



**TYNDALE**  
University College

**THEO 0539**  
**Philosophy for Understanding Theology**  
**Winter 2012**  
**Wednesdays 8:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.**

**Instructor:** The Reverend Dr. Victor Shepherd  
**Office:** 2011 (Seminary)  
**Phone:** 416 226 6620 ext. 6726  
**E-mail:** vshep@tyndale.ca  
**Office Hours:** as posted

**Commuter Hotline:** 416-226-6620 ext. 2187

Class cancellations due to inclement weather or illness will be announced/posted on the commuter hotline.

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

## **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."

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.

## **II. LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Students will be helped to come to terms with the following issues:

- Why should a Christian study philosophy?

- Can philosophy elucidate problem areas in theology?
- Is philosophy an aspect of that “world” which Christian mission engages?
- Can philosophy “keep theology students honest” by exposing facile and premature theological assertions?
- Does philosophy help expose the cultural context in which all theology is written?
- How does philosophy help us fulfil the commandment to love God with our mind? How does philosophy assist in exposing Christian declensions and distortions we might otherwise overlook?
- Can philosophy help us avoid a premature simplicity that undervalues legitimate intellectual difficulties with the Christian faith?

Fulfillment of these learning outcomes should be measurable by means of the methods of evaluation below.

### III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

#### A. REQUIRED TEXTS:

Diogenes Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1985/2007.

Diogenes Allen and Eric O. Springsted (eds.), *Primary Readings in Philosophy for Understanding Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992.

#### B. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING:

##### [1] Papers (2 X 33% = 66%)

Students will submit two 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, , and is to discuss and reflect critically on text and lecture materials of any one class session from the beginning of the course to this point.

The second paper is to be submitted by the conclusion of the examination, December 16, 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 Flew and positivism.

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.

[2] **Final Examination** (34%)

### C. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

Students should consult the current [Academic Calendar](#) for academic policies on Academic Honesty, Gender Inclusive Language in Written Assignments, issues regarding Extensions, Return of Assignments, and Grading System.

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.

### D. SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Major paper 1	33 %
Major paper 2	33 %
Final examination	34 %
<b>Total Grade</b>	100 %

Students are expected to appear punctually and attend all classes.

## 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.*)

Jan. 11	Introductory Lecture: "What is Philosophy?" "Why Should a Christian Study Philosophy?"
Jan. 18	Plato I T: 15-37 R: 16-38
Jan. 25	Plato II T: 39-59 R: 1-15
Feb. 1	Cynics and Stoics T: 61-70

Feb. 8	Aristotle	T: chapt. 4, plus 107-110
Feb. 15	Aquinas	T: chapt. 6 R: 59-66
Feb. 22	The Beginnings of the Modern World: Nominalism, Humanism, The Scientific Revolution	T: chapt. 7 (plus article by Emil Fackenheim)
Feb. 29	Hume	T: 189-202 R: 153-171
Mar. 7	Kant	T: chapt. 9 R: 172-185
Mar. 14	<i>Reading Week – No Class</i>	
Mar. 21	Hegel	T: chapt. 10 R: 210-218
Mar. 28	Kierkegaard	T: chapt. 10 R: 219-227
Apr. 4	Marx	T: chapt. 10 R: 244-247
Apr. 11	Flew and positivism	T: chapt. 10 R: 281-284
Apr. 18	<i>Final Examination</i>	

## V. SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Useful one-volume surveys are

Anthony Kenny, *A Brief History of Western Philosophy*

Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*

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

Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*

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

C. Stephen Evans, *Faith Beyond Reason*

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

Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*

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

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