



Postmodernity & Contemporary Theological Issues PHIL6328 / THEO6328 DEFEND 23

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Theological and Historical Studies Division
January 2–6, 2023

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Mission Statement

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

Course Description

This course exposes students to recent trends in philosophical and theological studies with an emphasis on the influence of postmodernity. Special attention will be given to theology's relationship to postmodern culture and how such a relationship influences the local church and its ministries.

Student Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Identify and define contemporary theological doctrines and movements;
2. Differentiate evangelical theology from deviant and heretical doctrines;
3. Intelligently discuss types of postmodern philosophies and theologies;
4. Analyze popular culture for theological and philosophical themes; and
5. Analyze theology for any influence postmodernity and postmodern culture has exerted upon it.

Required Textbooks

Allberry, Sam. *Why Does God Care Who I Sleep With?* Epsom, UK: The Good Book Company, 2020.

Kelly, Stewart E. and James K. Dew. *Understanding Postmodernism: A Christian Perspective*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017

Course Teaching Methodology

Students will attend the **Defend** conference January 2–6, 2023 on the campus of NOBTS and attend / or listen to recordings from all sessions related to postmodernity and contemporary theological issues. The remainder of the class will include reading and writing assignments.

Course Requirements

1. Attendance and Reading Report (25%)

Students are expected to attend all lectures related to the course at Defend 23. Because of the nature of the intensive, students who miss any portion of the class may receive a grade of "F" for the course. Students will also be required to submit a reading report at the end of the class that reports what percentage of the material was read.

2. Book Report (25%) DUE TWO WEEKS AFTER THE CONFERENCE END

Every student will write a review of one of the following texts. These book reviews should be 4-6 single-spaced pages in length. Each review should include a bibliographic entry, brief biographical data about the author (including dates, degrees, theological tradition, academic positions held, research interests, and significant works), a brief summary of the book's argument and contents, and critical analysis.

A few questions to consider while reading these monographs: What is the main purpose or thesis of this book? To whom is this book written? Did the author(s) fulfill his or her purpose? What are some of the author's working assumptions? Does the author provide strong biblical, philosophical, and historical support for his or her positions? Are there any points of contact between this book/writer and other texts read during the course of the semester? How might the content of this book affect ministry in the local church or ministry within your particular calling? Are there any ideas that changed your particular way of thinking on the subject matter at hand? Would you recommend this book to someone else?

- "A" papers (93-100) clearly state the book's thesis, successfully and succinctly outline its argument in its own terms, demonstrate advanced critical engagement with the argument and content of the book, make clear and well-structured arguments, and exhibit a proficient grasp of grammar, spelling, and style.
- "B" papers (85-92) clearly state the book's thesis, show an attempt to understand the book on its own terms and critically reflect on the issues at hand, make arguments, and show sufficiency in grammar, spelling, and style.
- "C" papers (77-84) state the book's thesis, present the content of the book, raise preliminary critical questions for further evaluation, limit evaluation to approval or disapproval of the author's arguments, and make repeated mistakes in grammar, spelling, and style.
- "D" (70-76) and "F" (0-69) papers lack evidence of grasping the book's thesis and content, limit evaluation to preformed judgments without serious consideration of the book's ideas, contain major grammatical, spelling, and stylistic errors, and demonstrate little or no attempt to proofread.

Students can choose either a primary or a secondary text. But be warned: the primary texts here are enormously challenging and cannot/should not be read through quickly. If students are planning to advance to further studies in theology or philosophy, these books would be helpful in understanding the intellectual climate of the late twentieth century, but some secondary sources may be needed to supplement understanding of these works. **If someone does go the route of a primary text, I STRONGLY ADVISE THE STUDENT TO START READING BEFORE THE DEFEND CONFERENCE.**

Primary Texts (very challenging; mostly non-Christian)	Secondary Texts (helpful overviews; most on this list are written by Christians)
<p>Caputo, John. <i>Against Ethics</i>. Indiana University Press, 1993.</p> <p>Derrida, Jacques. <i>Writing and Difference</i>, trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.</p> <p>Derrida, Jacques. <i>On Grammatology</i>. New York: John Hopkins University Press, 2016.</p> <p>Foucault, Michel. <i>Ethics</i>. New York: New Press, 1998.</p> <p>Foucault, Michel. <i>Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason</i>. New York: Vintage, 2013.</p> <p>Gadamer, Hans-Georg. <i>Truth and Method</i>. New York: Continuum, 2004.</p> <p>Hick, John. <i>God Has Many Names</i>. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1981.</p> <p>Lyotard, Jean-François. <i>The Postmodern Condition</i>. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.</p> <p>Ricoeur, Paul. <i>The Conflict of Interpretations</i>. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974.</p> <p>Rorty, Richard. <i>Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature</i>. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017.</p> <p>Rorty, Richard. <i>Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritarianism</i>. Boston: Belknap, 2021.</p>	<p>Erickson, Millard J. <i>Truth or Consequences: The Promises and Perils of Postmodernism</i>. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001.</p> <p>Grenz, Stanley. <i>A Primer on Postmodernism</i>. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.</p> <p>Smith, James K. A. <i>How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor</i>. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014.</p> <p>Smith, James K. A. <i>Who's Afraid of Postmodernism: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church</i>. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006.</p> <p>Trueman, Carl. <i>The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution</i>. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020.</p> <p>Vanhoozer, Kevin J., ed. <i>The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology</i>. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.</p> <p>Ward, Graham. <i>The Politics of Discipleship</i>. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009.</p> <p>Westphal, Merold. <i>Overcoming Onto-Theology: Toward a Postmodern Christian Faith</i>. New York: Fordham University Press, 2001.</p> <p>Westphal, Merold. <i>Whose Community? Which Interpretation? Philosophical Hermeneutics for the Church</i>. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009.</p>

Students will survey primary and secondary literature related to one (1) of the following **postmodern intellectuals**. Having a good “for dummies” guide (e.g., *Derrida for Beginners*, *A Visual Guide to Foucault*, etc.) to these figures will be EXTREMELY HELPFUL.

They will write an 6–8-page double-spaced paper with the **following outline**.

Name:

Date of Birth:

Selected Publications: List titles of selected publications followed by the original year. **Example:** *Of Grammatology* (1967); *Writing and Difference* (1978); *Margins of Philosophy* (1982); *Rights of Inspection* (1999).

Biography (1–2 pages)

Major Ideas (3–4 pages)

Christian Critique (2–3 pages)

These papers must be submitted in Turabian style with footnotes and proper citations. Students can look at the sample encyclopedia article provided by the professor.

- Roland Barthes
- Jacques Derrida
- Michel Foucault
- Friedrich Nietzsche (precursor to postmodernism)
- Hans-Georg Gadamer
- Paul Ricoeur
- Jean-François Lyotard
- Richard Rorty
- Charles Taylor (critical of postmodernism)

4. Postmodern Issue Teaching Outline (25%) DUE SIX WEEKS AFTER THE CONFERENCE END

Students will prepare a detailed teaching outline to be used in a church or ministry setting that offers a Christian apologetic response to one of the postmodern cultural issues listed below. These teaching outlines must be 4–6 pages in length, including an introduction, talking points, illustrations, applications, and a conclusion.

- Truth in a postmodern age
- Politics in a postmodern age
- Sexuality in a postmodern age
- Gender in a postmodern age
- The Bible in a postmodern age
- The Gospel in a postmodern age

Evaluation of Grades

The student's grade will be computed as follows:

1. Attendance and Reading Report

25%

2. Book Review	25%
3. Encyclopedia Article	25%
4. Postmodern Teaching Outline	25%
Total	100%

All assignments must be submitted to pass the course. Students who fail to complete an assignment will not receive a passing grade.

Technical Assistance

For assistance regarding technology, consult ITC (504-816-8180) or the following websites:

1. www.NOBTS.edu/itc/- Email for general technical questions/support requests.
2. Selfserve@nobts.edu- Email technical questions/support requests with the Selfserve.nobts.edu or My.nobts.edu site (Access to online registration, financial account, online transcript, Faculty portal, etc.)
3. Canvas@nobts.edu Click on the “Help” button for technical questions/support requests regarding the NOBTS Canvas System. You can also email questions to Canvas.nobts.edu / nobts.instructure.com.
4. Bluejeanshelpdesk@nobts.edu - Email technical questions/support requests with Bluejeans and NOBTS Bluejeans classrooms (On and Off-Campus).
5. TelephoneHelpDesk@nobts.edu- Email technical questions/support requests with the NOBTS Nextiva Phone system.
6. [504.816.8180](tel:504.816.8180) - Call for any technical questions/support requests. (Currently available Mon-Thurs 7:00am-9:00pm & Fri 7:00-7:00pm Central Time).

Help for Writing Papers at “The Write Stuff”

NOBTS maintains a Writing Center designed to improve English writing at the graduate level. Students can receive writing guides, tips, and valuable information to help in becoming a better writer.

Plagiarism on Written Assignments

NOBTS has a no tolerance policy for plagiarism. Plagiarism in certain cases may result in expulsion from the seminary. See the NOBTS Student Handbook for definition, penalties, and policies associated with plagiarism.