

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

PTH/THE 622 Communicating Christian Faith in a Pluralistic Society

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COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course develops a comprehensive understanding of the individual and societal relevance of the gospel in order to enhance its proclamation to the contemporary world. It supports the validity of Christian faith through evaluation of experiential, scientific, sociological, historical, and biblical evidences. It also helps leaders to meaningfully engage contemporary religious and secular worldviews and to respond to major challenges to Christianity.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Describe the areas in which the gospel is relevant to individuals and society.
2. Demonstrate the validity of Christian faith through experiential, scientific, sociological, historical, and biblical evidences.
3. Show a basic understanding of contemporary religions and worldviews in order to enhance communication and witness.
4. Respond to major challenges to Christian faith.
5. Collect pertinent material to enhance witness, spiritual discussions, and seeker messages.
6. Support the relevance and validity of the gospel amid diverse worldviews and challenges.

TEXTBOOKS

Required:

James W. Sire. *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 4th ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Philip Yancey. *Rumors of Another World: What on Earth Are We Missing?* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.

Alvin J. Schmidt. *Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001. (Read **chapters 1 to 11**)

Recommended (The 6 books listed below represent 6 different areas which we will examine during the course. Acquire or study items based on your personal interest):

D.A. Carson, ed. *Telling the Truth: Evangelizing Postmoderns*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000.

Peter Kreeft & Ronald K. Tacelli. *Handbook of Christian Apologetics: Hundreds of Answers to Crucial Questions*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994.

David. G. Myers. *The Pursuit of Happiness*. New York: Avon Books, 1992.

John P. Newport. *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview: Conflict and Dialogue*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998

Christopher Partridge, ed. *Dictionary of Contemporary Religion in the Western World*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002.

Lee Strobel. *The Case for a Creator*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004.

COURSE OUTLINE

I. RELEVANCE OF THE GOSPEL FOR INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

1. Anxiety to Peace
2. Brokenness to Wholeness
3. Conditional love to Unconditional love
4. Death to Eternal life
5. Emptiness to Fulfillment
6. Falsehood to Truth
7. Guilt to Forgiveness
8. Hopelessness to Hope
9. Illness to Health
10. Insignificance to Significance

II. RELEVANCE OF THE GOSPEL FOR SOCIETAL NEEDS

1. Alienation to Community
2. Bondage to Deliverance
3. Corruption to Renewal
4. Discrimination to Equality
5. Environmental degradation to Stewardship of the earth
6. Futility to Hope
7. Greed to Compassion
8. Hostility to Reconciliation

9. Injustice to Justice

III. VALIDITY OF THE GOSPEL: EXPERIENTIAL EVIDENCE

1. Spiritual desire
2. Moral sense
3. Greatness and evil in human beings
4. Beauty and wonder
5. Personal experience of truth
6. Interventions of grace

IV. VALIDITY OF THE GOSPEL: OBSERVABLE EVIDENCE

1. Transformed lives
2. History and sociology: Values of Christian faith
3. Medicine: Physical and emotional health
4. Physics: A beginning to the universe
5. Physics: Fine-tuning in the universe
6. Biochemistry: Intelligent design

V. VALIDITY OF THE GOSPEL: BIBLICAL EVIDENCE

1. Reliability of the Gospels and the Bible
2. The person, teachings, and claims of Jesus
3. The resurrection of Jesus

VI. RESPONSES TO CONTEMPORARY WORLDVIEWS

1. Modernism
2. Postmodernism
3. Eastern religions
4. New Age
5. Islam

VII. MAJOR CHALLENGES TO CHRISTIAN FAITH

1. Suffering and evil
2. Hell
3. Pluralism, fate of those who haven't heard
4. Evolution
5. Science and faith

METHODOLOGY

Class and small group discussions, student presentations, videos, supplementary readings, lectures, and guest speakers will be used to facilitate learning. A paper and an exam will be assigned to develop and reinforce insights.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Read the three required textbooks and submit a two page typewritten “Reading Analysis” for each. Briefly summarize the essential points (approximately half a page). Indicate those that were of most value to you. Indicate areas, if any, that were not clear to you or with which you disagree. State the overall value of the book to you and assess its strengths and limitations. These are **due at the beginning of class** on the following dates:

The Universe Next Door	Friday, January 28
Under the Influence	Friday, January 28
Rumors of Another World	Friday, February 25

Please bring textbooks to class on the day that their book analyses are due.

2. Attend all sessions punctually, and participate in discussions and small groups.
3. Read article(s) from the “Supplementary Readings” as assigned. Make a brief presentation (5 minutes). Provide a **one page outline** for each student.
4. Collect 20 items (articles, book excerpts, stories, statistics, and quotes) related to items in I and II of the Course Outline. These should have **value for personal witness, spiritual discussions, and in preaching to seekers**. Be sure to cite the source. *No more than 5 items* should come from *collections* in magazines, books, or the Internet.

Try to be alert to these during your regular schedule, if possible, rather than specifically searching for them. Bonus points will be given for items which have persuasive value (vs. informational value).

First seven: Due at the beginning of class Friday, February 25

Second seven: Due at the beginning of class Friday, March 18

Final eight: Due by 4:00 pm to Faculty Secretary Friday, April 8

5. Choose a topic from I or II in the Course Outline, and write a **10 to 12 page research paper**. In general, presentation of the need, exploration of alternative solutions, the biblical response, and support material for the biblical response should each comprise approximately one-fourth of the paper. Do **not** use more

than 2 items from the supportive material given in class. You may use any of the items that you have personally collected.

Make a 6 minute presentation in class. Provide a **1 to 2 page outline** for each student. *Option:* Choose two topics and write a 5 to 6 page paper for each. Make a 3 minute presentation for each. Provide a 1 page outline for each student.

Due at the beginning of class

Friday, March 18

Papers should be typewritten, double spaced, with 1" margins and 12 font type. A minimum of 5 sources should be consulted for each paper, and sources duly noted with endnotes at the conclusion of the paper. Quotes of more than two lines should be single-spaced. Avoid simply listing facts, rather analyze, synthesize, and evaluate research materials. Be concise, yet thorough, aiming to be clear and logical in your writing. Thoroughly edit your work, and have knowledgeable individuals review it as well. Poor grammar and writing reduce clarity and will affect your grade.

6. Complete a take home exam.

GRADING PROCEDURE

Reading analyses (3 @ 10 points)	30 points	10%
Class participation (3 @ 10 points)	30 points	10%
Class presentations (2 @ 10 points)	20 points	6.7%
Collection of illustrative materials (20 @ 1 point)	20 points	6.7%
Paper	100 points	33.3%
<u>Final exam</u>	<u>100 points</u>	<u>33.3%</u>
TOTAL	300 points	100%

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

This will be distributed during class.

SPECIFIC DATA

Prepared by Dr. Steve Lim, November 4, 2004