



TYNDALE

• SEMINARY •

Course Syllabus

Winter 2014

THEO 0539

Philosophy for Understanding Theology

Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m.

Instructor: Professor Victor Shepherd

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Office Hours: as posted

Mailboxes: Every student is responsible for information communicated through the student mailboxes. A mailbox directory is posted beside the mailboxes.

To access your course material, please go to <http://mytyndale.ca>. Course emails will be sent to your @MyTyndale.ca e-mail account. For information how to access and forward emails to your personal account, see <http://www.tyndale.ca/it/live-at-edu>.

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course endeavours to acquaint students with the history of philosophy from the pre-Socratics to modernity, especially where the history of thought intersects theology. The course seeks to inform students of the Western world's intellectual (and, to less extent, the social and political) development, and to indicate where this development has influenced theological understanding and articulation even where theologians may not have been aware of philosophy's "encroachment."

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Since it has been argued (Hans Urs von Balthasar) that philosophy is most fruitful when it deliberately engages theology – i.e., philosophy that ignores theology thereby impoverishes itself – students will be able to grasp the importance of a profound, protracted dialogue between the two disciplines.

At the end of this course students will be able to:

- appreciate the importance of philosophical study for Christian theology;
- apply philosophy to elucidate certain problem areas of theology;
- assess philosophy as a means to fulfill the commandment to love God with our mind;
- demonstrate how philosophy can expose Christian declensions and distortions we might otherwise overlook;
- avoid premature simplicity that undervalues legitimate intellectual difficulties with the Christian faith.

- should be measurable by means of the methods of evaluation below

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. REQUIRED TEXTS:

Allen, Diogenes, and Eric O. Springsted. *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*. Second edition. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007.

Allen, Diogenes, and Eric O. Springsted, eds. *Primary Readings in Philosophy for Understanding Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997.

B. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Note: All written material may be submitted in French.

Assignments

Students will submit three papers, approximately 2000 words each, that probe the intersection of philosophy and theology. For instance, a paper on Plato's theory of knowledge and its relation to virtue would probe the boundary between his understanding and that of biblical thought on such matters as the possibility and actuality of our knowledge of God, the role of the Holy Spirit, the difference between virtue as a natural phenomenon engendered by philosophical wisdom and grace-facilitated obedience to the living God.

The first paper is to be submitted by **the conclusion of class, 18 February**, and is to discuss and reflect critically on text and lecture materials of any **one** class session from Plato to Aquinas.

The second paper is to be submitted by **the conclusion of class, 31 March**, and is to discuss and reflect critically on text and lecture materials of any **one** class session from "The Beginnings of the Modern World..." to Hegel.

The third paper is to be submitted by the conclusion of class, **15 April**, and is to discuss and reflect critically on text and lecture materials of any **one** class session from Kierkegaard to Flew.

Note 1: The mark on late papers will be reduced by 5% per day.

Note 2: The instructor is not permitted to accept papers after the end of the semester.

Evaluation

Each paper: 33.33 %.

Students are expected to appear punctually and attend all classes.

C. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

For proper citation style, consult the [Chicago-Style Quick Guide](#) (Tyndale e-resource) or the full edition of the [Chicago Manual of Style Online](#), especially [ch. 14](#). For citing scripture texts, refer to sections [10.46 to 10.51](#) and [14.253 to 14.254](#).

Academic Integrity

Integrity in academic work is required of all our students. Academic dishonesty is any breach of this integrity, and includes such practices as cheating (the use of unauthorized material on tests and examinations), submitting the same work for different classes without permission of the instructors; using false information (including false references to secondary sources) in an assignment; improper or unacknowledged collaboration with other students, and plagiarism. Tyndale University College & Seminary takes seriously its responsibility to uphold academic integrity, and to penalize academic dishonesty.

Students should consult the current Academic Calendar for academic polices on Academic Honesty, Gender Inclusive Language in Written Assignments, Late Papers and Extensions, Return of Assignments, and Grading System. The Academic Calendar is posted at <http://tyndale.ca/registrar>.

D. SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Evaluation is based upon the completion of the following assignments

Paper #1 (one class session from Plato to Aquinas)	33.3 %
Paper #2 (one class session from Modern to Hegel)	33.3 %
Paper #3 (one class session from Kierkegaard to Flew)	33.3 %
Total Grade	100 %

IV. COURSE SCHEDULE, CONTENT AND REQUIRED READINGS

Note: "T" = text (Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*)

"R" = readings (Allen and Springsted, *Primary Readings in Phil. for Und. Theol.*)

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
Jan. 14	Introductory Lecture: "Why Should a Christian Study Philosophy?" "What is Philosophy?"	
Jan. 21	Plato I	T: Chapt. 1 R: 16-38
Jan. 28	Plato II	T: Chapt. 2 R: 1-15
Feb. 4	Aristotle	T: Chapt. 4, plus 77-81 R: 59-66
Feb. 11	Aquinas	T: Chapt. 6 R: 92-98
Feb. 18	The Beginnings of the Modern World: Nominalism, Humanism, The Scientific Revolution	T: Chapt. 7 (plus article by Emil Fackenheim) 1st paper due
Feb. 25	Hume	T: 143-153 R: 153-171
Mar. 4	Kant	T: Chapt. 9 R: 172-185
<i>Mar. 11</i>		<i>No Class (Reading Week)</i>
Mar. 18	Hegel	T: Chapt. 10 R: 210-218
Mar. 25	Kierkegaard	T: Chapt. 10 R: 219-227 2nd paper due
Apr. 1	Marx	T: Chapt. 10 R: 244-247
Apr. 8	Flew and positivism	T: 211, last par.- 223 first par. R: 281-284
Apr. 15	Final paper must be submitted by 11:30 a.m.	3rd paper due

V. BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Select Bibliography

Useful one-volume surveys are

Kenny, Anthony. *A Brief History of Western Philosophy*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997.

Russell, Bertrand. *History of Western Philosophy*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007.

A multi-volume work, always reliable, whose scope is the same but gives much more detail, is:

Copleston, Frederick. *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 1-11. New York: Image, 1946 -.

A useful book, written from the standpoint of a Christian philosopher, indicating the role of reason in several different schools of philosophy is:

Evans, C. Stephen. *Faith Beyond Reason*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998.

A highly recommended book on the philosophy of thinking (i.e., thinking about thinking) is:

Arendt, Hannah. *The Life of the Mind*. Vol 1-2. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981.

(This book, however, presupposes considerable familiarity with philosophy.)

For books on specific topics in the course please see the instructor.