regardless of the topic, you must include distinct 10 citations from at least four different sources.

Example paper questions—feel free to develop your own and/or specify even further

#### Questions about the truthfulness of Christianity

- Did the resurrection really happen?
- Can we trust Scripture?
- Etc.

#### Questions about the Christianity and science

- Does Christianity exclude evolutionary theories?
- Does Christianity require a certain view of reproductive rights?

- Etc.

#### Questions about Christianity and history

- How can you belong to a religion that condoned the crusades?
- How can you belong to a religion that condoned slavery?
- Etc.

#### Questions about Christian doctrines

- How could a good God let bad things happen to good people?
- Do I need to believe in the Trinity to go to heaven?
- Etc.

#### Questions about Christianity and other religions

- Is Jesus the only way to God?
- How do Christians explain the good things in other religions?
- Etc.

#### Questions about Christianity and culture

- Is Christianity homophobic?
- Is Christianity necessarily judgmental?
- Etc.

Feel free to specify the question further by providing a brief explanation of the situation at the beginning of this letter.

#### Outline

Your outline should include:

- A) The specific question that your friend is asking.
- B) A draft of your main point in response.
- C) Your 2-4 claims that support your main point
- D) At least one piece of evidence for believing each of these 2-4 claims.
- E) What four sources you will engage/read

#### Example of an Outline

Skeptical friend is asking: Are the Bears even going to be good this year?

Main point: The Bears are going to be good, indeed, they're going to win a playoff game.

Claims:

- 1) Mobile Quarterback have dominated the NFL over the past 5 years.



- a. Evidence: Hurts, Mahomes, Jackson, Rodgers, Allen, Russel Wilson AND the Bears have a mobile QB (Justin Fields)
- 2) The Bears lack of success has been due to a lack of a #1 receiver.
  - a. Evidence: The only two times the Bears have made the Playoffs in the last 12 years was when Allen Robinson was on the team – a clear #1 receiver
  - b. See Boomer Esiason on the Bears WR difficulties (..... p. ##)
- 3) The NFC North champion may make the playoffs with an 8-9 record.
  - a. Evidence: The NFC North has so much parity, even if the Bears have a below average season, they might be able to make the playoffs.
  - b. Evidence: The Bears have the easiest schedule in the NFC —  
<https://www.sharpfootballanalysis.com/analysis/2023-nfl-strength-of-schedule/>