

CHRISTIAN FOUNDATIONS
RELI 300
Fall 2008
Phone: x2661

DR. COREY BEALS
Office: HOOVER 206
Office Hrs: MWF 9:40-10:30, Tue 3-4pm
or by appt. (call x2650 for appt.)

Course Description:

Everyone has a *foundational faith* in something or someone. For example, it might be faith in success, pleasure or in self. Each person's foundational faith affects her worldview—it affects how she interprets everything that she encounters. We will be looking at *faith in Christ* in particular and three key influences on Christian faith.

A person's *thinking* affects his faith. The *larger story* that each person is a part of affects his faith. A person's own *experiences* and testimonies of other's experiences also affect his faith. And faith affects the way one views the world. Therefore, we will be examining Christian faith by looking at it through 1) theological, 2) historical and 3) experiential lenses, observing the way it affects our own philosophies of life.

Course Goals:

A primary goal of this course is to deepen and broaden the student's understanding of Christian faith by:

- 1) broadening the understanding the student has of the story of Christianity that is larger than any one person or one particular congregation;
- 2) acquainting the student with the controversies that have taken place in Christian thought and understanding how these have helped clarify theological reflection about Christian faith;
- 3) observing the religious experience of Christians who have gone before us and reflecting on how those experiences relate to one's own religious experiences.

Another goal of this course is to help clarify and sharpen the student's worldview by making real connections between Christian history, theology, experience and the student's own foundational faith.

Required Texts:

Introduction to the History of Christianity, ed. Tim Dowley
Theological Turning Points by Donald McKim
Devotional Classics, ed. Richard Foster

Course Requirements:

1. Précis and Reflections (20%)

At the beginning of each class meeting, one précis or reflection (1/2 page-1 page each) covering that day's reading will be due. You may take a 'bye' seven times throughout the semester and may do so at your discretion. No précis are due on days when a paper is due. The précis and reflections are due at the **beginning** of class. If handed in late, they will be eligible for a maximum of 7 out of 10 points. After one day, late précis will not be accepted. If you have printer problems, write out a neatly hand-written copy.

The **précis** should include:

- a) a key point from the reading,
- b) a confusing point (something you found confusing) in the reading, and
- c) a query (a question that invites further reflection/investigation) that arose from the reading.

It is preferred that it is typed, double-spaced, but if it is neatly and legibly written in pen, that will be acceptable as well. Please include Name, Section (e.g. RELI 300E) and box number on the heading of every précis.

2. *Being Present (10%)*

Being *present* (in every way), on time and *engaged* in our discussion is crucial to success and participating in class will also be considered. I grant everyone 3 absences and do not put myself in the position of judging whether an absence is excused or not (so no need to notify me about absences unless it is a situation where you're in the hospital or some-such). Participation is not only speaking, but involves listening well to others.

3. *Christian Experience Paper (10%) 2-3 pages*

For this paper, begin with finding a question that has been affecting your experience of faith. Then talk to at least three people experienced in living a Christian life (and at least 65 years old). Ask them your question and how their life experiences might shed light on your experience. Ask others as well (classmates, family, other people in church, professors, etc.) and then write about your reflections on the question after having discussed it with others. You will be sharing this paper with other members of your class by posting it on Fox-Tales.

4. *Mid-Term Exam (10%)*

This exam will test your familiarity with the major events and issues of Christianity through 1054 A.D. The format is coin-toss (True/False) and multiple guess.

5. *Denomination Story Project (20%) 3-4 pages and presentation*

For this project, you will write a paper on the history of your denomination. You will work in groups and present your findings to the class. One person might focus on the founding of the denomination, another on the key theological distinctions and yet another on the current status and issues of the denomination. Your goal will be to tell the *story* of your denomination in a way that is accurate, holistic and memorable. You will be sharing this paper with other members of your class by posting it on Fox-Tales.

6. *Christian Beliefs Paper (20%) 2-3 pages*

In this paper you will need to write a concise account of your theological views including your doctrine of Creation, God (trinity, etc.), Christology, ecclesiology, anthropology, Soteriology, authority, sacraments and eschatology. Consult the *Theological Turning Points* for this so you are aware of the various views on these subjects.

7. *Final Exam (10%)*

This exam will test your familiarity with the major events and issues of Christianity from 1054 A.D. to the present. The format is coin-toss (True/False) and multiple guess.

Evaluation

0-59=F, 60-69=D, 70-76=C, 77-79=C+, 80-82=B-, 83-86=B, 87-89=B+, 90-92=A-, 93-100=A

Plagiarism

Avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism includes the obvious cases of using another person's writing without citing them, but it also includes using someone's ideas without citing them. The consequences for plagiarism could include failing the course or even expulsion from the university, as specified in the student handbook. I look forward to reading your *honest grappling* with the ideas and issues raised in the course.

The Academic Resource Center (ARC)

provides all students with free writing consultation, general tutoring, academic coaching, and learning strategies (e.g., techniques to improve reading, note-taking, study, time management). The ARC hours of operation are from 1:00-10:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 12:00-4:00 p.m. on Friday. Call ext. 2327 or email the _arc@georgefox.edu to schedule an appointment. Visit www.georgefox.edu/arc/ for information about ARC Consultants' areas of study, instructions for scheduling an appointment, and helpful learning tools. Call Rick Muthiah, Director of the Academic Resource Center, at ext. 2314 if you have questions.