

History of Philosophy and Christian Thought: 6ST504
Summer 2010, Reformed Theological Seminary, Washington D.C.

Instructor: Stephen J. Nichols
E-mail: snichols@lbc.edu
Home: 717-445-4102
McLean Presbyterian Church
June 7-11, 2010; 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

I. Course Description & Objective

This course introduces the main schools and figures in the history of philosophy and Christian thought. As a survey, it begins with the Greco-Roman period and stretches to the contemporary scene. The course intends to enable the student to critically evaluate ideas of the past and present as they impact culture and the church.

II. Texts

Required Texts:

Anselm, *Proslogion*. Available online.

-----, *Why the God-Man?* Available online.

Armstrong, Karen, *Islam: A Short History* (New York: Modern Library, 2002).

Augustine, *The Confessions*, Books 1 – 9.

Collinson, Patrick, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2004).

Edwards, Jonathan, *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*, edited by John Smith, Harry Stout, and Kenneth Minkema (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

Keller, Timothy, *Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Dutton, 2007).

Nichols, Stephen J., *For Us and for Our Salvation: The Doctrine of Christ in the Early Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007).

Smith, James K. A., *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006).

Wills, Garry, *Saint Augustine* [Penguin Lives] (New York: Penguin/Viking, 1999).

III. Evaluation

1. Examination: Essay Questions, 60%.

You will be given a set of essay questions in a take-home format that cover the reading and class discussions.

Due: to be announced in class

2. Paper, 40%.

Write a ten page (or so) paper on a philosopher or theologian of your choice with my approval. Your paper should include 1.) a brief biographical sketch; 2.) a discussion of the person's main idea(s) and contribution to contemporary thought—this could be a discussion of one of the person's books or essays; and 3.) a critical analysis from a Christian perspective.

Due: to be announced in class

IV. Course Schedule

Day One: Greco-Roman Period

Lectures:

- Jerusalem & Athens, Faith & Reason: introduction to the course
- the intersection of theology and philosophy: Christology as a case study
- Augustine

Reading:

- Nichols, *For Us and for Our Salvation*: We'll use this to explore Christology as the test case for the intersection of theology and philosophy. The book combines narrative (chapters 1, 3, and 5) with primary readings (chapters 2, 4, and 6). Read all.
- Wills, *Saint Augustine*: This is a masterful biography that sets Augustine against the philosophical and cultural context of the era. Please read all of it.
- Augustine, *Confessions, Books 1-9*: This text gives great insight into Greco-Roman philosophy, as well as being a wonderful piece of literature. Read what you can of books 1-9, especially get to books 1 and 7-9.

Day Two: Middle Ages

Lectures:

- introduction to medieval philosophy and theology
- Anselm
- metaphysics and arguments for God's existence
- rise of Islam

Reading:

- Anselm, *Proslogion* & Anselm, *Why the God-Man?*: I'll be using the edition by Eugene R. Fairweather (*A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*) in class. Feel free to bring any print or online version you may find. Give both texts a close read.
- Armstrong, *Islam*: This book traces the history of Islam by a well-regarded religion scholar. Please read chapters 1-4 for today.

Day Three: Reformation

Lectures:

- introduction to the philosophical thought and context of the Reformation
- Luther and Calvin
- political philosophy

Reading:

- Collinson, *The Reformation*: This explores the philosophical and cultural context and contribution of the Reformation by a brilliant social historian. Please read as much of it as you are able, esp. chapters 1-4, 6, and 9-11.
- Calvin's *Institutes*: If you have a copy of the *Institutes*, it wouldn't hurt to bring it along on this day. I'll be referring to various points in Book I. I'm not expecting you, though, to read it. Don't read, just bring with you.

Day Four: Modern Age

Lectures:

- introduction to the philosophy of the modern era
- Locke, Hume, and Kant
- Jonathan Edwards
- epistemology

Reading:

- Edwards Reader: This offers the broad spectrum of Edwards's writings. Try to read as much of it as you are able.

Day Five: Postmodernism

Lectures:

- the so-called "linguistic turn" and the end of metaphysics and modernity
- contemporary philosophical schools and postmodern developments
- 20th century theological developments
- Islam (again)
- What's ahead? What does a pastoral apologetic look like in the 21st century?

Reading:

- Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism*: This book engages the "unholy trinity" of postmodern thinkers. But rather than just taking a dismissive tone, the book offers an appreciative reading of postmodernism. Smith looks to offer an analysis of the philosophical developments (postmodernism) underlying and intersecting with current theological developments (nonfoundationalism, postconservatism, emergent movements). The book should spark some discussion. Read all.
- Armstrong, *Islam*: Please read chapter 5 of this book, which traces Islam in the modern world.
- Keller, *Reason for God*: We won't be discussing Keller in detail or in depth. We will simply be using him as a model for a "pastoral apologetic" approach in the 21st century. If you haven't read it in the past it might be worthwhile to read it some time. You do not need to read it for this class, though.