

## COURSE SYLLABUS

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# ST503: Contemporary Theology I: From Hegel to Death of God Theologies

Course Lecturer: John S. Feinberg, PhD

Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

### About This Course

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**This course was originally created through the Institute of Theological Studies in association with the Evangelical Seminary Deans' Council. There are nearly 100 evangelical seminaries of various denominations represented within the council and many continue to use the ITS courses to supplement their curriculum. The lecturers were selected primarily by the Deans' Council as highly recognized scholars in their particular fields of study.**

### Course Description

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For good or for bad, philosophy has played a pivotal role in the development of theology and culture. In this course, learners examine the major trends in contemporary theological thought in light of their philosophical contexts. The course begins with a review of the major developments in Western thought prior to Hegel, and then explores the theologies of Hegel, Kierkegaard, Barth, Bultmann, and Tillich. The course culminates in the "Death of God" theologies of Paul Van Buren and Thomas Altizer. The course enables learners to evaluate contemporary, non-evangelical theologies and to recognize their impact on everyday life.

### Course Objectives

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Upon completion of the course, the student should be able to:

- Know the major trends in contemporary, non-evangelical thought.
- Understand the presuppositions (philosophical and otherwise) that generate such modern theologies.
- Recognize and defend against such views.
- Better comprehend orthodox positions through analysis of errant views.
- Apply Old Testament theology to life and ministry.

## Accessibility

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If you have particular accessibility needs, please contact the CUGN Registrar at the beginning of the course. This will allow us to work directly with you to make efforts to accommodate your situation and ensure as full as possible accessibility to the course.

## Course Lecturer

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*John S. Feinberg, PhD*

**Education:**

- University of Iowa, postgraduate work
- University of Chicago, MA and PhD
- Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, ThM
- Talbot Theological Seminary, MDiv
- University of California, BA

**Teaching Career:**

- Department Chair and Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
- Professor at Liberty Baptist Seminary and College (1981-1983)
- Professor at Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (1976-1981)
- Visiting professor at Bethel Theological Seminary
- Guest lecturer at numerous schools across the United States
- Visiting professor in Germany and Italy
- Adjunct Professor, Tyndale Theological Seminary in the Netherlands
- Instructor in Doctrine, Los Angeles Bible Training School (1969-1971)

**Other Career Highlights:**

- Ordained minister
- Preacher at local churches and holder of various pulpit supply roles in California, Idaho, Illinois, Oregon, and Wisconsin
- Pastor of Elmwood Park Bible Church in Illinois (1974-1976)
- Missionary work in Los Angeles (1970-1971)
- Staff member for the American Board of Missions to the Jews, Inc. (1970-1974)
- Member of the Evangelical Theological Society (with a term on the National Membership Committee during the mid-1980s)
- Regular presenter at ETS regional and national conferences, the American Academy of Religion, and the Society of Biblical Literature
- Roles as President and Vice President of the Evangelical Philosophical Society
- Theological consultant for the academic division of Crossway Books

**Publications:**

- Articles in various journals in both Europe and North America, including submissions to the *Evangelical Theological Journal*, *Trinity Journal*, and *Westminster Theological Journal*
- Author and editor of several books, including *Ethics for a Brave New World*, *Deceived by God? A Journey Through Suffering*, *The Many Faces of Evil*, and *Where Is God?: A Personal Story of Finding God in Grief and Suffering*

- General editor of Crossway's "Foundations of Evangelical Theology" series

## Online Professor

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If you are taking this course for credit, CUGN will assign one of its faculty members as the online professor for this course. This professor will contact you upon enrollment in the course and will guide your study. Your online professor will be available to you by email and, at set times, by chat room or other real-time technology. Your online professor will do the following in order to stimulate student involvement and facilitate effective learning:

- Evaluate and assign grades to all coursework.
- Provide assistance with technological problems that may occur.
- Answer questions that may arise.
- Issue your final grades.

## Course Texts

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The following texts are required reading (or possible alternates to the requirements \*\*); specific reading assignments are listed with each lecture. Some of these are out of print (indicated by OP), but are necessary due to the nature of the course. The code LIB suggests that the student borrow the book from a library; the code BUY suggests that the student may borrow the book, but might find purchasing the book worthwhile. Various editions of the primary sources may be used, as may appropriate substitutions for secondary literature that becomes unavailable. The course is up to date on this matter as of Summer 1999.

OP: Altizer, Thomas J. J. *The Gospel of Christian Atheism*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966.

LIB: Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. 4 vols. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936-1962.

BUY: Bretall, Robert, ed. *A Kierkegaard Anthology*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1951; reprint, 1973.

LIB: Bultmann, Rudolf. *Jesus Christ and Mythology*. New York: Scribner, 1958; reprint, New York: Macmillan, 1981.

OP: Collins, James. *The Existentialists*. Chicago: Regnery, 1952.

\*\* : Ford, David F., ed. *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.

OP: Gilkey, Langdon. *Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-Language*. Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969.

LIB: Grayling, A. C. *Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

\*\* : Grenz, Stanley J. and Roger E. Olson. *20th Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1992.

BUY: Kierkegaard, Soren. *Fear and Trembling*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983; reprint, New York: Penguin, 1986.

LIB: *Philosophical Fragments*. Edited and translated by Howard and Edna Hong. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985.

BUY: Lowrie, Walter. *A Short Life of Kierkegaard*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965.

LIB: Taylor, Charles. *Hegel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

LIB: Tillich, Paul. *Systematic Theology*. 3 vols. in 1. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.

OP: Van Buren, Paul. *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*. New York: Macmillan, 1963.

LIB: Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1922.

LIB: *Philosophical Investigations*. 3rd ed. Paramus, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973.

To order textbook(s), you may use the CUGN online store available on our website at [cugn.org](http://cugn.org). Shipping is available to international students, but please place your order early enough to allow adequate time for delivery. When available, you may also consider downloading the textbook(s) to an eReader.

## Academic Honesty

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At CUGN, we believe all we do is “as unto the Lord” and we thus hold to a high academic standard of honesty; we do not tolerate plagiarism and cheating. Students found guilty of any form of academic dishonesty face consequences ranging from interaction with the Academic Dean to expulsion from CUGN.

**Quizzes and Exams:** Any student found guilty of cheating on a quiz or exam will automatically receive a score of zero for that quiz or exam. A second offense will result in automatic course failure and possible disciplinary action and/or expulsion from CUGN. Please view the [CUGN Academic Catalog](#) for a full definition and examples of cheating.

**Plagiarism:** If a student’s work is found to be plagiarized, consequences will vary depending on the nature of the plagiarism.

If an offense is deemed unintentional, the student will have an opportunity to resubmit the work. A second offense will result in an automatic score of zero for that assignment, which may also result in failure of that course.

More serious plagiarism offenses could result in automatic course failure, disciplinary action, or

expulsion from CUGN. Please view the [CUGN Academic Catalog](#) for a full definition and examples of plagiarism. If you have questions about plagiarism, or would like to request resources for learning how to avoid plagiarism, please contact our Registrar's Office at [registrar@cugn.org](mailto:registrar@cugn.org) or toll free at (888) 487-5376 ext. 3.

## Course Methods

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Throughout this course, a number of methods will be used to engage the students in learning and processing information, and applying the learning to their lives. These methods include the following:

### Media/Materials

The course will include media presentations of lectures and supplementary materials to be listened to and/or read throughout the lessons of the course.

- **Audio-based teaching**

The primary teaching session in each lesson is provided in audio format. If available, we also provide the option of reading the lesson from a transcript of the audio lecture (found in the course Audio Lecture section).

- **Readings**

Reading from the required textbook(s) is assigned in this syllabus.

### Mentor Relationship

Students are required to seek out a mentor with whom they can discuss the spiritual impact of the course on their life. The goal of this process is to facilitate the student's growth through interaction with a mature believer.

### Spiritual Formation Project

Ministry preparation and the Christian life require more than academic exercises. Learners also need personal, spiritual formation, which involves theological reflection and critical thinking on their current practices and assumptions. This process occurs as learners engage in self-reflection through the course's Spiritual Formation Project.

## Course Requirements

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1. **Time:** The student is required to spend a minimum of 120 hours in this course. All course requirements must be completed within 6 months of enrolling in the course.
2. **Recorded Lectures:** Listen carefully to the 24 lectures of recorded material by Dr. Feinberg and keep in mind the questions and the intended outcomes listed in the Study Guide. Completion of the Study Guide constitutes a portion of the course grade (see below).
3. **Collateral Reading:** In addition to the required readings listed with study questions in the Study Guide, read an additional **500 pages**. It is assumed that not more than 200 pages of what you read in preparation to write your research paper (see description below) can be used to satisfy this

collateral reading assignment. You are encouraged to use the bibliography in the Study Guide and to read from the primary literature, though further reading in secondary sources is also acceptable. Please be sure to submit a report to the supervisor of this course as to what you have read to satisfy this 500-page requirement.

**4. Research Paper:** Write a **15-20 page** (double-spaced) paper on some aspect of contemporary theology involving the theologians and movements covered in this course. The following are suggestions, but are not meant to limit your options:

(a) Compare and contrast two thinkers on a given topic (e.g., you might compare and contrast Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Tillich on their understanding of Christ and the role this doctrine plays in their overall theology/philosophy);

(b) Analyze some concept/doctrine in a modern thinker and compare and contrast it to traditional orthodox understanding of the doctrine (e.g., Barth and orthodoxy on Scripture; Kierkegaard and orthodox soteriology on saving faith; Bultmannian hermeneutics vs. the evangelical commitment to literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutics);

(c) Expound and explain a particularly difficult concept of one writer or difficult portion of his work and evaluate it (e.g., Kierkegaard's concept of truth as subjectivity or his understanding of the relation of faith and reason; the later Wittgenstein on doubting, explaining, and certainty; Kierkegaard's comparison of Idealism [especially Hegelian Idealism] and Christianity and his critique of the former in *Philosophical Fragments*);

(d) Take a theme and trace its development throughout the period (or a portion thereof) we are studying (e.g., the concept of God; the concept of faith; the meaningfulness of religious language).

As noted, these are only suggestive of the direction you may take. It should be obvious, however, that whatever topic you choose, you should not merely repeat course lecture material. Your own creativity and analysis are expected.

Recommended guidelines for the paper are those set forth in the latest edition of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers for Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

**5. Spiritual Formation Project**

**RATIONALE:** Ministry preparation and the Christian life require more than academic exercises. Learners also need personal, spiritual formation, which involves theological reflection and critical thinking on their current practices and assumptions. This process occurs as learners engage in self-reflection and interaction in a community of learning. With this in mind, CUGN includes in all courses a capstone project addressing these issues and facilitating interaction beyond the formal learning environment (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 4.1.1; 10.3.3.3).

Write a **five-to-six page reflective essay** and **interview a mentor**, discussing the spiritual impact of this course on your life. Identify your mentor early in the course, and submit the essay to your grader when you take the final exam. This last project should not be a summary of course content, but an application of course principles. Complete the following:

**A. Personal Reflection and Evaluation:** Reflect on the course – To integrate your academic

studies with your walk of faith, reflect on the content of the course and evaluate your life in light of what you learned.

- i. Follow these steps in your reflection:

Step 1: What one theme, principle, or concept in the course is the most significant to you personally? Why is it significant?

Step 2: What portion(s) of the course brought this theme/principle/concept to light?

Step 3: Think about your past. Why is it vital now for you to deal with and apply this theme/principle/concept?

Step 4: How should this affect your thoughts and actions, and what specific steps should you take to concretely apply what you have learned?

- ii. Write your answers to the above questions in full paragraph form. (Recommended length for this reflection: approximately three pages)
- iii. Give a copy of this reflection to your mentor (see #2).

**B. Community Reflection and Interaction:** Interview a mentor – Since the Holy Spirit uses the input of others to guide and form His people, interview a mentor according to the following guidelines:

- i. Who should you interview? (1-3 are required; 4-6 are recommended)
  1. Someone with whom you have a reasonably close relationship.
  2. Someone who is a mature Christian ministry leader (i.e. a pastor).
  3. Someone who is not your grader or a family member.
  4. Someone who values the spiritual formation process.
  5. Someone who is familiar with and values the subject of the course.
  6. Someone who has experience using the content of the course in ministry.

**NOTE:** Identify your mentor early in the course, and give him/her the page entitled “Guidelines for Mentors.”

- ii. Focus of the interview – Your interview should focus on the issues and questions you raise in your essay. For example:
  - What feedback can your mentor give in response to your essay?
  - In light of the course content, are the conclusions you made appropriate? Why or why not?
  - What additional advice, deeper insights or broader applications might he/she suggest from his/her own life and ministry?

**NOTE:** Conduct this interview either in person (preferred) or over the phone. Do not use electronic communication (i.e. email, instant messenger, etc). Suggested length: 45 minutes.

**C. Synthesis and Application:** Draw your final conclusions – Having reflected on the course and the discussion with your mentor, synthesize what you have learned in these three sections:

- i. Section 1: Begin your essay with the personal reflection from #1 above. This should be exactly what you gave your mentor for the interview.
- ii. Section 2: Comment on your interview, explaining what you discussed and the insights you gained from your mentor. Include the following:
  - What were the mentor’s comments regarding your essay?
  - What advice did he/she give?
  - How did his/her comments expand or correct your application of the course?
  - Include the person’s name, occupation, and the length of the interview.
- iii. Section 3: Conclude with a synthesis of what you have learned. Answer the following:
  - If your mentor corrected any thoughts in your “Personal Reflection and Evaluation”, how do you feel about these corrections? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
  - Synthesizing your thoughts from section one and your mentor’s insight in section two, what final conclusions have you reached? How is this different from section one?
  - In light of the interview and further reflection, what additional, specific changes need to occur in your life and what concrete steps will you take to implement them?

**NOTE TO STUDENTS:** Your effort in this assignment will determine its benefit. If by the end of this course you have not yet reflected critically on your life in light of what you have studied, allow this assignment to guide you in that process. The instructor for this course will not score your essay based on the amount of spiritual fruit you describe; so do not exaggerate (or trivialize) what you have learned. The primary grading criteria is that you have thoughtfully considered the principles of the course and realistically sought to apply them to your life. If you have done this and met the minimal requirements (as noted above), you will earn the full points for this assignment.

Note on confidentiality: Perhaps the Holy Spirit is dealing with you in some very personal areas of your life. Because of this, your grader will keep your essay entirely confidential and either return or discard it.

Objective: to stimulate reflection and interaction on course principles in order to enhance personal spiritual formation.

- 4. Final Examination:** A final exam will be offered at the conclusion of the course. It will test your mastery of the lecture material. Insofar as the lecture material interacts with your required reading, that reading is fair game for the test. However, make your focus the lecture material. The test will be essay in nature and will test your understanding of the various thinkers and movements covered in the course. You will be tested not only on how well you understand each thinker on his own terms,

but also on how well you can relate the thinking of the different theologians to one another. Study questions in the Study Guide should help you prepare for the exam, though you will also need to be able to relate the ideas of one thinker to another and understand the development of individual themes throughout the period.

## Course Grading

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Your grade for the course will be determined as follows:

Study Guide/Required Reading	15% of Course Grade
Research Paper	35% of Course Grade
Spiritual Formation Project	10% of Course Grade
Final Exam	35% of Course Grade
Total	100%

**NOTE:** Please submit a written statement telling how much of the required reading you have completed, listing the specific works (and number of pages) you have read to satisfy the collateral reading assignment. Accompanying this statement should be your answers to the questions in the Study Guide.

Grades will be issued within two weeks of the end of the course.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Course: \_\_\_\_\_ Interview  
Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

## Guidelines for Mentors

(Students, give this sheet to your mentor for the Spiritual Formation Project.)

Thank you for your involvement in this student's CUGN coursework. We believe the Christian life is more than an academic exercise, so we encourage students to critically reflect on their life in light of what they learn and then apply those insights to the daily life of faith.

Therefore, students taking CUGN courses are required to complete a final assignment called the "Spiritual Formation Project." This assignment involves two parts: an essay and an interview:

**The ESSAY:** After completing their coursework, students reflect on the content of the course, evaluate their lives, and discuss the one theme, principle or concept that is most significant to them and why. Students are to identify specific ways this theme/principle/concept should apply to their lives and what action steps they plan to take in order to make these changes a reality.

**The INTERVIEW:** After writing this reflection, students give a copy to their mentor and meet with him/her to discuss their thoughts and get feedback. The goal of this interview is to facilitate the student's growth through interaction with a mature believer.

### NOTES ON THE INTERVIEW:

- You do not need to be familiar with the course to participate in this interview. You will primarily respond to the thoughts of the student. (However, general knowledge of the subject matter of the course and/or experience applying it to ministry is valuable.)
- Prior to meeting with the student, read his/her "Personal Reflection and Evaluation" and prepare to discuss the following:
  1. What feedback can you give the student in response to his/her essay?
  2. Are the student's conclusions from the course appropriate? Why or why not?
  3. What additional advice, deeper insights or broader applications would you suggest from your own life and ministry?
- Meet with the student either in person (preferred) or over the phone. Do not use electronic communication (i.e. email, instant messenger, etc.).
- Suggested length of the interview: 45 minutes

Thanks again for participating in this project! You have a real opportunity to guide this student in the application process and to help him/her connect academics to life – *a valuable process for all who wish to grow in Christ.*

**NOTE: If the student's school makes any changes to this assignment, their requirements should replace those described here.**