

Christian Beliefs and Convictions (THE3003)
School of Theology and Philosophy
Mount Vernon Nazarene University
Syllabus – Summer 2013

Title: THE3003—Christian Beliefs & Convictions
Credit: Three (3) semester hours
Schedule: May 16-June 29, 2013
Instructor: Matt Price, Ph.D., Matt.Price@mvnu.edu
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Course Description

This course is a study of the essential Christian doctrines and their contemporary significance. We will look at the history, sources, and norms of Christian beliefs as well as expose students to current discussions in Christian theology. It also seeks to give students the tools necessary to think critically and constructively about what it means to be a disciple of Christ in today's world.

Students are expected to produce as much work online as would be the case if they were attending regular on-campus class sessions. Weekly discussion forums are required as well as other weekly assignments, such as outlined below. In a distance online course all work is submitted online and on time. Online courses place a great deal of responsibility directly on the students for weekly work submission. No late work is accepted. The pace of an online course is normally more than students expect if they have never taken an online course. Make sure to check the discussion forum on a daily basis. If you have any questions regarding the nature of this course or how to meet its requirements, please contact the professor.

Prerequisites: BIB1014G or BIB1003G and BIB1013G

Course Outcomes

This course is designed to help the student meet the following objectives:

- Understand the history and development of central Christian beliefs, gaining familiarity with the beliefs of the Wesleyan-Arminian holiness tradition.
- Recognize the integral connection between faith and practice.
- Become familiar with contemporary issues in Christian theology and understand what is at stake on various sides of theological debates.
- Discover resources helpful in discerning what it means to be a disciple of Christ in today's world.

Course Textbooks

Required Textbooks

Lodahl, Michael. *The Story of God: A Narrative Theology*. 2nd edition. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2008. (ISBN: ISBN: 9780834123939; Library: BT83.78.L63). 256 pages.

Nouwen, Henri J.M. *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life*. New York: Doubleday, 1986. (ISBN: 0-385-23682-4; Library: BX250.2N676). 165 pages.

Olson, Roger E. *Questions to All Your Answers: The Journey from Folk Religion to Examined Faith*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2007. (ISBN: 978-0-310-28758-2; Library: BT1103.O47). 189 pages.

Course Requirements

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

(all weekly assignments are due by 8:00 p.m. on due date)

- 1. Faithful class participation through Attendance Posts on the Discussion Forums.** The learning objectives for this course depend on reading the supporting material and the online class discussions of the practical aspects of the theological heritage of the Christian faith, as well as the universal church of Jesus Christ and its mission in the world. Students and the professor will engage in a dynamic interchange of ideas and experience which depends on the participation of students in each week of the course. Students will self-report the number of days and posts they made each week. You will have three grace days in which you will not need to post. You can claim these by making a note of it in your weekly Reading Reflection when reporting attendance.

NOTE: Attendance is defined as two attendance posts on the discussion forum on at least five (5) days for every week beginning with Monday at 12:00 a.m. and ending Sunday at 11:59 p.m. Posts with a Monday time stamp will count for the following week. The time stamp on the post will be the official time of posting. You have three grace days during the whole six weeks. You do not have to post on a grace day. These days are for you to choose.

Attendance posts are a minimum of 100 words. They are substantial, make reference to the readings, written lectures, or presentations; they can be general comments, responses, questions, reflections, connections made to other students' posts. A minimum of six of the 10 posts must be original (and not replies to others) in order to count for each week's attendance. Your reading questions, reading question responses, and biweekly reflection will count as one of your daily attendance posts. You may want to post more than this minimum requirement as discussion begins to flow, though your extra posts (beyond 10) can be less than the required word count. Also put the word count in parentheses at the end of a post or assignment Example: **(Word count: 313)** Make sense? If not, email me for clarification.

- 2. Weekly Reading Questions (Due each Wednesday).** Each week you will submit two questions from the readings. They should be open-ended, such as those beginning with beginning with 5 Ws and H (Who, What, Why, When, Where, and How). Or phrases like "In what way . . ." / "Explain this concept to a typical . . ." / "Compare and contrast . . ." Your questions should be able to be answered objectively and refer directly to the chapter title and/or authors to guide student responses.
- 3. Weekly Reading Question Responses, course outcomes 1, 3 (Due each Friday).** Each Wednesday you will submit two questions based on the reading assignment. Choose **one (1) question from the Reading Questions submitted by students and submit a 250-word response to the question** on the discussion board. Also, you will submit a **250-word response to one (1) of the professor's questions** found in the Weekly Schedule. Submit to the appropriate forum on Moodle.
- 4. Reading Reflection, course outcomes 1, 2. (Due biweekly on Saturday, submit no earlier than Friday).** The learning objectives for this course depend on reading the supporting material and the online class discussions on various course-related topics. Students and the professor will engage in a dynamic interchange of ideas which depends on everyone's participation during the course. To summarize your thoughts and learning on a weekly basis, you will submit responses to the questions on the Weekly Reflection forum as well as self-report the percentage of assigned reading, number of days attended and number of posts made each week. **The word count for a Course Reflection is 850-1000 words.**

5.

COURSE PROJECTS

(all course projects are due by **11:59 p.m.** on due date)

6. **Student Autobiography, course outcome 1 (Due on Monday of Week 1).** Follow the directions and outline given in Moodle for this assignment. Tell us about yourself: your family, the house/neighborhood/town you grew up in, any hobbies you enjoy, why you chose major/degree program, and what you hope to gain from this course. Save a personal copy in a Word document before pasting it within the discussion forum. You need to respond to every student's autobiography with a brief word of encouragement and greeting. All of these response posts will count for two of the required attendance posts for the first week.

7. **Film & Faith Reflection Paper, course outcomes 3, 4 (Due Saturday of Week 3).** Watch a film on the list provided. Find seven theological themes, issues, or questions that are raised by the film. Using the course reading and lectures as a guide, write a 500-word reflection on how this film depicts or discourages a Christian view of these themes, issues, or questions. Give specific citations with page numbers and specific examples from the film. Submit to the appropriate place in Moodle.

Keeping the Faith (PG-13, 128 min, 2000)

Chocolat (PG-13, 121 minutes, 2000)

Contact (PG, 153 minutes, 1997)

Les Misérables (PG-13, 158, 2012)

Life of Pi (PG, 123 min, 2012)

The Adjustment Bureau (PG-13, 106 min, 2011)

E.T. (PG, 115 minutes, 1982)

The Mission (PG, 126 minutes, 1986)

O Brother Where Art Thou? (PG-13, 107 minutes, 2000)

Surrogates (PG-13, 90 minutes, 2009)

Of Gods and Men (R,122 minutes, 2010)

The Apostle (PG-13, 134 minutes, 1997)

The Book of Eli (R, 118 minutes, 2010)

8. **Church Visit Report, course outcomes 1, 4 (Due Saturday of Week 5 but will accept until Sunday night).** Attend a service at a church unlike the one you belong to or attend regularly. It does not matter if you do not regularly attend church, just choose one that piques your curiosity. If you are Protestant, consider attending a Catholic or Orthodox church. If you are Baptist, consider a Pentecostal service. You could also choose to attend a church with a particular ethnic emphasis, such as a Latino or Asian church. Just choose something different than what you are used to. Take specific and detailed notes on your observations so you can respond to the following questions:

- **Identify the church location, denomination, date and time of the service.**
- **Describe similarities and differences in how people experience worship in this setting compared to what you are used to.**
- **In what ways was the worship service what you expected (or not)?**
- **What beliefs presented or discussed in the reading or course materials did you recognize in the music, singing, art, prayers, and preaching?**
- **What would you say to someone looking for a church that would encourage them to attend this worship service?**

Submit a 1000-word report with responses to the questions on the appropriate assignment link in Moodle.

9. **Book Reflection on *Reaching Out* by Henri Nouwen, course outcomes 2, 4 (Due on Wednesday of Week 6).** For *Reaching Out*, students will write a 1000 word book reflection.

Be sure to cite the book often as well as other course readings throughout your reflection. Think of the reflection paper as a conversation between your life and the ideas encountered in the book.

Submit as a TurnItIn assignment in Moodle, name the file: THE3003 Book Reflection

YourLastNameFirstName

You will need to reflect on what Nouwen means by reaching out to the innermost self, to fellow human beings, and to God. Your paper should have three sections:

Name:
THE3003 Summer Session
Date:
Book Reflection—*Reaching Out* by Henri Nouwen

- (1) **Summary (100 words)** -- What is this book about? What are some unique characteristics about the author? Why do you think the author wrote the book?
- (2) **Critique (600 words)** – What does this book say specifically about solitude? In what ways do you agree or disagree? How has Nouwen helped you understand solitude? What does this book say specifically about hospitality? In what ways do you agree or disagree? How has Nouwen helped you understand hospitality? What does this book say specifically about prayer? In what ways do you agree or disagree? How has Nouwen helped you understand prayer?
- (3) **Application (300 words)**. *In what ways has Nouwen challenged your previous thinking about yourself, others, and God? What are some connections between the course presentations, discussions and readings and what you've read from Nouwen? How might you change your mind and possibly your life in response to what you've read? How could you apply Nouwen's ideas into your personal and professional life?*

Course Evaluation

The number of points accumulated during the semester determines the final grade.

Assignments	Points	Learning Hrs
Attendance posts 10 pts (2 posts x 5 days x 6 weeks) (2 posts x 5 days = 10 posts minimum per week); NOTE: Student Autobiography counts as two posts for week one.	(-25 for each absence)	30
Assigned Reading & Reading Questions (601pp & Moodle articles & videos) 5 pts x 5 weeks	25	50
Reading Question Responses (50 pts per week: 25 pts for students' questions & 25 pts for the professor's question) 50 pts x 5 weeks	250	15
Course Reflection Papers (100 pts x 3)	300	12
Student Autobiography	25	4
Faith and Film Reflection Paper	125	7
Church Visit Report	125	9
Book Reflection on <i>Reaching Out</i> by Nouwen	150	9
Total	1000	136

A 1000-900 B 899-800 C 799-700 D 699-600 F 599>

MVNU does not recognize A+ or D-

One course learning hour equals . . .

- 20 pages of reading (3000 level) (300 page book = 15 course work hours)
- 2 pages of writing (500 words) (add one hour of research for every research page written, no extra hours added for reflection papers)
- 1 minute of video
- 3 minutes of presentation with visual aids (powerpoint, prezi, object lesson, skit, illustration, dialogue, etc.)
- 60 minutes of face-to-face class time
- 60 minutes of research or exam study time
- 60 minutes of exam time
- All scheduled time spent in seminars/conferences/field trips excluding travel time

Course Policies:

1. **Distance classroom attendance and participation** is required by attending class and checking daily on Moodle for current announcements, assignments, and discussion board. **The minimum attendance requirement is making two significant and substantial posts of 100 words or more on at least five days of each week of class (10 posts per week). Look at Course Schedule for exact requirements. The posts are responses to the reading or to another student's post. Posting assignments does not count toward attendance.** Remember good online etiquette when posting. You may find MVNU's excused absence policy in the handbook which the professor will follow and uphold.
2. **Late work will automatically lose 10% of the possible points per school day (M to F) that it is late. It should be posted by the given time on the due date unless otherwise noted.**
3. **Use of Moodle the online course management system** is required. All announcements, writing assignments, and other information will be posted electronically. Students should also consider opening a Facebook, Twitter, and iTunes account to facilitate communication in this course.
4. **The professor is interested in and committed to the students' success in the course.** Any questions about assignments, class preparation, research, or anything else which the professor can do to help the student, please email, call, or post to the News Forum in Moodle. During an online course, I commit to a response within 12 hours. I will be available and am eager to help you with whatever you need to be a good student and complete person.
5. **Students who qualify for and desire accommodations in this course due to a disability**, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992, must follow the Disability Services Policies and Procedures as put forth by the office of Academic Support. The guidelines may be obtained in hard copy at the Academic Support office or in electronic form at: <http://www.mvnu.edu/academics/services/dservices.html>. Call David Leedy, Disability Services Coordinator (740) 397-9000 extension 4284 for further information.
6. **Academic Integrity:** If you are observed cheating, actively or passively, or plagiarizing, you will be asked to meet with the instructor. The instructor reserves the right to give a zero for that specific assignment or exam, and you could be dropped from the course.

Getting Started

- **Explore the course site on Moodle.** Course Information is where to find the syllabus and Weekly Schedules. Course Documents is where to find weekly folders with lectures, videos, and course project TurnItIn links. Discussion Board forum is where you will post discussion posts, weekly assignments, and course projects.
- **Submit your Student Autobiography on the Discussion Board by the first Monday night.** Take time to read and respond to each other's bios. Welcome each other to class by leaving a note of encouragement or something you share in common.
- **Review all of the assignments and put due dates into your calendar.**
- **It might be a good idea to save all assignments and posts submitted to Moodle in a folder on your computer or an online storage site like Dropbox.**
- **Make sure you have a backup plan** if you run into problems with the Internet connection or your computer, like power outages or while traveling. I've traveled across the United States while working. I know it's possible to find an internet connection in the least likely places.
- **Get a head start on your reading assignments for Week One.**

Course Schedule

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			MAY 16	MAY 17	MAY 18
			Gather books by this date to begin reading	Sign into Moodle to explore the course	If you have questions, contact the professor
MAY 20	MAY 21	MAY 22	MAY 23	MAY 24	MAY 25
First Posts x 2 Due Today Wk 1	Spiritual Autobiography due	Posts x 2	Posts x 2 Reading Questions Due (an extra day is given this first week)	Posts x 2 Reading Question Responses Due	
MAY 27	MAY 28	MAY 29	MAY 30	MAY 31	JUNE 1
Memorial Day No posts required Wk 2	Posts x 2	Posts x 2 Reading Questions Due	Posts x 2	Posts x 2 Reading Question Responses Due	Posts x 2 Course Reflection Due
JUNE 3	JUNE 4	JUNE 5	JUNE 6	JUNE 7	JUNE 8
Posts x 2 Wk 3	Posts x 2	Posts x 2 Reading Questions Due	Posts x 2	Posts x 2 Reading Question Responses Due	Film & Faith Reflection Paper Due
JUNE 10	JUNE 11	JUNE 12	JUNE 13	JUNE 14	JUNE 15
Posts x 2 Wk 4	Posts x 2	Posts x 2 Reading Questions Due	Posts x 2	Posts x 2 Reading Question Responses Due	Course Reflection Due
JUNE 17	JUNE 18	JUNE 19	JUNE 20	JUNE 21	JUNE 22
Posts x 2 Wk 5	Posts x 2	Posts x 2 Reading Questions Due	Posts x 2	Posts x 2 Reading Question Responses Due	Church Visit Report Due (will accept until Sunday night June 23)
JUNE 24	JUNE 25	JUNE 26	JUNE 27	JUNE 28	JUNE 29
Posts x 2 Wk 6	Posts x 2	Posts x 2 Nouwen Book Reflection Paper Due	Posts x 2	Posts x 2	Final Course Reflection Due