

## **RELS 305 CHRISTIANITY ON-DEMAND 3 Credits**

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Office hours vary by semester; contact by email first for in-person appointments. Telephone messages also reach me by email, so feel free to leave messages with your name, a brief statement on the main problem at hand, and the number to call back.

### **Online Office hours**

Monday and Friday evenings from 6:00-8:00

### **Course Description**

Overview of ideas drawn from the history of Christianity, including major intellectual developments behind its changing character as a world religion past and present.

This colonnade course is self-paced and governed by WKU On Demand course policies and deadlines.

- Begin this course with an e-mail introducing yourself to the instructor by giving your name, subject major, one reason for taking this course on Christianity, career options and main hobby. **Length of self-introduction = half a page.**
- Please follow the detailed reading instructions provided for each Module on Blackboard.
- To make sure your written work is up to standard, make sure you look at the writing guidelines on the last page of the syllabus.
- At the end of each module, please write a half a page statement on whatever you find most interesting and relevant to your understanding of Christianity as a cultural phenomenon in your world today.
- **Note:** The best answers come from students who take the trouble learn something about the historical period, social setting and the literature from which the excerpts are taken by McGrath. McGrath also provides a list of “Sources of Reading” needed to encourage more independent reading on both the complex multi-cultural history of experiences which explain Christianity (See *Christian History*, pages 572-582) and Theology.

### **Textbooks:**

1) *Christian History: An Introduction* by Alister E. McGrath, 2013 published by Wiley Blackwell. This is an important introduction to the history of the Christianity in the Early Church (c.100-c.500), the Middle Ages, The Modern Age and The Present. If opting for the online version of this book, please make sure it is possible to provide in-text citations.

2) *The Christian Theology Reader*, a collection of excerpts published by McGrath Alister. Fifth Edition, 2017. This reader is also published by Wiley Blackwell. Because of the need to keep reading extensively for this course, students are expected to have hardcopies of this book. Students are also encouraged to keep their theology reader for independent use during and after this important course on the history of theology.

### **Additional course materials**

- Flash drive or other means of storing digital versions of notes on the background history and achievements of theologians; excerpts read for modules; and the essays and journal entries submitted for grading.
- A valid WKU e-mail address to be checked regularly.
- Reliable access to internet. This course is fully online.
- Access to a computer with Microsoft Word. Smart phones, tablets and some Mac computers do not always work well with Blackboard. In case you experience problems with submitting your work on Blackboard, contact the WKU IT-Helpdesk (270)745-57000 for expert advice and make sure the instructor can confirm receipt of your work.

### **WKU Policy on Cheating**

Evidence of plagiarism will result in failure.

### **Ruling on absences**

Because this is a self-paced course, the ruling on absences is impossible to implement. The instructor will be counting on students finishing their work and the proctored final examination.

### **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>

### **Value of Module A - up to 5 points per journal entry**

At the beginning of the course, the instructor will prompt students to sharing news about themselves in terms of places of birth, majors, hobbies and interest in further knowledge about the history of ideas in Christianity theology. Otherwise, Module A is a special opportunity for individual students to touch base with the instructor and classmates who may be taking the same course. At the end of each for the modules (B-E), students must share observations which say something about student abilities to us the learning outcomes of the colonnade program think independently. Value out of 5 points per journal entry = 20%

### **Value of Module B-E out 20 points per module**

Score will be posted on Blackboard on completion of each module. Deadlines for the submission of completed modules are like the journal entries determined by students taking this as a self-paced learning experience. Value out of 15 points per module = 60%

### **Proctored Final Examination out of 20 points**

Please contact the DELO-ON-DEMAND Office to fix the date and time for an hour-long test on basic questions allowing students to reflect on reading favorite excerpts on current trends in theology according to McGrath. Value = 20%.

**The total scores will be out of 100%**

**Letter grading scale used to determine final grades:**

**A = 90-100%; B = 80-89%; C = 70-79%; D = 60-69%; F = 59% and lower; X = incomplete**

### **Writing Guidelines on Essays and Questions of Study**

Western Kentucky University, Writing Center offers individual conferences about writing with English majors and graduate students. Students who make full use of The Writing Center should attach a signed form to get extra credit.

#### **General advice:**

AVERAGE LENGTH OF ESSAY = 4 PAGES OF MAIN TEXT, followed by a separate page for Works Cited or Bibliography including lists of numbered excerpts used to produce modules. AVERAGE LENGTH OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS OF STUDY, and JOURNAL ENTRIES for Module A, also 1 page per entry.

McGrath provides short biographies of theologians and a “Glossary” by which he means a list of word to add to your vocabulary. Students are expected to use this information to show their knowledge about the identity and context of the Christian thinkers selected for discussion before giving answers.

- Plan your essay and come up with a few eye-catching words for your topic!
- Start your essay by explaining your topic of interest providing the instructor with some background information about the different theologians chosen for discussion by reading first the biographical details in the blue box positioned at the top of each excerpt. To help you develop a deeper understanding of the different theological issues and personalities, McGrath ends his opening remarks in the blue box at the top of each excerpt with “See also with numbers of other excerpts that are interesting to compare with whatever ideas draw your attention when reading particular excerpts. **Students are encouraged to introduce and conclude essays with a comment or two on whatever strikes them the most about the arguments made in the texts chosen for study i.e. conclude with an example of a lessons learned.**
- Show the level of understanding of the main points made in texts by providing summary statements of main argument presented by making good use of keywords and phrases used as in-text citations (e.g. McGrath, 11 or even better mention the names of theologians, e.g. Polkinghorne, 63) to expedite grading.
- Avoid double spacing lengthy quotations, cover pages and cutting corners with the use of fonts bigger than the recommended New Times Roman Font Size 12. This class demands a high level of thoughtful answers drawing on examples of beliefs and practices of Christianity in the wider society in which students take this course.
- Draw upon experiences from life to develop critical skills need to distinguish answers and score good points. Also, practice thinking independently by explaining why you are drawn to the texts selected for study.
- End with a statement on something interesting learned about theology from your comparative study.
- Provide bibliographical information about the reader or Works Cited, the give the number, title and pages of each of the texts used to produce an essay.

## **TIPS ON HOW TO GIVE ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS OF STUDY**

Start by giving the number and title of excerpt with page numbers. For example: 1.4 Augustine on Philosophy & Theology, pp. 7-8. Then provide answers which show that you grasp the background and identity of the author (including dates of birth and significance) as you start giving your answer to each Question of Study chosen. Then use the second paragraph to relate your answer to at least one or two of the Colonnade Program Learning Outcomes, even if means using one of the questions of study into a journal entry.

## **ESSAY TOPICS**

Once satisfied with your thorough reading, and clear about the main subject for discussion as dictated by the general context of the Chapter, choose a few interesting words for your topic. Make sure you begin your essay with a brief explanation of your topic, identify the theologian and issues to be address in your main argument in the opening paragraph. Then present your argument with in-text citations (e.g. Pinnock, 33), or (McGrath p. 59). Please remember to write a clear conclusion highlighting factors you think anyone else reading your essay might find inspiring, original, or important to learn from your essay.

## **Example of Works Cited**

1. Alister E. McGrath, *Christian History: An Introduction*. Wiley Blackwell, 2013. It is assumed you will provide in-text citations or footnotes depending on your writing skills.
2. Alister E. McGrath (Ed.), *The Christian Theology Reader*, Fourth Edition. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2017. Excerpts studied:  
**1.4 Augustine on Philosophy & Theology, pp. 7-8**  
**1.11 William of Ockham on Proofs of God's Existence, pp. 19-20**  
**1.29 Paul Tillich on the Method of Correlation, pp. 43-47.**
3. Interview with Sam Cloud, 6/5/2019
4. Interview with Biology student, 5/4/1019
5. In case you are interested in using notes from interviews with friends, classmates from your major, family members, or members of other communities of interest, provide a list of interviewees with names or initials, and dates of discussion.

*This course was created for use by Western Kentucky University students only.*

**END**