

REL 3403: Christianity

Department of Philosophy

University of Central Florida

COURSE SYLLABUS

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Please email me with questions rather than posting them in the forum!

Course Overview:

In this course we will consider the Christian tradition from theological, historical, and cultural perspectives. We will look at the origins of early Christianity and the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth, the role of the Bible, the development of church orthodoxy, major movements in Christian history, differences between denominations, and the role of rituals and culture. Ultimately we will consider the breadth of Christianity both in terms of its official tenets and its reality as a living, evolving tradition. This course assumes no prior knowledge or participation in Christianity as a religious tradition.

Course Objectives:

- i. Students will discover and identify major components of the Christian tradition.
- ii. Students will actively engage in dialogue by critically discussing and evaluating important components of Christianity.
- iii. Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of and critical thinking about philosophical and religious concepts.
- iv. Students will be able to identify theoretical and critical principles in philosophical and religious thinking from historical and cultural contexts.
- v. Students will have a greater awareness of issues of religious and philosophical importance that are displayed in popular cinema and culture.

Required Texts and Materials: *Christianity: An Introduction*, 3rd Edition, ed. Alister McGrath. ISBN: 9781118465653. Additional readings posted online in Canvas.

Basis for Final Grade: After the introduction, most weeks we will have reading assignments and an assigned discussion post in the forum. There will be three tests throughout the semester that can be completed on Canvas. On selected weeks throughout the semester we will view films and have a paper assignment. We will not have discussions during the weeks with paper

assignments.

Discussion Posts (10 points each): You will respond to the discussion topic assigned each week in the Course Module section in Webcourses. Discussion posts should be at least 250-300 words, interacting with the assigned texts and properly cited using APA format. After you make your initial post (**6 points and due on Thursdays of that week**), you should respond to the posts of at least two of your classmates, raising substantive questions or challenging their assertions (**4 points and due by Sunday of that week of discussion**). Your responses must go beyond “nice post” or “good work.” Ask probing questions of your classmate to help further the discussion. (11 posts)

Paper Assignments (20 points each): We will watch two movies that will have paper assignments following and one paper on another assigned topic at the end of the semester.

Tests (15 points each): There will be three tests based on our reading throughout the semester and are accessible through Canvas. These quizzes will be timed (30 minutes), so you should prepare for them ahead of time as if we were in a traditional classroom setting.

Syllabus Quiz (5 points): The Registrar’s office needs to document student activity the first week of class in order for financial aid to be disbursed on time. Please review the syllabus and complete the brief syllabus quiz in order to satisfy this requirement no later than Friday, August 26 at 5:00 pm. If you complete the quiz after this time you will still receive your financial aid but it may be late. Even if you are not receiving financial aid you should complete this quiz in order to receive credit for the 5 points.

Grade Summary _____

Discussion Posts = 110 points

Paper Assignments = 60 points

Tests= 45 points

Syllabus Quiz = 5 points

TOTAL = 220 points possible

Grading Scale (%)

94-100 A 90-93.5 A- 87-89.5 B+ 84-86.5 B 80-83.5 B- 77-79.5 C+ 74-76.5 C 70-73.5 C- 67-69.5 D+ 64-66.5 D 60-63.5 D- 0 – 59.5 F

Grade Dissemination: You can access your scores at any time using the Grade Book function of Webcourses. Please note that scores returned mid-semester are unofficial grades.

Course Policies:

Late Work Policy: This class operates in Eastern Time Zone (US & Canada) and assignments

are due by 11:59 pm of the date specified in the course schedule. Late posts in the forum (initial posts) will be deducted by .5 pts per day late.

In the Modules section you will find information for each week's assignments and the specific questions you are to answer for the discussion posts. **You must make your initial post answering these questions by the end of day on Thursdays** (on the weeks we have discussions) **The discussion forum closes at the end of the day on Sunday** and *no additional posts will be accepted.*

If you have a special circumstance that prevents you from posting to the forum on time, then please notify me as soon as possible and I will determine extensions on a case-by-case basis. In most situations I will need documentation to verify the reason. ***Late papers will be deducted by 5 points per day late up to 3 days after the due date.***

Grades of "Incomplete": The current university policy concerning incomplete grades will be followed in this course. Incomplete grades are given only in situations where unexpected emergencies prevent a student from completing the course and the remaining work can be completed the next semester. Your instructor is the final authority on whether you qualify for an incomplete. Incomplete work must be finished by the end of the subsequent semester or the "I" will automatically be recorded as an "F" on your transcript.

Email: Since this is a Webcourse, email will be our primary form of communication. In most circumstances, you can expect a response from me immediately, but please allow 24 hours for a response. If something arises and I will be away from email, I will let you know in advance. ***If you have any questions about the assignments or course, please send me an email rather than posting questions to me in the discussion forum.***

Movie screening: Most of the movies are accessible online through the Webcourse. If a movie is not able to be streamed online (due to licensing issues), then I will notify you in advance and it will be your responsibility to obtain the movie through Netflix, Redbox, Amazon, etc.

Course Access: The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Accessibility Services, Ferrell Commons Room 185, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.

****Professionalism Policy and special note regarding the purposes of this class**:** I look forward to lively and engaged discussions in the forum, although please keep your posts respectful and appropriate for the classroom environment at all times. Please note that this course assumes no knowledge or religious affiliation. You are free to share your personal experiences as you wish and as is appropriate for the discussions, *but please note that your personal experiences are not a substitute for the assigned academic readings and assignments.* We will be approaching the tradition of Christianity from an objective, academic perspective. We are not here to promote the religion or convert followers, but to understand the religion from historical, cultural, and theological perspectives. I will be asking probing questions to

consider its formation and the philosophical and cultural implications of the tradition as it is lived, but respect is to be maintained for all traditions and viewpoints at all times.

Academic Conduct Policy: Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. ALL WORK IN THIS CLASS MUST BE YOUR OWN. If you are uncertain as to what constitutes academic dishonesty, please consult The Golden Rule, the University of Central Florida's Student Handbook <http://www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/> for further details. As in all University courses, The Golden Rule Rules of Conduct will be applied. Violations of these rules will result in a record of the infraction being placed in your file and receiving a zero on the work in question AT A MINIMUM. At the instructor's discretion, you may also receive a failing grade for the course. Confirmation of such incidents can also result in expulsion from the University. In this course we will utilize turnitin.com, an automated system which instructors can use to quickly and easily compare each student's assignment with billions of web sites, as well as an enormous database of student papers that grows with each submission.

Please see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> for information on APA citation format.

University Writing Center: The University Writing Center (UWC) is a free resource for UCF undergraduates and graduates. At the UWC, a trained writing consultant will work individually with you on anything you're writing (in or out of class), at any point in the writing process from brainstorming to editing. Appointments are recommended, but not required. For more information or to make an appointment, visit the UWC website at <http://www.uwc.ucf.edu>, stop by MOD 608, or call 407.823.2197.

The dates and assignments listed in the syllabus are tentative and can be changed at the discretion of the professor.