2ST504, History of Philosophy and Christian Thought

**Course Handbook**

RTS/Orlando, Spring Term, 2013

# Meetings

Thursdays, 2-5 PM.

# Instructor

John M. Frame

My stated office hours this term are Thursdays, 8-11 AM, others by appointment. I’m in my office most mornings, and if my door is ajar I’ll be happy to see you. Feel free to write me at [jframe@rts.edu](mailto:jframe@rts.edu). I will probably give a better answer to your question by email than in person, but I realize that sometimes face-to-face meetings are better.

**Teaching Assistant**

Robert Binion, [binion.robert.e@gmail.com](mailto:binion.robert.e@gmail.com). Robert is also available to help you. He will be evaluating your written assignments and will be available to help you prepare for exams.

# Objectives

1. To inform students about the main thinkers in the history of philosophy, Reformed theology, and liberal theology.
2. To show the interaction of philosophy and theology, especially the influence of philosophy on our theological formulations.
3. To illumine the spiritual warfare that takes place in the intellectual movements of human history.
4. To give students critical tools to evaluate, not only thinkers of past history, but future thinkers as well.

# Assignments

1. Regular attendance, preparation of assigned material each day for discussion. This year I will be using my new book *Philosophy: a Christian Perspective*, available at [www.reformedperspectives.org](http://www.reformedperspectives.org). With each chapter, you should be prepared to define the Key Terms at the end and answer the Study Questions.

2. One paper of roughly 3000 words, due Fri., May 17, at 11 AM. Put it in the bin marked with our course name in the area near the Administrative Assistants.

a. Choose some thinker discussed in this course.

b. Read some of the thinker’s own works, plus some secondary sources, both assigned and unassigned.

c. Describe and explain briefly one of his distinctive theses (one for which he is known in distinction from other thinkers).

d. Note one or more of his main arguments for that thesis.

e. Evaluate those arguments.

f. Compare his position with that of Reformed Christian Theism.

3. MAR. 31-APR. 5: Midterm Exam. The exam will cover assignments through that of Mar. 13. The exam will be given in the library. You can go there to take it any time between its opening Mon., Mar. 31 to its closing Sat., April 5. You are responsible to know the library’s opening and closing hours.

4. Final Exam: covering the assignments from that of Mar. 20 to the end of the course. It will be given during the official exam period, at a place to be announced by the seminary.

**N. B.: In your preparation for the exams, do not make use of any exam used for this course in an earlier year. If you do, it will be considered cheating, for which RTS applies draconian penalties.**

**Grading**

Individual assignments 1-4 will be graded on a pass-fail basis. Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Passing work on all four assignments—A.

Passing work on three of four assignments—B.

Passing work on two of four assignments—C.

Passing work on one of four assignments—D.

Passing work on no assignment—F.

# Required Texts

Papers by Frame and Edgar, including Frame’s book *Philosophy: a Christian Perspective*, can be found at [www.reformedperspectives.org](http://www.reformedperspectives.org). Click on “Hall of Frame,” then this course.

Diogenes Allen and Eric Springsted, *Primary Readings in Philosophy for Understanding Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992). **ISBN-13:** 978-0664252083.

Edgar, “No News is Good News”

Frame, “Certainty”

--, “Christianity and Contemporary Epistemology”

--, “God and Biblical Language”

--, “Greeks Bearing Gifts”

--, “Infinite Series”

--, *Philosophy: a Christian Perspective*

--, Lecture Outline

--, “Ontological Argument”

--, “Transcendental Arguments”

--, “Van Til Reconsidered”

**Recommended, Supplementary Texts**

Andrew Hoffecker, ed., *Revolutions in Worldview* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2007). An excellent survey of worldviews from the Greek philosophers to the present. My “Greeks Bearing Gifts” is included. Other contributors include present and former RTS professors and other well-known Reformed scholars like Vern Poythress, Peter Leithart, Carl Trueman, Richard Lints.

Donald Palmer, *Looking at Philosophy* (NY: McGraw Hill, 2010). I used this as a text for this course for several years.

William Placher, *Readings in the History of Christian Theology*, 1 and 2 (Phila.: Westminster Press, 1988). Primary source readings for many of the thinkers we discuss in the course.

Robert Strimple, “Roman Catholic Theology Today” in John Armstrong, ed., *Roman Catholicism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 85-117. I have assigned this as an accurate and concise summary of post Vatican 2 Roman Catholicism.

Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre and Beyond*: *A History of Philosophy* (NY: McGraw-Hill, 2003). Dr. MacKenzie used this book as his main text. Excellent, detailed account. I have thought that it is perhaps too technical for most seminarians, but I could be wrong.

## Course Schedule

This schedule indicates the readings you should do to prepare for each class meeting. We shall not be specifically discussing the assignments in AS, but they should help you to understand some of the thinkers we will be studying. The midterm and final exam will cover both lectures and readings.

All dates are Thursdays.

## Feb. 6: Introduction

Frame, *Philosophy: a Christian Perspective* (henceforth PCP), Chapter 1.

Be able to define all key terms and answer all study questions.

**Feb. 13: Greek Philosophy**

PCP*,* Chapter 2.

Allen and Springsted (henceforth AS), 1-82.

**Feb. 20: Early Christian Thought, Through Augustine**

PCP*,* Chapter 3.

**Feb. 27: Medieval Philosophy**

PCP, Chapter 4

AS, 83-110

Frame, “Ontological Argument”

--“Infinite Series”

**Mar. 6: Early Modern Thought: Secular**

PCP, Chapter 5

AS, 111-171.

Frame, “Certainty.”

**Mar. 13: Early Modern Thought: Christian**

PCP, Chapter 6

**Mar. 20: Early Liberal Theology; Kant and His Successors**

PCP, Chapter 7

AS, 172-218, 228-247.

**Mar. 27: Spring Break; No Class**

**MAR. 31-APR. 5: MIDTERM EXAM.** The exam will cover assignments through that of Mar. 13 (above). (It will not include the assignment for Mar. 20.) It will be given in the library, and you can take it whenever the library is open, from Monday through Saturday of this week. You are responsible to determine when the library is open.

**Apr. 3: Nineteenth Century Theology**

PCP, Chapter 8

AS, 219-228.

**Apr. 10: Phenomenology, Pragmatism, Existentialism**

PCP, Chapter 9

AS, 248-262.

P, 305-318, 359-384.

**Apr. 17: Twentieth Century Theology, Part 1**

PCP, Chapter 10

**Apr. 24: Twentieth Century Theology, Part 2**

PCP, Chapter 11

AS, 263-280

**May 1: Language Analysis, Structuralism, Deconstruction**

PCP, Chapter 12

Edgar, “No News is Good News”

**May 8: Recent Christian Thought**

PCP, Chapter 13

AS, 281-303.

Frame, “God and Biblical Language.”

“Christianity and Contemporary Epistemology.”

“Transcendental Arguments”

“Van Til Reconsidered”

### Bibliography

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Arguments of Plantinga and Van Til,” forthcoming.

Clark, Kelly James, Return to Reason (Grand Rapids:

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Hart, H., Vander Hoeven, Johan, and Nicholas Wolterstorff,

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(Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America, 1983). Includes some earlier

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Plantinga, Alvin, Warranted Christian Belief (NY: Oxford University Press,

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--, and Wolterstorff, Nicholas, ed., Faith

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--, Perceiving God : the Epistemology of Religious Experience (Ithaca:

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Helm, Paul, Belief Policies (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994). Frame’s review is in your SD.

--, The Varieties of Belief (NY: Humanities Press, 1973). Helm is a

Reformed Christian, well respected in secular philosophical circles.

--, ed., Objective Knowledge: A Christian Perspective (Leicester: IVP,

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High, Dallas M., New Essays on Religious Language (NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969). Reviewed by Frame in WTJ.

Holmer, Paul, The Grammar of Faith (San Francisco: Harper,

1978). Frame’s advisor at Yale. Sympathetic to Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein,

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See Frame’s review in DKG. Lindbeck is now known as the founder of

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Mavrodes, George, Belief in God (NY: Random House, 1970). Evangelical.

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Mitchell, Basil, ed., Faith and Logic (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957).

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(Notre Dame: UND Press, 1988).

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Peterson, Michael, et al., Reason and Religious Belief (NY and Oxford: Oxford

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Press, 1967).

‑‑, God, Freedom, and Evil (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,

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“Reformed epistemology,” but he considers them still valid as providing

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Questions (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

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Yandell, Keith, The Epistemology of Religious Experience (Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 1993).

**Postmodernism**

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Altizer, Thomas, et al., Deconstruction and Theology (NY: Crossroad, 1982). 14.95. 178. H.

Anderson, Walter Truett, Reality Isn’t What It Used to Be (San Francisco: Harper, 1990).

Burnham, Frederic B., ed., Postmodern Theology: Christian Faith in a Pluralist World (NY: Harper, 1989).

Cahoone, Lawrence, ed., From Modernism to Postmodernism: an Anthology (Cambridge. MA: Blackwell, 1996).

Derrida, Jacques, Writing and Difference (London and NY: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

Dockery, David S., ed., The Challenge of Postmodernism

(Wheaton: Victor Books, 1995). 428. p.

Edgar, William, “No News is Good News,” WTJ (Fall, 1995), 359-82. Good intro. by knowledgeable Van Tillian.

Grenz, Stanley J., A Primer on Postmodernism (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996). Probably the best general introduction to the subject, but I would be more critical of the postmodern movement.

Gunton, Colin, The One, the Three, and the Many: God, Creation, and the

Culture of Modernity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

Harvey, David, The Condition of Postmodernity (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

Lundin, Roger, The Culture of Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

Lyotard, Jean-Francois, The Postmodern Condition (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1984).

--, The Postmodern Explained (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).

McCallum, Dennis, ed., The Death of Truth (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996). Postmodernism.

McHale, Brian, Constructing Postmodernism (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1992).

Middleton, J. Richard, and Walsh, Brian J., Truth is Stranger than it Used to Be (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995). Christians who are more friendly than most toward some postmodern ideas.

Murphy, Nancey, and McClendon, James W., “Distinguishing Modern and Postmodern Theologies,” in Modern Theology 5:3 (April, 1989), 191-214.

Phillips, Timothy R., and Okholm, Dennis, Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995).

Taylor, Mark, Deconstructing Theology (NY: Crossroad, 1982).

Tilley, John, Postmodern Theologies (NY: Orbis, 1994).

**Course Objectives Related to MDiv Student Learning Outcomes**

Course: 2ST504, History of Philosophy and Christian Thought

Professor: John M. Frame

Campus: Orlando, FL

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| **MDiv Student Learning Outcomes** | | **Rubric**   * Strong * Moderate * Minimal * N/A | **Mini-Justification** |
| **Articulation**  **(oral & written)** | Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. | Strong | Discusses the forms of Christian and non-Christian thought through history, promoting understanding and articulation in all these ways. |
| **Scripture** | Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.) | Moderate | Not a course in exegesis, but the intent is to present and defend a biblical worldview as it applies to historical and modern circumstances. |
| **Reformed Theology** | Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards. | Moderate | Teaches a worldview that is distinctively Reformed, notes a number of significant Reformed thinkers. Doesn’t focus on Reformed standards. |
| **Sanctification** | Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification. | Moderate | This is certainly one goal in the course. I am trying to show that the biblical worldview is best for the intellect, will, and passions. |
| **Desire for Worldview** | Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. | Moderate | The worldview presented in the course is comprehensive, pertaining to all of life, and therefore motivating our greatest passion. |
| **Winsomely Reformed** | Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.) | Strong | Presents positively Christian thinkers of all traditions and tried to model a winsome approach to non-Christian thinkers. |
| **Preach** | Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm. | Moderate | Not a preaching course. But I hope the course will help students to understand better the needs of the world today and will help them to think and speak more clearly about those needs. |
| **Worship** | Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service. | N/A |  |
| **Shepherd** | Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide. | Moderate | The course ought to encourage concern for non-Christians, since it will present their epistemological situation as hopeless. I hope to present the material in a way that will model Christian maturity. |
| **Church/World** | Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues. | Moderate | The course focuses on a worldview held essentially in common by all Christians, and it seeks to show how differences of worldview affect all discussions of public issues. |

