

ASSOCIATED CANADIAN THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS**CAP 603: Reliability of Scripture****Fall 2009****Instructor: Paul Chamberlain, Ph.D.****3 semester hours****Time: Wednesday 8:30 a.m. – 11:10 a.m.****E-mail address: paul.chamberlain@twu.ca**

Paul Chamberlain holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from Marquette university (1990) and an M.Div. from Trinity International university (1981). He 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 have been 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, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion at ACTS and is Director of the Institute for Christian Apologetics at ACTS.

Course Description

Christians have been defined for centuries as people of the book. Much of who we are is inexorably bound up with our scriptures. We see the Bible as canon, a measuring stick by which we evaluate our doctrines and behavior. We hold that the Bible was preserved throughout history by the providential hand of God and remains a faithful witness to the life of Christ and the character of God, infallible in all matters of faith and practice. But on what basis do we hold this confidence? How can we be sure that the Bible is reliable? In this course we will examine the foundation for the reliability of Scripture and also interact with critics of biblical reliability both within and without the church. Our constant goal will be to establish confidence in the scriptures as reliable, true, and trustworthy for all time.

Course Objectives

The purpose of this course is to:

1. introduce students to a number of key authors on the topic of scriptural reliability, including both those who hold a high view of scripture and those who do not,
2. enable students to examine the foundation for the truth and coherence of scripture,
3. provide students with a deep understanding of many challenges to biblical reliability,
4. begin the process of finding and communicating responses to these challenges,
5. develop and deepen a respect for the Bible within students.

Required Texts

Barnett, Paul. *Is the New Testament Reliable?* 2nd ed. Downers Grove: Intersity press, 2005.

Blomberg, Craig. *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*. Downers Grove: Intersity press, 1987.

Blomberg, Craig. *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel*. Downers Grove: Intersity press, 2002.

Bock, Darrell L. *Can I Trust the Bible? Defending the Bible's Reliability*. Atlanta: RZIM Critical Concerns Series, 2001.

Bock, Darrell L. *The Missing Gospels: Unearthing the Truth Behind Alternative Christianities*, Nashville: Nashville, 2006.

Swinburne, Richard, *The Resurrection of God Incarnate*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003.

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: Intersity press, 2004.

Bruce, F.F., *New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

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

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

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: Intersity Press, 2002.

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

Kreeft, Peter. *Between Heaven and Hell: A Dialogue Somewhere Beyond Death with John F. Kennedy, C. S. Lewis and Aldous Huxley*. Downers Grove: Intersity Press, 1982.

Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity*. New York: Macmillan, 1952.

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

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

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.

Course Schedule

Sept. 16: Syllabus and introductory lecture

Sept. 23: Contemporary attitudes toward the Bible, Bock (*Can I Trust The Bible*), entire book
Pres _____

Sept 30: Principles for weighing the evidence for scriptural reliability, Swinburne, chapter 1
Pres _____

Oct 7: Sources of evidence for scriptural reliability, Swinburne, chapter 4
Pres _____

Oct 14: The case for the reliability of scripture, Barnett (one chapter, to be selected by the student
presenter and reported to the professor at least one week prior to class presentation)
Pres _____
Pres _____

Oct 21: Historical attitudes toward the Bible, Blomberg, *Reliability of The Gospels*, chpts. 1-2
Pres _____
Pres _____

Oct 28: Reading Week: No classes at ACTS

Nov 4: Foundations for biblical reliability I, Blomberg, *Reliability of The Gospels*, chapter 3
Pres _____

Nov 11: Remembrance Day: No classes at ACTS

Nov 18: Foundations for biblical reliability II, Blomberg, *Reliability of The Gospels*, chpts. 4-5
Pres _____
Pres _____

Nov 25: Thorny questions regarding biblical reliability II, Blomberg, *Reliability of the Gospels*, chapter 6

Pres _____

Dec 2: Implications of Jesus' recorded life and teachings for scriptural reliability,
Swinburne, chapter 5

Pres _____

Dec 9: Implications of Jesus' post-crucifixion appearance passages for scriptural
reliability, Swinburne, chapter 9

Pres _____

Assignments and Grading Procedures

1. Careful reading of all assigned readings
2. One reading summary and evaluation.....20%
3. Two in-class seminar presentations.....40%
4. One research essay.....40%

Reading Summary/evaluation

You will select one chapter from either of the Blomberg or Bock texts. For the chapter you select, first summarize the author's most important ideas. Your rule of thumb as you summarize is that what is important to the author is important to you. Then evaluate the chapter's main ideas. Do you agree with the author? Why or why not? Identify any ideas which seem particularly strong or weak to you and interact with them. The more careful your analysis is here, the higher grade you will receive. How might the chapter have been different if you had written it? The assignment should be four to six pages in length with approximately two-thirds summary and one-third evaluation.

Due Oct. 22, 2009

Value: 20%

Research Essay

This essay will be a dialogue between two fictional characters. Using this dialogue format, you will respond to one major challenge of your choice to biblical reliability. You are encouraged to choose a challenge that is important to you and that you sense a need to be better prepared for. One character in the dialogue will represent and argue convincingly for the perspective 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. Make the dialogue as realistic as possible in order to avoid a sense of artificiality or a straw man in the conversation. This is a chance for you to develop your own creative writing abilities as you wrestle with an important challenge to Christian faith.

The following elements must be included somewhere in your dialogue:

1. a clear statement of the objection you wish to address. The dialogue format provides a ready method for doing this,

2. definitions of key terms and concepts relevant to your issue,
3. a precise “thesis statement” setting out early on what you plan to demonstrate or prove through the dialogue,
4. the best reasons you know of for the objection,
5. main steps in your argument as you respond to the objection.
6. A thoughtful perspective on the issue which is compatible with, and in fact, shaped by Christian truth.

Please be advised that your research for the essay must include interaction with both Christian and nonchristian sources which are unsympathetic to your personal perspective. This will provide first-hand knowledge of opposing positions 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 skeptics 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)

Due: November 26, 2009

Worth 40%

In-class seminars

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 as agreed upon early in the course.

Each student will lead the class in **two** seminars through one of the assigned readings for the day. The assignment will consist of the following two parts:

- 1) A basic summary of the author’s most important ideas,
- 2) Your assessment of and response to them. Interact deeply with the author. For example, highlight points of agreement and disagreement with specific ideas and tell why, 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 4-6 page written document, in polished form, which you will read from and distribute to the class at the beginning of your presentation.

Worth 20% x 2 = 40%

Grading Scale

| | | |
|-----|------|----------|
| A + | 4.30 | 97 % |
| A | 4.00 | 94 - 96% |
| A - | 3.70 | 90 - 93% |
| B + | 3.30 | 85 - 89% |

| | | |
|-----|------|----------|
| B | 3.00 | 80 - 84% |
| B - | 2.70 | 75 - 79% |
| C + | 2.30 | 70 - 74% |
| C | 2.00 | 65 - 69% |
| C - | 1.70 | 60 - 64% |
| F | .00 | 0 - 59% |

CAMPUS CLOSURE POLICY

In the event of deteriorating conditions overnight or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate the decision to the radio stations CKNW (980 AM), CKBD (600 AM), CKSR (104.9 FM), MAX (850 AM), PRAISE (106.5 FM) and KARI (550 AM) by 6:30 a.m.

To find out if the campus is open or closed due to snow or any other condition, please dial directly to **604-513-2147**. The recording will be updated if and when any changes to the status of the campus occur.

The first announcement regarding a closure will cover the period up to 1:00 p.m. only. This allows for the beginning of Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Tuesday, Thursday classes and work in the afternoon.

If classes or work are to be cancelled beyond 1:00 p. m., this decision will be announced by the same means before 11:00 a. m. that day. Students and faculty should assume that all night classes will continue to operate.

If the emergency continues into the evening, students and faculty may check for a closure notice on the above telephone number after 3:00 p.m.

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 overnight or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to the radio stations CKNW (980 AM), CKWX (1130 AM), MAX (850 AM), PRAISE (106.5 FM) and KARI (550 AM) by 6:30 a.m., and an announcement will be placed on the University's switchboard as well as on the website <http://www.twu.ca/conditions/>. The first announcement regarding a closure will cover the period up to 1:00 p.m. only. If classes are to be cancelled beyond 1:00 p.m., this decision will be announced by the same means before 11:00 a.m. that day. Students and faculty should assume that all night classes will continue to operate. If the emergency continues into the evening, students and faculty may check for a closure notice on the University's switchboard and website after 3:00 p.m. that day.

Paper Formatting

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

Students are strongly encouraged to use RefWorks (available through the library home page www.twu.ca/library) as their bibliographical manager and as a tool for formatting bibliographies. They will need to be aware of the need 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/. Note that in RefWorks the available formatting styles are those of Turabian (Notes), 7th edition, and APA – American Psychological Association, 5th edition. For Turabian, note that there are two formats – Notes (or Bibliography Style) 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 found at the following website. <http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html>.

For free online programs that will enable you to create properly formatted bibliography citations, go to <http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/> ("Chicago stands for "Turabian") or <http://www.sourceaid.com/citationbuilder/>

CANIL students can locate this on the CANIL intranet, under the “student” side. A hard copy is given to incoming students in the fall.

Please check with your professor to see which one he/she recommends you use!!

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/academics/research/ethics/>. Those needing additional clarification may contact Dr. Bruce Guenther. 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

As Christian scholars pursuing higher education, academic integrity is a core value of the entire TWU community. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship at TWU. This includes, but is not limited to, avoiding all forms of plagiarism and cheating in scholarly work. TWU has a strict policy on plagiarism (see academic calendar 2008-09, pp. 37-38). Further details on this subject are contained in the ACTS Student Handbook in section 4.12. The handbook is available online on the ACTS webpage (www.acts.twu.ca) at the following link: www.acts.twu.ca/Handbook.html.

Learning what constitutes plagiarism and avoiding it is the student's responsibility. An excellent resource describing plagiarism and how to avoid it has been prepared by TWU Librarian William Badke and is freely available for download (PPT file) or used as flash (self running) tutorials of varying lengths from:

<http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/plagiarism.ppt>

<http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/Plagiarism.swf> (14 minute flash tutorial)

http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/Plagiarism_Short.swf (8 minute flash tutorial)

Equity of Access

It is the responsibility of a student with a learning disability to inform the ACTS Director of Student Life of that fact before the beginning of a course so that necessary arrangements may be made to facilitate the student's learning experience. We are unable to accommodate any student who informs the Director of Student Life of a disability after the beginning of class.