WM/TH 626 EVANGELICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ROMAN CATHOLICISM AND EASTERN ORTHODOXY

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COURSE DESCRIPTION
Following a brief survey of Christian history with a special focus on events and theological developments related to the Great Schism (1054), this course analyzes the essential theological distinctives, ecclesiastical structures, developments, practices and principal expressions of spirituality of Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox churches. Issues of church-state relations, ecumenical concerns, biblical and liturgical renewal and missions and evangelism/proselytism will be given special attention.

COURSE FORMAT
The class will meet for three extensive weekend sessions: Sept 25-26, Oct 9-10, Nov 6-7
Location: to be determined
Fridays 6:00 - 9:30 p.m
Saturdays 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.; lunch 12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

The course will consist of lectures, class presentations of approved papers and/or projects, discussions and evaluation of assigned reading. Guided tours of Catholic and Orthodox churches and ecumenical dialogue with their clergy are anticipated.

REQUIRED READING


Collection of articles and book excerpts to be provided in class or on CAMS.

Reading of several other works, documents and selected articles will be recommended and/or required in accordance with the student’s specialization and special interest upon prior consultation and approval by the professor.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Short written reports on assigned readings will be required (see the attached description for a written report). A project/paper by individual students and/or interested groups as a team project (discussed in class and approved by the professor) will be presented and defended in class on assigned dates.

FINAL GRADES
There will be no final written examination. Oral examinations (European style) remain an option. The student’s final grade will be based on: class participation (30%), reading reports (30%), and paper/project, including its presentation and defense in the class (40%).

RECOMMENDED READING


Ware, Timothy. *The Orthodox Church*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1983 (and the following eds.).


The Making of a Critical Review

Adapted from J.M. McCrimmon, *Writing with a Purpose*, Houghton Mifflin, 1966. Many thanks to Gordon Fee and Gary Bekker for their insights on this matter.

**Purpose and Substance of the Critical Review**

The critical book review is an evaluation, never a book report or digest. That is, the goal of a good review is the critic’s judgement. Your success (i.e. grade) depends primarily upon how convincing your arguments are for this evaluation and not on your judgement itself.

The essence of most good reviews can be divided into three categories: interpretation, technical analysis and judgement.

**Interpretation** deals with the author’s purpose for writing book. *What does the book set out to do? What do I want to remember about this book?*

**Technical analysis** describes the techniques by which the author selects, shapes, and presents his or her materials. *How does the author go about fulfilling his or her purpose?*

**Judgement** is the critic’s appraisal of the book’s purpose and methodology. The critic’s judgement is not only the capstone by the main goal of a review since it deals with significance and success of the book. When formulating your judgement, ask yourself, *How effective is the author’s treatment of the topic? What new questions do I have on this topic? How significant is the book in its purpose and achievement? What implications does this book have for life and ministry?*

A good review does not let this three-part approach become obvious. The finished product should be a finely honed essay.

**Preparation**

There is no substitute for careful reading and writing. The critic who skims a book and/or writes haphazardly is doomed to failure (or at least a “C”). Indeed, most critics find it indispensable to take notes. Your notes can include a selection of quotes from which you may choose when writing your review. However, your review should not be a chain of quotes. Instead, use quotes to indicate emphasis or provide rationale for your judgement.

When reading, take special note of the preface and opening paragraphs. In a great majority of cases, the purpose and sometimes the organization of the book are revealed there. However, be careful that any judgements made early in the reading process remain open to modification until the whole book has been carefully read.
**Writing**

Organization and presentation of the review is entirely up to the critic. However, keep in mind at all times your obligation to the reader(s) and your overall judgement of the book.

The opening paragraph is the most difficult to write. The overwhelming temptation is to plunge right into the final judgement. While this might be appropriate on certain occasions, it most often yields a dearth of material just when the review should be building to a climax. Other options for the opening paragraph include an introductory statement on the author, a quotation that summarizes the purpose of the book, or a summary of the problem that the author is discussing.

Always write a critical review with the reader(s) in mind. In most cases, you should *not* be writing for the professor but for *fellow students* who have not yet read the book. Your review is meant to help them make judgements as to whether the book would be worthwhile to read.

Your final draft should be 2-3 pages. Be sure to include the bibliographic information for the book, written in proper style, at the top of your paper so readers may find the book themselves.

**Common Weaknesses**

1. Using too much of the review to explain the action or content of the book. This is a digest (book report) and not a review.
2. Reviewing parts of the book while neglecting the whole. Parts may be criticized in relation to the whole, but criticism outside the context of the whole book is poor scholarship.
3. Digressing upon your personal views on a subject rather than the merits or demerits of the book.
4. Failure to provide adequate rationale for judgements made.
5. Conveying to the reader a sense of prejudice that makes the reader believe the evaluation to be biased and unfair.

**Usefulness of Critical Reviews**

Finally, learn to read critical reviews yourself. See the more popular ones in *Christianity Today* or *Eternity*. More technical reviews are found in *Journal of Biblical Languages*, *Evangelical Quarterly*, and *Scottish Journal of Theology*. You will learn about books in your field of interest.

Even if a critical review is not a class assignment, writing short reviews for all the books you read will allow you to build a file of resources for papers, sermons, and lectures. If a piece of writing merits your time, it also merits a careful, analytic reading. Do yourself a favor and put your analytic thoughts into writing for future reference.

PK/ahd
August 2002