Religion 20643-010
Sophomore Seminar: Thinking About Christian Faith
Texas Christian University
Spring 2006

Dr. C. David Grant
Office: TBH-105
Office hours: M 1:15–2:00 p.m.; W 8:00–9:00 a.m.; Th 1:30–3:00. I work on campus, so I'm usually around during the day and will be glad to set up an appointment at other times. I keep these posted hours available so that you can drop in without an appointment.

Course Web Page: http://faculty.tcu.edu/grant/20643

Description. An introduction to theological reading, thinking, and writing through an exploration of major doctrines in Christian theology. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century developments, such as the rise of historical thinking and its impact on Christology, the rise of scientific thinking and its impact on the doctrine of creation, and the rise of postmodern thinking and its impact on Christian views of other religions will be emphasized. Class procedure will be seminar discussion of assigned readings.

Books. Students should purchase from the TCU Bookstore:


Other reading assignments will be placed on reserve.

Course Objectives. As a result of this course, students will be able to:

1. Summarize and explain the major doctrines of classical Christian faith.

2. For selected doctrines, articulate the reinterpretations that resulted from nineteenth- and twentieth-century developments in our understanding of ourselves and our world.

3. Write concise, well-organized, critical essays on theological topics.

Requirements. Students will be expected to:

1. Attend class. Consistent class attendance is expected of all students and erratic attendance will adversely affect your term grade. Students are, on occasion, sick; built into the attendance policy is a four-class allowance for missing class due to minor illness or personal emergency. (Work missed as result will not be excused.) After four absences, however, your final term average will be lowered by a half-letter grade (five points) for each additional absence. A roll will be passed around at the beginning of each class, and you are to sign this roll with your usual signature. It is your responsibility each day to see that you've signed the roll before you leave the classroom, for these rolls are the official record of class attendance.
2. **Read assignments daily.** Class discussions presuppose that you’ve read the day’s assignments. Those who come unprepared place themselves at a significant disadvantage.

3. **Complete all daily written work.** You will be given short written assignments to complete. Some will be in-class assignments but most will be out-of-class assignments, usually in the form of your writing a précis of a reading assignment or a brief response to it. The purpose of these daily assignments is to encourage your careful study of the assigned readings. Daily assignments will be posted on the course’s web page, so if you are absent, be sure to check for upcoming out-of-class assignments. You can expect at least fifteen written daily assignments to be made during the semester. *Missed in-class assignments cannot be made up.*

4. Take a midterm examination (March 1, 2006) and a final examination (Friday, May 12, 2006, from 8:00 a.m.–10:30 a.m.). NO MAKE-UP EXAMS WILL BE GIVEN, EXCEPT FOR OFFICIAL UNIVERSITY ABSENCES, SERIOUS ILLNESS, CATASTROPHIC ACCIDENTS, OR FAMILY EMERGENCIES. The instructor will ask for documentation to verify such events and may ask the Campus Life Office to verify the reason for the absence. Such verification will require the presentation of appropriate medical records as requested by the instructor or the Campus Life Office.

   Students who miss an exam because of an official university absence must contact me **before** the examination is missed. Students who miss an exam due to serious illness, catastrophic accident, or family emergency should notify me if possible before the test and should in no instance wait later than the day after the scheduled test to do so. My office telephone number and e-mail address are listed on the previous page. Leave a message if I'm not in when you call. **NOTE:** You will not be given a make-up exam until the serious illness, catastrophic accident, or family emergency is verified.

5. Write three short critical essays, each of approximately 1250 words. The assignments for these essays will be distributed at appropriate times in the semester. The due dates are:

   - Essay One: Monday, February 13
   - Essay Two: Monday, March 20
   - Essay Three: Between Wednesday, April 26, and Monday, May 1 (inclusive)

   The papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date and **late papers will be assessed a significant penalty, a letter grade per day, or portion of a day, late.**

**Grades.** Your term average will be weighted as follows:

- Midterm Exam: 10%
- Final Examination: 25%
- Daily Written Work: 20%
- 3 Essays @ 15%: 45%
Grading Scale. Your work will be evaluated as follows. (Grades are kept on a 100-point scale.)

A (90.00–100) → Designates exceptional work
B (80.00–89.99) → Designates superior work
C (70.00–79.99) → Designates satisfactory work
D (60.00–69.99) → Designates poor work
F (0–59.99) → Failure

Last day students may withdraw from class → March 22, 2006.

Final Examination → Friday, May 12, 2006 at 8:00 a.m. NOTE: Students whose published exam schedule would require them to take more than two final examinations in a twenty-four-hour period may ask to reschedule one of these exams. If you are in this situation and wish to reschedule the exam for this class, you must submit to Dr. Grant a “Request for Rescheduled Final Examination” no later than Wednesday, April 26, 2006. The form can be downloaded from the course website. This request must contain your examination schedule as published, including course and section numbers and instructor names.

Expectations of Written Work. All written work should conform to the standards of presentation found in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (6th. ed., New York: Modern Language Association, 2003), with the exception that for your two major essays you should place the required heading on a separate cover sheet and put only the title of your paper (not your name) on the first page. Also, please number the pages in the top right corner and do not include your name with the page number. Then staple all the pages together in the top left corner. (This enables me to evaluate the essays without knowing the author’s identity until the evaluation is done.) You should purchase a copy of the *MLA Handbook* if you do not already own one. MLA style is also included in Lipson’s *Doing Honest Work in College*.

Plagiarism, whether accidental or deliberate, is a serious academic offense. You can avoid plagiarism by carefully using quotation marks around material that you directly cite from a source and indicating your indebtedness to an author by a reference when you borrow ideas. Please see chapter three of Lipson’s *Doing Honest Work in College* for a detailed discussion of plagiarism. Chapter two of the *MLA Handbook* also has an excellent discussion of plagiarism. I have a zero tolerance policy concerning plagiarism, so be sure you know what it is and how to avoid it.

Criteria for Evaluation of Critical Essays. Your critical essays will be evaluated in light of the four criteria below. Papers that fulfill these criteria in an exceptional way will be awarded As; papers that do so in a superior way, Bs; and papers that meet the criteria at a satisfactory level, Cs. Papers that do not fulfill the criteria at a satisfactory level will be awarded Ds and Fs, depending on the severity of the problems.

1. **Organization**: The paper is exceptionally well organized. It contains a clear thesis statement that focuses the essay and each and every paragraph logically contributes to the development and defense of that thesis. The paper is succinct, to the point, and avoids needless words.

2. **Understanding**: The paper exhibits a thorough understanding of the work being criticized and accurately explicates its author’s argument where relevant to the development of its critical thesis.
3. Criticism: The paper takes a critical stance toward the material under examination, clearly articulating reasons for its critical evaluation. The criticisms are based on solid reasoning that is well supported with relevant evidence.

4. Mechanics: The paper is flawlessly presented, with no spelling or grammar errors. It properly references the ideas and words of others and is presented in the form stipulated by the MLA Handbook.

*Papers are due at the time and on the day specified in the syllabus. Late papers will be penalized a letter grade per day, or fraction of a day, late.*

**Official Class Correspondence:** All official correspondence concerning this class will be sent to your TCU e-mail address. If you don't regularly look at your TCU e-mail account, please set that account to forward your e-mail to the account you regularly use. I will assume that you have received an e-mail when it reaches your TCU e-mail account.

**Disabilities Statement:** Texas Christian University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities. If you require accommodations for a disability, please contact the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities in the Center for Academic Services, located in Sadler Hall 11. Further information can be obtained from the Center for Academic Services, TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129, or at 817-257-7486.

Adequate time must be allowed to arrange accommodations and accommodations are not retroactive; therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the academic term for which they are seeking accommodations. Each eligible student is responsible for presenting relevant, verifiable, professional documentation and/or assessment reports to the Coordinator. Guidelines for documentation may be found at [http://www.acs.tcu.edu/DISABILITY.HTM](http://www.acs.tcu.edu/DISABILITY.HTM).

Students with emergency medical information or needing special arrangements in case a building must be evacuated should discuss this information with their instructor/professor as soon as possible.

**Academic Conduct:** You are expected to know and follow appropriate academic conduct. Academic misconduct as defined in the Code of Student Conduct, sec. 3.4, will result in serious sanctions.
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<th>Day</th>
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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 W</td>
<td>1/18</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>2 F</td>
<td>1/20</td>
<td>How to Read Theology</td>
<td>Read, Lipson, 3-31</td>
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<td>3 M</td>
<td>1/23</td>
<td>How to Write about Theology</td>
<td>Read, Lipson, 32-56</td>
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<td>4 W</td>
<td>1/25</td>
<td>Writing Précis</td>
<td>Read, Lipson, 86-106</td>
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<td>5 F</td>
<td>1/27</td>
<td>What is Christian Theology?</td>
<td>Read Placher, 1-10.</td>
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<td>6 M</td>
<td>1/30</td>
<td>The Sources for Doing Theology</td>
<td>Read, “Our Theological Task” (handout)</td>
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<td>7 W</td>
<td>2/1</td>
<td>Discussion on “Our Theological Task”</td>
<td>Reread, “Our Theological Task”</td>
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