

**RELS 305-001 Summer****Instructor:** Bella Mukonyora**Recommended study time per day:** 4 Hours**Christianity**

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**M-F: Blackboard**

**Course Description:** This course gives continuous and comprehensive coverage of major theological conversations from the last 2,000 years of Global Christian. The sources of knowledge are texts especially selected to advance learning by highlighting the differing views about sources of knowledge, methods of arriving at knowledge, and throughout this course, different questions are used to advance theology in history.

**Required textbook:** McGrath Alister (Fourth Edition, 2011). *The Christian Theology Reader* by Oxford University Press.

**Prerequisites:** There are no WKU official pre-requisites for the course. However, this can be a difficult course that requires students working at home to read the textbook as closely as possible and answer questions provided at the end of each text. Students with a working knowledge of introductory classes on religion, philosophy, and classes such as the history of to western civilization will be useful. **Course specific prerequisites:** Please prepare for this course by looking up examples of contemporary or current trends in theology whose ideas you can share for discussion. You will find examples of feminist theology (Sallie McFague, Elizabeth Johnson), liberation theology (Gustavo Gutierrez), and even theology and science with John Polkinghorne, and other authors of interesting topics striking to you as a student of theology in 2014. McGrath provides the "Details of Theologians" (567-578). Use this information to orient yourself to this course.

**The Last Discussion Board:** Please remember to finish the course having shared ideas from the theologians you think address important issues concerning our humanity today!

**INTRODUCTIONS AND Module A-D Details under Tests and Quizzes**

**INTRODUCTIONS: Monday, June 6, 8:00am-1:00pm.** The Discussion Board will be open for the instructor and students to interact by introducing members of the class to each other. This Discussion Board session is also time to explain the syllabus and textbook.

**MODULE A DEADLINE: Details under Tests and Quizzes**

**Monday, June 13, 8:00am-4:00pm** will be time to submit the first written assignment consisting of an essay and half page answers to "Questions of Study" as stated under Module A. Please do not waste the space needed to produce good answers by repeating questions first. Also please proceed with work on Module B.

**MODULE B DEADLINE: Details under Tests and Quizzes**

**Friday-Saturday June 18-19:** The Discussion Board will be open for the instructor to provide feedback on Module A and allow students to exchange ideas on these two days. Work on Module C should be underway by this time!

**MODULE C DEADLINE: Details under Tests and Quizzes**

**Thursday, June 25, 8:00am-4:00pm.** Deadline for Module C. Once finished, students are

welcome to join the discussion board. To make the best use of this facility, one must reflect in as profound a manner as possible the NEW ideas learned from reading the excerpts carefully put together by McGrath! PLEASE PROCEED TO MODULE D!

### **MODULE D DEADLINE: Details under Tests and Quizzes**

**Friday, July 1, 2:00-4:00 pm. Module D Final Test on the "New Directions of Theology."**

Module D is built on the quality of contributions to conversations held on Blackboard on the dates stated above. The final test will take the form of contribution to a Discussion Board meetings starting with a quick look at what students think of Chapter 9 on Christianity as World Religions among others (closure to Module C).

### **Requirements:**

- Read and summarize assigned texts from Introduction to *The Christian Theology Reader*, Fourth Edition (Edited by Alister McGrath, 2011)
- Please follow the instructions provided under Module A-D on Blackboard.
- Note that each module is meant to end with discussions in which all students are expected to take part at least twice with the instructor using background knowledge of the subject to make sure that each module ends with students aware of the most important lessons.
- **The instructor provided Writing Guidelines on Blackboard for use in essay work. The guidelines are presented alongside each module to make sure students who are not used to essay writing get some assistance. Otherwise, the instructor expects all 300 level student to know how to write essays with proper citations and a bibliography. If not, additional help is provided by the Writing Center on the English Department, First Floor of Cherry Hall.**
- Please take part in discussions of questions raised during lectures and assignments linked to your homework on articles picked from the reader on a regular basis.
- Whenever articles on religion are published by the New York Times and the local Daily Newspaper students are encouraged to share any relevant the information and get extra credit depending on ability to communicate the relevance of observations made to knowledge about Christianity today. Every Friday the Daily News features an article on Christianity in Bowling Green!

### **General Education Expected Outcomes:**

- Knowledge of human cultures
- Intellectual and practical skills
- Personal and social responsibility
- Integrative learning

**Ruling on Absences:** *Absences from on-line discussions class, even those reported to the instructor and acknowledged, will automatically reduce the quality of student learning, if not for the students who miss class, for those who attend classes on a regular basis. Please note that absences lead to drops in grades, and in extreme cases it is easy to fail this course altogether. The written work will not be enough!*

**Student Disability Services:** Students with disability who require accommodations (academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Office for Student

Disability Services, Student Success Center, DUC-A200. Per university policy, please DO NOT request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from the Office for Student Disability Services.

ADA Guidebook for Faculty/Staff is available at:

<http://www.wku.edu/Dept/Support/Legal/EOO/sds.htm>

**DEBATES** covered by selected texts address questions about the philosophy, scriptures, tradition, doctrine, reason, revelation and experience. Note: The texts provided differ significantly depending on the period of history and cultural location of theologians.

**Interesting issues raised by thinkers from the Early Church facing the need to give meaning, intellectual merits of the study of Christianity.**

Results of Hellenism and the Politics in the Greco Roman Empire

- Plato, Aristotle and Stoic Philosophies
- Gnostic Christianity
- Docetism, Monophytism and Arianism
- Creeds
- Allegory
- Augustinian Trinitarian thought and the idea of Christian Orthodoxy

**AMONG the issues raised by thinkers from the middle and early modern period also facing the need to give meaning, intellectual merit, and to either defend Christian orthodoxy or rely on the spread of ideas about reason and human experience to challenge it.**

- Scholasticism
- Anselm of Canterbury's Proof of the Existence of God
- Thomas Aquinas, "The Five Ways" and "Principle of Analogy"
- Deism
- John Calvin on "Natural knowledge of God"
- Martin Luther's "Theology of the Cross."
- And many other excerpts found in the textbook.

**Interesting issues raised by the modern period draws attention a slow but certain evolution of more debates involving secularism, reason, scriptures and global politics. Examples to do with the reactions to the Enlightenment!**

Reason (e.g. Emmanuel Kant) [from the Greek philosophical divine reason to the "innate capacity for reason" in all men!

- Soren Kierkegaard on suffering
- Tillich on the "method of correlation"
- Bonhoeffer, "God in a secular world"
- Karl Rahner, "universal transcendentalism"

**New Directions for local and global Christianity CHAPTER 9!**

- John Hick on World Religions
- Leslie Newbigin on religious plurality
- John B. Cobb on Religious Pluralism
- And so on – PLEASE READ ALL OF CHAPTER 9, THEN IDENTIFY THE

THEOLOGIAN TO MAKE PART OF YOUR FINAL MODULE.

- Pope Francis' encyclical, *On Care for our Common Home* IS AN ALTERNATIVE REQUIRING YOU TO PURCHASE most controversial theologian of a time who is also operating as a Pope! By now good theologians know what to read because they are the sharpest critical thinkers of humanity and the planet today! You are expected to contact the instructor for extra credit if choosing to write on this topic on 21<sup>st</sup> century Christianity.

**In short, students must look up Modules A-D on Blackboard, the deadlines for the submission of papers and Discussion Boards entries giving individual student access to the instructor at the end of each test.**

**Instructor: Professor Bella Mukonyora @ Western Kentucky University, Summer 2016.**