Course Description
Introduces some of the more significant themes of Christian thought today. Themes include both traditional concepts and more contemporary developments in religious thought. Emphasis on one’s personal interaction with these themes.

This is a fully online, eight-week course. We will not meet face-to-face at any time.

Course Prerequisites
None

Course Objectives
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:
1. Summarize and analyze the theologies of some of the major religious movements and major theologians/philosophers of the modern period.
2. Discuss the pros and cons of natural theology and state their position on natural theology.
3. Describe four types of relationships between science and religion and explain which type they favor and explain why they rejected the other types.
4. Evaluate Christian attitudes (pluralist, exclusivist, inclusivist) toward other religions and defend their own position toward the world’s religions.
5. Defend their position on why God permits moral evil.
6. Examine the positions on whether inclusive language should be used when speaking about God.
7. Evaluate Theologies of Success in light of Liberation Theologies.

Required Text
ISBN: 978-0-8010-2253-1

Course Assignment Descriptions
You will have several opportunities to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of the principles taught in this course. The primary means of evaluating your work will be through practical application of the material. In the event that you have difficulty completing any of the assignments for this course, please contact your instructor immediately. Please refer to the Weekly Materials section of the cyberclassroom for
complete details regarding the activities and assignments for this course. The following is merely a summary.

**Discussion contributions (160 points)**
(three postings per week @ 20 points per week)

**Initial Substantive Posts:** Submit an initial response to each of the prompts provided each week by your instructor. Your initial post should be substantive (approximately ½ of a page in length) and must be posted by midnight, Central Time by Wednesday of each week. In your substantive post you are encouraged to use references (you may use your textbook); show evidence of critical thinking as it applies to the concepts or prompt and/or use examples of the application of the concepts to work and life. Proper punctuation, grammar and correct spelling are expected. Please use the spell-check function.

**Required Replies:** You must reply to at least two different peers per prompt. Your replies should build on the concept discussed, offer a question to consider, or add a differing perspective, etc. Rather than responding with, "Good post," explain why the post is "good" (why it is important, useful, insightful, etc.). Or, if you disagree, respectfully share your alternative perspective. Just saying "I agree" or "Good idea" is not sufficient for the posts you would like graded.

**Posting Guidelines:** Overall, postings must be submitted on at least two separate days of the week. It is strongly recommended you visit the discussion forum throughout the week to read and respond to your peers' postings. You are encouraged to post more than the required number of replies.

(Please review the Policies section of Blackboard for further details.)

**Week 1 Essay: What is Postmodernism? (30 points)**
After reading Adams’ article in Cross Currents (information provided in the Overview section of this lesson), write a 650-800 word essay (using APA format, including an introduction and a conclusion) in which you do the following:

- Describe the characteristics of postmodernity and postmodernism.
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of postmodernity and postmodernism. Discuss at least one strength and one weakness of both postmodernity and postmodernism.
- Also, remember to write in the third person (people, he, she, and they), not in the first or second person (I, you, we, our, and us).

**Week 2 Essay: Is There a Role for Natural Theology Today? (40 points)**
Write a 650-800 word essay (using APA format, including an introduction and a conclusion) in which you do the following:

- Using your text and two of the video interviews located in the Learning Content section of this week's lesson, make the case that natural theology has a role in modern theology.
- Next, using your text and G. Strawbridge's article (listed in the Readings section of this week's lesson) present a counter argument against natural theology.
- Then argue your position on natural theology, based on personal opinion.
Remember to write in the third person (people, he, she, and they), not in the first or second person (I, you, we, our, and us) for the first two parts of the assignment - arguing for and against natural theology. You may use first person in the third part where you argue your position based on your opinions.

**Week 3 Presentation: Religion and Science (50 points)**

Read Chapter 1 of Ian Barbour's, *Religion in an age of science* (link provided in this week's reading). Prepare a 20 to 25 slide PowerPoint presentation that does the following:

1. Describes and evaluates (strengths and weaknesses) Barbour's four typologies of the relationship between science and religion.
2. Presents your choice of one of the four typologies and a defense of that choice.

Be sure that the presentation has a clear beginning, middle, and end. Your presentation should also have a title slide, an introduction slide, a conclusion slide, and a reference slide.

Also include slide notes in the "Click to add notes" section for each of the content slides. These notes should contain your commentary on the content in the slides (as if you were actually going to give an oral presentation using this presentation. Remember to write in the third person (people, he, she, and they), not in the second or third person (I, you, we, our, and us) for the portion of the presentation where you are evaluating Barbour's typologies. You may use first person when discussing your personal preference and defense of that choice.

**Week 4: Conversation Assignment (40 points total)**

Using your textbook and other sources, create a conversation between Karl Barth, John Hick, and Karl Rahner in which you present each theologian's position on the uniqueness of the Christian religion. The word count for this assignment is 800 to 1000 words. At the beginning of the conversation, briefly introduce your participants. You should ask each participant at least one question. At the end of the conversation, you will choose which theologian you agree with and explain your choice. A reference page should also accompany the conversation. Use APA format for in-text citations and the reference page, although you may use the first and second person.

The following is a brief example of how to structure the conversation.

- Student: Christian, do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?
- Christian: Yes, I do. I have always maintained that "only Jesus can claim to be God's unique son" (Christian, 2000, p. 1).
- Muslim: I do not agree. Allah, may his name be praised, has no sons and needs no help (Jones, 2000, p. 1).
- Zen Buddhist: Is Jesus the Son of God? Ask the cat.
- Christian: Muslim, you are wrong. I do not understand what Zen means about the cat.
- Muslim: No, I am right (Jones, 2000, p. 22). I have a cat, but it doesn't talk. What do you mean Zen?
- Zen Buddhist: If you have to ask me such a silly question, you prove that you have not moved beyond intellect to insight. Only you can answer that question. Since you don't know, let's move on to another question.
- Student: Muslim, according to Islam, who is Jesus?....

**Week 5: Written Speech (40 points)**

Write a 650-800 word speech titled Does God Want Us to Be Rich? A Response to Greg Marquez in which you do the following.

- Watch the video Why God wants you rich (provided in the Learning Content section of this week's lesson)
- Imagine you are speaking at a conference for various scholars and theologians. Write a speech in which you analyze Marquez's contention that God wants every Christian to be rich.
- Your speech should contain the following sections:
  - Introduction
  - A description of Marquez's teaching
  - Your analysis of Marquez's teaching: What (if any) are his strengths? Why are these strengths? What (if any) are his weaknesses? Why are these weaknesses?
  - Conclusion - Come to a conclusion about Marquez's teaching.

A title page and reference page in APA format should also accompany the speech. Use APA format for in-text citations and references. You may use the first and second person in your writing, however.

**Week 6: Interview Assignment (40 points)**

For this Interview Assignment, "Is God Our Mother and Father? An Interview of Elizabeth Achtemeier," you will need to use the following sources:

- Elizabeth Achtemeier's article, "Why God in not mother." (Information to access the article provided in the Overview section of this lesson)
- The text and at least one additional article. You can choose an article from the additional resources provided in the Learning Content section of this lesson or another article from a scholarly source.

Using APA format, including an introduction and a conclusion, create a 800-1000 word interview of Elizabeth Achtemeier, who rejected using inclusive language when speaking about God, in which you do the following:

- Introduce Achtemeier.
- Ask Achtemeier thought-provoking, detailed questions. These questions should be prefaced by a position that supports some aspect of using inclusive language when speaking about God.
- Using Achtemeier's article "Why God is not mother," provide in-depth answers to the questions from her perspective. (Keep in mind that during this section you are writing from Achtemeier's perspective and opinions, not your own.)
- At the end of the conversation, explain why you agree or disagree with Achtemeier's position.
- A reference page should also accompany the conversation. Use APA format for in-text citations and the reference page, although you may use the first and second person.
Following is a brief example of how the conversation might look. (This conversation is with a different author, on a different topic, however. It is just provided as an example of how to format your assignment.)

- **Student:** As you know, Barth, many theologians contend that religions other than Christianity might be paths to salvation. Hans Küng, for example, rejected the exclusivist position that completely rejects non-Christian religions (Küng, 1978, p.111). According to Küng (1978), a man can be "a good Muslim as long as the Koran remains binding on him and in this way he may gain salvation" (p.125). Is this "good Muslim" on the right path? Do you believe that non-Christian religions can be paths of salvation like Christianity?
- **Barth:** People cannot know who God is unless God reveals himself to them. They cannot know God on their own strength. This "good Muslim" man about whom Küng writes is like every other "good" person. Whether he is a "good" Muslim, a "good" Christian, or a "good-for-nothing," he is on a futile quest to know God. Salvation is the free gift of grace, not of works. People do not understand this aspect of salvation because they believe that they can achieve salvation on their own, that is, by being "good." In Christ, however, God completely negates all human attempts at achieving salvation. Christ is God's self-revelation and self-offering, and only through Christ can anyone be saved (Barth, 1956, p.308).
- **I must conclude my answer by saying that this "good" Muslim's religion, and even a "good" Christian's religion, is worthless, for "religion is unbelief. It is...the one great concern of godless" people (Barth, 1956, 299-300), no matter how "good" they are.

References

**Week 7 Essay: Why Does God Allow Evil? (50 points)**
For this assignment you will write a 900-1200 word essay (using APA format, including an introduction and a conclusion) on theodicy titled Why Does God Allow Evil? in which you do the following:
- Describe in the first part of the essay the following three approaches to the essay's topic
  1. Free-will theodicy
  2. Soul-making theodicy
  3. Process theology theodicy
- In the second part of the essay evaluate the three approaches described in part one by noting strengths and weaknesses of each approach.
- Develop in the essay's third section your own answer or response to why God allows evil.
- In preparing your essay, you may use any of the sources in the Learning Content section of this lesson or any other scholarly source. You must, however, use at least one of the following sources.
  - Religion Online - A good search term is theodicy.
  - Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy - Two good search terms, among others, are soul-making and theodicy.
Also, remember to write in the third person (people, he, she, and they) during the first two sections of the essay. You may write in first person for the third section of the essay where you are discussing your own response.

**Week 8 Theological Scavenger Hunt (30 points)**
For this assignment, you will be completing a scavenger hunt through your text on various topics we have explored throughout this course. You will be provided with a list of 60 questions for you to respond to. Please provide your answer to each question along with the page number for where you found the answer. Each correct answer with page number is worth ½ point, for a total of 30 possible points for the assignment. The document containing the questions will become available to you in the Assignments section of the course on Monday of Week 8.

**Course Schedule At-A-Glance**
Please refer to the Term Calendar in our cyberclassroom for specifics regarding dates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Readings &amp; Activities</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
<th>Date/Time Due**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Week 1 | • Article: Toward a Theological Understanding of Postmodernism  
• Letter to the Independent | • Course Discussion  
• Essay: What is Postmodernism? | • Midnight CT on Weds/Sun.  
• Sunday at midnight |
| Week 2 | • Chapter 1: Fundamentalism  
• Chapter 2: Neo-orthodoxy | • Course Discussion  
• Essay: Is There a Role for Natural Theology Today? | • Midnight CT on Weds/Sun.  
• Sunday at midnight |
| Week 3 | • Chapter 3: Pentecostalism  
• Chapter 4: Evangelicalism  
• Chapter 5: Neo-Liberalism | • Course Discussion  
• Presentation: Religion and Science | • Midnight CT on Weds/Sun.  
• Sunday at midnight |
| Week 4 | • Chapter 6: Post-Vatican II Catholicism  
• Chapter 7: Eastern Orthodox Theology  
• Chapter 8: The Charismatic Movement | • Course Discussion  
• Conversation Assignment | • Midnight CT on Weds/Sun.  
• Sunday at midnight |
| Week 5 | • Chapter 12: Theologies of Success  
• Chapter 13: Liberation Theology  
• The Peril of the Unconverted Purse | • Course Discussion  
• Written Speech | • Midnight CT on Weds/Sun.  
• Sunday at midnight |
| Week 6 | • Chapter 14: Third Wave Theology  
• Chapter 15: Feminist Theology  
• Chapter 17: The New Age Movement | • Course Discussion  
• Interview Assignment | • Midnight CT on Weds/Sun.  
• Sunday at midnight |
| Week 7 | • Chapter 9: Theology of Hope  
• Chapter 10: Process | • Course Discussion  
• Essay: Why Does | • Midnight CT on Weds/Sun.  
• Sunday at midnight |
Theology
- Appendix: Some Third-World Theological Directions

God Allow Evil?
- Chapter 11: Secular Theology
- Chapter 16: Reconstructionist (Dominion) Theology
- Chapter 18: Creation Spirituality

- Course Discussion
- Theological Scavenger Hunt

- Midnight CT on Weds/Sat.
- Saturday at midnight

* All online weeks run from Monday to Sunday, except the last week, which ends on Saturday.
** All assignments are due at midnight Central Time. (All submissions to the Blackboard system are date/time stamped in Central Time).

Assignments At-A-Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment/Activity</th>
<th>Qty.</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 1-8: Discussion</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20 per week</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 1: Essay on Postmodernism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2: Essay on Natural Theology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3: Presentation: Religion and Science</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4: Conversation Assignment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5: Written Speech</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6: Interview Assignment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7: Essay on Why God Allows Evil</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8: Theological Scavenger Hunt</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL POINTS</strong></td>
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*Please refer to the Policies menu for more information about our Course Discussions.

Grading Scale

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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90 to 100%</td>
<td>432-480</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80 to 89%</td>
<td>384-431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70 to 79%</td>
<td>336-383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60 to 69%</td>
<td>288-335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt; 60%</td>
<td>&lt; 288</td>
</tr>
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</table>

To access your scores, click on Grades in the Student Tools area in Blackboard.

Important Policies

All course-specific policies for this course are spelled out here in this syllabus. However, additional university policies are located in the Policies section of Blackboard. You are responsible for reading and understanding all of these policies. All of them are important. Failure to understand or abide by them could have negative consequences for your experience in this course.

Editorial Format for Written Papers

All written assignments are to follow the APA writing style guidelines for grammar, spelling, and punctuation. This online course includes information regarding the APA
style under “Writing and Research Resources” in the **Resource Room** on the course menu in Blackboard.

**Ottawa Online Late Policy**

With instructor approval, assignments may be accepted for up to one week after the due date, but a minimum automatic deduction of 10% of the points will be assessed. The instructor also has the option of increasing this deduction percentage up to a maximum of 20%. Extenuating circumstances may be determined on rare occasions and an extension allowed without a deduction, but only at the sole discretion of the instructor.

Discussion board postings will not be accepted for credit when posted after the close of the discussion week. There are no exceptions to this rule; however, solely at the discretion of the instructor, the student may be allowed to submit an alternative assignment to make up for the points under extenuating circumstances. If granted, this should be an exception to the rule.

No assignments will be accepted after the last day of the course (end of term) unless arrangements have been made and “approved” by the instructor at least one week in advance.

**Saving Work**

It is recommended that you save all of your work from this course on your own computer or flash drive. The capstone course you take at the end of your program may require you to have access to this work for culminating assignments and/or reflections.

**Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated at any level on any assignment. The reality of cyberspace has made academic dishonesty even more tempting for some, but be advised that technology can and will be used to help uncover those engaging in deception. If you ever have a question about the legitimacy of a source or a procedure you are considering using, ask your instructor. As the University Academic Council approved on May 29, 2003, “The penalty for plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty will be failure in the course in which the academic dishonesty occurred. Students who commit academic dishonesty can be dismissed from the university by the provost/director.”

Please refer to **Academic Honesty** in the **Policies** section of the online course menu for important information about Ottawa University’s policies regarding plagiarism and cheating, including examples and explanations of these issues.

**Student Handbook**

Please refer to your student handbook for all university regulations. The **Resource Room** on the course menu in Blackboard contains information about where to find the student handbook online for your campus.

Please see **Policies** in Blackboard for additional university policies.

**Blackboard Technical Support**

The Resource Room in Blackboard contains links to student tutorials for learning to use Blackboard as well as information about whom to contact for technical support. Ottawa
University offers technical support from 8 a.m. to midnight Central Time for all students, staff, and faculty at no cost. See www.ottawa.edu/ouhelp for contact information.

**Ottawa University Mission Statement**

The mission of Ottawa University is to provide the highest quality liberal arts and professional education in a caring, Christ-centered community of grace which integrates faith, learning and life. The University serves students of traditional age, adult learners and organizations through undergraduate and graduate programs.