

4ST 718 : Postmodern Approaches to God
January 2008 : Course Syllabus

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Catalog Description: This course examines recent theological responses to the postmodern condition. The course will include an explanation of the theoretical, ideological, and existential influences shaping the postmodern conversation; and a Reformed analysis of the responses from deconstructionists, revisionists, and radical orthodoxy.

Texts, Required:

Penner, Myron, *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn* (Brazos, 2005), ISBN 1587431084 (\$15.63 at amazon.com)

Vanhoozer, Kevin J., *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), ISBN 0521793955 (\$23.74 at amazon.com)

Ward, Graham, *The Postmodern God: A Theological Reader* (Blackwell, 1997), ISBN 0631201416 (\$51.95 at amazon.com)

Paper:

Charitable Analysis Essay: a 2000-2400 word edifying and appreciative summary and critical analysis of an article-length contribution to postmodern theology published since 1997. An **Essay Specification** is due by midnight on **January 4, 2008** indicating the article to be treated. (No article may be treated by more than one student. First come, first served.) The completed essay is due by midnight on **January 26, 2008 or ten days after the return of a rough draft if the draft is submitted by January 19, 2008.**

Project:

Students will complete one of the following. A **Plan** for the project is **due by midnight on January 12, 2008. Final Draft is due February 9, 2007** at midnight (by e-mail or postmark). [Note: students may work in pairs to prepare a more extensive version of one of the following.]

A. Sermon/Edifying Discourse Text: a 2000-2500 word exhortation applying God's Word to a body of believers striving to take responsibility for their place in the postmodern theological conversation. (Must work from a specific text and focus on the considerations favored by one of the "schools" of postmodern theology. [Pairs of students may prepare two connected discourses.]

B. Sunday School Curriculum: a 2000-2500 word leader's guide for a four week Adult Sunday School class about one of the "schools" of postmodern theology. Guide should include Objectives (Cognitive, Affective *and*

Practical), Talking Points, Interactive Materials (powerpoint slides, video clips, handouts, worksheets, reading excerpts, etc.) for each session. [Pairs of students may prepare coordinated guides for an eight week series.]

C. Interview and Analysis: a 2000-2500 word description and analysis of an interview with a knowledgeable enthusiast for one of the leading “schools” of postmodern theology. [Pairs of students may prepare a 4000-4500 word report on a jointly-conducted interview.]

Participation: In-class activities (quizzes, debates, puzzle solutions, role-playing, etc.) will contribute to this portion of the grade, along with attendance.

Grading: Grades will be calculated using the following percentages:

Project (Final Draft).....	35%
Project (Plan).....	5%
Paper	35%
Project (Plan).....	5%
Participation/Attendance.....	20%

Schedule of Topics, Recommended Readings & Assignments:

Note about the readings: the compressed meeting format and the conceptual density of some of the texts militate against requiring that the readings be completed prior to class meetings. Familiarity with the readings will be a consideration when the paper and project are assessed. Reading groups of no more than four members (for mutual support on the written assignments) are permitted, even encouraged.

Jan. 2 (Wed.) The Postmodern Condition (The theological situation in the wake of disillusionment about modernity.)

Reading (ideally before the first meeting):
Vanhoozer, chap. 1
Penner, Introduction
Ward, chap 1.

Jan. 3 (Thu.) Deconstructivist and Revisionist Theologies

Reading:
Vanhoozer, chaps. 5, 6, 3, 12;
Penner, chaps 1, 2, 3
Ward, chaps. 2, 3, 4, 6,

Jan. 4 (Fri.) Feminist Theology and Radical Orthodoxy

Reading:
Vanhoozer, chaps. 7, 8, 2
Penner, chaps 4, 5, 6
Ward, chaps. 5, 9, 10, 11,13, 14

Written: Paper: Essay Specification

Jan. 5 (Sat.) **Reformed Theology in the Postmodern Context**

Reading:

Vanhoozer, chaps 9, 10, 11, 15

Penner, chaps. 7-12

Jan. 12 **Plan for the Project**

(Jan. 19 **Rough Draft of Essay: optional)**

Jan. 26 **Final Draft of Essay (unless Rough Draft Comments received later than Jan. 16)**

Feb. 9 **Final Draft of Project**