

ACTS

SEMINARIES

Associated Canadian Theological Schools of Trinity Western University

CAP 560: Challenges to Christianity

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| Instructor: Paul Chamberlain, Ph.D. | E-mail: paul.chamberlain@twu.ca Phone: 604-888-7511 (3806) |
| Semester & Year: Spring 2019 3 credit hours | Course Dates: January 8 – April 12, 2019 Class days: February 18 to 21, 2019 Time: 6:00 pm – 9:30 pm |

Paul Chamberlain has taught at Trinity Western University since 1990. During part of that time He has also been involved with Ravi Zacharias International Ministries. His primary areas of teaching are Christian Apologetics, Ethics, Philosophy of Religion and Political Philosophy. He is the author of three books and a number of articles on social and apologetic issues. He currently serves as professor of Apologetics and Ethics at ACTS and is Director of the Institute for Christian Apologetics at ACTS.

This course will consist of regular class sessions from **February 18 to 21, 2019, 6:00 pm to 9:30 pm**, plus attending a minimum of three sessions at the Apologetics-Canada conference held in Abbotsford on March 1-2, 2019. As noted later in this syllabus, assignments will include writing reports on two of the lectures at the conference. There will be a small fee (reduced for members of this class) for attending the conference which you will pay at the door unless other arrangements are made.

I. Course Description

Apologetics is an academic discipline whose purpose is to make a case for the truth of Christian faith (positive apologetics) and also to defend Christian faith against charges of falsehood or inconsistency (negative apologetics). In this course we will turn our attention to negative apologetics. Our purpose will be to understand the most common obstacles to Christian faith raised both by its critics and also by sincere seekers, and to develop effective responses to them. Although we will pay some attention to historical objections our primary focus will be contemporary challenges.

Objections considered will include postmodern understandings of truth, reality, and textual interpretation and their implications for Christian truth, the exclusivity of Christianity, the problem of hell, the plight of the unevangelized and its implications for the justice of God, the problem of evil and suffering, the supposed atrocities of God in the Old Testament, alleged biblical contradictions, the problem of miracles, and the charge that Christianity is sexist.

II. Objectives

The purpose of this course is to:

1. Enable students to examine and test the truth and coherence of Christian faith,
2. Provide students with a deep understanding of the most difficult obstacles to faith raised by believers and nonbelievers alike in our world,
3. Demonstrate the necessity of finding and communicating responses to these obstacles to the faith of others,
4. Help students develop such responses,
5. Encourage and strengthen the faith of Christian students through this process,
6. Aid students in the task of communicating Christian faith with others.

III. Course Textbooks

Required Texts

Enroth, Ronald. *A Guide to New Religious Movements*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2005.

Kreeft, Peter. *Socrates Meets Jesus*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*. Macmillan Publishing Company, 1996.

Lewis, C.S. *Miracles*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2001.

Murray, Michael J. & Plantinga, Alvin. *Reason for the Hope Within*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999.

Note: A course pack with extra readings will be distributed to students on the first day of class.

Recommended for further reading:

Beckwith, Francis J., William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland, eds. *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity press, 2004.

Blomberg, Craig. *Can We Still Believe The Bible? An Evangelical Engagement with Contemporary Questions*.

Bush, L. Russ. *Classical Readings in Christian Apologetics: A.D. 100-1800*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Academie, 1983.

Chamberlain, Paul. *Why People Don't Believe: Confronting Seven Challenges to Christian Faith*. Grand Rapids: Baker books, 2011.

Chamberlain, Paul. *Can We Be Good Without God: A Conversation About Truth, Morality, Culture and a Few Other Things That Matter*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity press, 1996.

Clark, David K. *Dialogical Apologetics: A Person-Centered Approach to Christian Defense*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993.

Copan, Paul. *Is God a Moral Monster?* Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011.

Craig, William Lane. *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*. Third ed. Wheaton: Crossway, 2008.

Edgar, William. *Reasons of the Heart: Recovering Christian Persuasion*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.

Evans, C. Stephen. *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics and Philosophy of Religion*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2002.

Kreeft, Peter. *The Best Things in Life: A Twentieth-Century Socrates Looks at Power, Pleasure, Truth, and the Good Life*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1984.

Lewis, C. S. *Miracles*. New York: Macmillan, 1947.

Lewis, C. S. *The Problem of Pain*. New York: Macmillan, 1940.

Licona, Michael R. *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity press, 2011.

Moreland, J. P. *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987.

Moreland, J.P. and William Lane Craig. *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2003.

Pascal, Blaise. *Pensees*. Trans. A. J. Krailsheimer. Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1966.

Stackhouse, John G., Jr. *Humble Apologetics: Defending the Faith Today*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

IV. Course Assignments

1. Careful reading of all assigned readings
2. One in-class seminar presentation.....30%
3. One research essay.....40%
4. Two Apologetics-Canada conference reports.....30%

1. Research Essay

This essay will be a dialogue between two fictional characters. Using this dialogue format you will respond to one major challenge to Christian faith of your choice. It is hoped that the objection you choose will be one that is important to you and which you sense a need to be better prepared for. One character in the dialogue will represent and argue convincingly for the objection you wish to address. His job is to make the strongest case possible for this objection. The other character will represent your position and will respond to this challenge with the best responses available to you.

The following elements must be included somewhere in your dialogue:

- i. A clear statement of the objection being raised against Christian faith. The dialogue format provides a ready method for clarifying the objection,
- ii. Definitions of key terms and concepts for your issue,
- iii. A precise thesis statement setting out early on what you plan to demonstrate or prove through the dialogue,
- iv. The best reasons you know for the objection,
- v. Main steps in your argument as you respond to the objection.

Please be advised that your research for the essay must include interaction with Christian sources as well as non-Christian ones which are unsympathetic to your personal perspective. This will provide first-hand knowledge of opposing perspectives and the rationale given for them. It will also be indispensable in refining your own views and arguments. In your research into unsympathetic perspectives, be sure to include Internet sources along with other more traditional ways of research. The web sites of skeptic's societies, atheistic associations, humanist groups, etc., are especially helpful in this regard. These should be documented appropriately.

Essay length: 16-20 pages (4,000 – 5,000 words)

Value: 40%

Due Date: March 25, 2019

2. In-class Seminar Presentation

These are not intended to be prepared or even begun before the course begins. They will be prepared during the course and due at various times throughout the course as agreed upon at the first class session.

Each student will lead the class in one brief seminar on an assigned reading. The seminar presentation will consist of:

- A basic summary of the author's most important ideas,
- Your assessment of and response to these ideas. For example, hi-light points of agreement and disagreement with the author, draw out assumptions you find the author making, and give apologetic responses to them. Then respond to questions from your colleagues and professor.

Your presentation should be approximately half summary and half assessment. You will prepare a 5-6 page written document, in polished form, which you will read from and distribute to the class at the beginning of your presentation.

Value: 30%

3. **Apologetics-Canada conference reports**

Each student will write two 500-word reports which summarize and assess lectures given by two of the speakers at the 2018 Apologetics-Canada conference in Abbotsford, BC, being held on March 1-2, 2019. Students may choose any two speakers they wish and write a report on each. Please be aware that there is wide flexibility in how you construct your reports but each must include comments and assessment on the **themes, arguments, and assumptions** you find in the speakers you choose to report on. Students are also welcome to comment on other aspects such as style and skill of presentation, ability to hold ones interest, depth of knowledge of subject area, value of the lecture, etc.

Value: 15% x 2 = 30%

Grading Scale

| Letter Grade | Percentage | Grade Point |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
| A+ | 97-100 | 4.30 |
| A | 93-96 | 4.00 |
| A- | 90-92 | 3.70 |
| B+ | 87-89 | 3.30 |
| B | 83-86 | 3.00 |
| B- | 80-82 | 2.70 |
| C+ | 77-79 | 2.30 |
| C | 73-76 | 2.00 |
| C- | 70-72 | 1.70 |
| F | Below 70 | 0.00 |

V. Course Lecture & Reading Schedule

- Feb. 18:** Introductory lecture;
 Principles for responding to challenges;
 Conversing with atheists and agnostics, *Murray* 116 – 134
 Religious Pluralism and Christian Exclusivity, Kreeft, *Socrates* 77-119
- Feb. 19:** Religion and Violence, *Dawkins/Harris* course pack (entire document)
 Seminar: Course pack 11-49 (Harris) _____
 Seminar: Course pack 60-79 (Harris) _____
 Seminar: Course pack 80-108 (Harris) _____
- Feb. 20:** Evil and Suffering & the God of the Old Testament, *Murray* 76-115
 Seminar: Course pack 237-253 (Dawkins) _____
 Seminar: Course pack 254-278 (Dawkins) _____
- Feb. 21:** Hell and the plight of the unevangelized, *Murray* 287-317
 Seminar: *Murray* 287-302 _____
 Seminar: *Murray* 303-317 _____
 Seminar: Enroth _____
 Seminar: Enroth _____
 Jesus, God, and Miracles: Lewis *Miracles* ch. 1-3, 8, 12-13 & *Murray* p. 345-374
 Seminar: Lewis, *Miracles* ch. 1-3, 8 _____
 Seminar: Lewis, *Miracles* ch. 12-13 _____
 Seminar: *Murray* p. 345-362 _____
 Seminar: *Murray* p. 363-374 _____
- Mar 1-2:** Attend Apologetics-Canada conference in Abbotsford, BC & write 2 reports as per syllabus instructions.

Supplement: Important Academic Notes from ACTS

Web Support – Student Portal <https://students.twu.ca>

All students at TWU have a TWUPass username and password. This is determined at the time of an online application or can be managed through the computing services help desk or the link on the student portal. Your student email account is also available through this student portal and is vital for communication about grades, account statements, lost passwords, sign-up instructions, etc. If you do not know your account or password, there is a link at the login area called “I forgot my password.” When you click on that link, you will be walked through the process of retrieving your account information.

Campus Closure

In the event of deteriorating weather conditions or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to the following radio stations: CKNW (980 AM), CKWX (1130 AM), STAR FM (107.1 FM), PRAISE (106.5 FM) and KARI (550 AM). As well, an announcement will be placed on the University’s campus closure notification message box (604.513.2147) and on the front page of the University’s website (<http://www.twu.ca> – also see <http://www.twu.ca/conditions> for more details).

An initial announcement regarding the status of the campus and cancellation of classes will be made at 6:00 a.m. and will cover all classes that begin before 1:00 p.m. A second announcement pertaining to classes that begin between 1:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. will be made at 11:00 a.m. A third announcement pertaining to classes that begin after 5:00 p.m. will be made at 3:00 p.m.

Paper Formatting

Students need to adhere to Turabian Notes (Bibliography) format except in counselling courses, for which APA format is used, and in CanIL courses.

Students are strongly encouraged to use EndNote Basic/Web (to create an account or log in, go to: <http://libguides.twu.ca/EndNote/>) as their bibliographical manager and as a tool for formatting bibliographies. It is free. The link to EndNote from the library home page provides detailed instructions. Students will need to be aware that it is necessary to “clean up” most bibliographies generated by this program. Students are encouraged to view the documents on the following websites for format samples:

http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html or www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/. In EndNote Basic/Web the available formatting styles are those of Turabian Bibliography, and APA 6th edition. For Turabian, there are two formats – Notes (Bibliography) and Reference List (a short format citation style). ACTS uses the Notes (Bibliography) format, not Reference List.

Counselling students are expected to purchase the APA Publications Manual. More information may be found at the following website: <http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html>.

For free online programs that will enable students to create properly formatted bibliography citations, go to <http://www.eturabian.com/turabian/index.html> or <http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/> (“Chicago” stands for “Turabian”).

CANIL students should consult with their own faculty on specific requirements.

Please check with your professor to find out which style he/she recommends you use!!

Course Evaluations

Course evaluations are important for improving teaching outcomes, faculty professional development, and the student learning context. Completion of course evaluations is, therefore, considered to be a course expectation. Professors will schedule time for students to fill out online course evaluations (20-30 minutes) on their personal laptops or a collegium computer during the last scheduled class of the semester. Students who are absent that day or who are otherwise unable to complete the online course evaluation during the last class will be expected to make every effort to do so by the last day of exams. Information about how to access online evaluation forms will be provided to the faculty and students prior to the last week of classes by the ACTS Administration.

Research Ethics

Please note that all research projects involving human participants undertaken by members of the TWU university community (including projects done by ACTS students to satisfy course or degree requirements) **MUST** be approved by the Trinity Western University Research Ethics Board. Information and forms may be found at <http://www.twu.ca/research/research/research-ethics/default.html>. Those needing additional clarification may contact the ACTS Academic Dean’s office. Please allow at least three (3) weeks from the date of submission for a review of the application.

Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism at TWU

Christian scholars at TWU regard academic integrity to be a core value. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and are required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship. This means that all members of the TWU academic community must avoid all forms of plagiarism and cheating in scholarly work. ACTS uses the TWU Student Handbook as a guide for our seminary students. Though some features in the handbook are focused on the university’s undergraduate population, it provides the essential student life information for ACTS students as well. It can be found online at: <http://www.twu.ca/studenthandbook/>.

Learning what constitutes plagiarism and avoiding it is the student’s responsibility. An excellent resource in this regard has been prepared by TWU Librarian William Badke and is freely available for download (PPT file) or can be viewed in flash (self-running) tutorials of different lengths:

<http://williambadke.com/plagiarism.ppt>

<http://williambadke.com/Plagiarism.swf> (14 minute flash tutorial)

http://williambadke.com/Plagiarism_Short.swf (8 minute flash tutorial)

Equity of Access

Students with disabilities who need assistance are encouraged to contact the Equity of Access Office upon admission to TWU to discuss their specific needs. All disabilities must be recently documented by an appropriately certified professional and such documentation should include a statement regarding the educational impact of the disability along with recommended accommodations. Within the first two weeks of the semester, students must meet with their professors to agree on accommodations appropriate to each class. Students should follow the steps detailed by the Equity of Access Office outlined on the TWU website at <http://twu.ca/life/wellness/learningresources/disabilities-and-equity-of-access/steps-to-attaining-disability-services.html>.

Policy Information and Student Concerns

Information on academic and community life policies and procedures that affect students can be found in the ACTS *Academic Catalogue*, which is available on the ACTS website (www.actsseminaries.com) under the *Academics* tab. Students who wish to communicate concerns or to lodge academic appeals are welcome to contact the appropriate faculty or staff member directly, or to fill out and submit the relevant Concerns & Grievances or Appeals form found on the *Files & Forms* page of the *Current Students* section of the ACTS Website.

Appendix: Live-Streamed Courses

A live-streamed course makes it possible for students at a distance to observe and also to participate interactively with an on-campus class in real time. Those who attend a class by live-streaming see and hear the instructor. They can watch class media presentations (e.g. PowerPoint) on their computer screens. They can follow class discussions, posing questions and making comments of their own. They can join in group discussions with other learners when the class breaks into smaller groups. Through internet-based simulcast, they are able to share all the essential elements of the formal class experience with those who attend class in person.

Unless otherwise stated in the syllabus, live-streaming students will do the same course assignments and follow the same course schedule as on-campus students.

Requirements for Participating in a Live-streamed Course

- Because the number of live-stream participants to a course is limited, ***students must receive faculty permission prior to the beginning of the course*** in order to participate through live-streaming.
- ***Students must participate in classes in real-time***, as they would if they were attending class in person. For example, those who take a live-streamed course that meets on Thursday mornings will be expected to be in that class virtually, or physically, when that class meets. (A live-streaming student who is in the area and able may attend class in person when possible if he/she wishes.)

ACTS has the capacity to record live-streamed courses for later viewing, but we do not record them as a matter of routine. If it is difficult for students to participate in a class session, they may ask the instructor for permission to watch recorded versions of the class. This will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

- Participation in a course through live-streaming ***requires a fast and consistent internet connection (ADSL or cable), a reasonably up-to-date computer system, a webcam, and a quality headset with a microphone***. Students must familiarize themselves with the live-streaming software platform and ensure that their link, webcam, and headset are working properly before the first class session.

Please arrange for a practice run on the system with the instructor prior to class, especially if this is your first live-stream course. This can be arranged by email.

- As much as possible, ***be sure you are fully ready for each class session before the class begins***. To the degree that logging in and connecting with the system can be done from your end, there is some flexibility for you to “arrive” as you are able. But testing the system and other logistics that require faculty assistance should be done before class starts. The instructor will do his/her best to ensure that everything is in place for the live-stream session; but he/she cannot allow live-stream setup to significantly delay or interfere with the smooth flow of the class session for other students once class begins.

- Arrange a backup plan with your instructor in case of system failure. ACTS uses high-caliber, current equipment and communication platforms for live-streaming, but hardware and internet connections are not infallible and do occasionally fail. Your instructor cannot stop class in order to troubleshoot and resolve technical problems in the unlikely event that these occur. To minimize possible disruption in the case of a loss of connection:
 - Provide email, text, or phone contact information so that he/she can contact you at the next natural break in the class.
 - Discuss the possibility of a back-up link to the class in case of system failure. (E.g.: a skype or phone link if the Webex link fails.)
 - Have a plan for follow-up contact with the instructor and/or with a fellow student to fill any gaps in your interaction with the class (as you would if you had to miss a class for other reasons).

Note that under the policy guidelines of our accrediting body, the Association of Theological Schools, live-stream courses are classified as “distance” education and are subject to the normal policies, limitations, and expectations that apply to distance courses. See the ACTS academic catalogue, or consult with the Academic Program Advisor or your Program Chair if you have any questions about the way that distance courses operate within your degree program.