

THEO-252-M01: CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

*Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion;
this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief,
and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private,
to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance...*

—United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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TTh 12:30-13:45, PRH 3
Prerequisite: THEO-100
Fall Semester 2009
Credits: 3

Description: *A systematic theological reflection on the main tenets of the Christian faith and a personal and theoretical exploration of what it means to believe.*

Objectives:

- To understand and articulate the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith as confessed in the Apostles and Nicene creeds
- To make connections between faith and life, by learning to see and think theologically
- To observe and analyze the connections and contradictions between the beliefs and practice of Christians in the world

Required texts:

Fischer, K. and Hart, T., *Christian Foundations: An Introduction to Faith in Our Time* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995).

Lewis, C.S., *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001).

Supplementary Resources:

The Holy Bible (available in the library and on-line at <http://www.catholic.org/bible/> or <http://www.nccbuscc.org/nab/bible/>)

Essay information: www.thisibelieve.org

Newspapers and Periodicals (*America, The National Catholic Reporter, etc.*)

Books: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

Ehrman, Bart D., *The New Testament: a historical introduction...*

From Christ to the World: introductory reading in Christian ethics, Boulton, ed.

González, Justo, *The Story of Christianity*, Vol.s I-II.

Guthrie, Shirley, *Christian Doctrine*.

Harvey, Van A., *A Handbook of Theological Terms*

New Catholic Encyclopedia (far more up-to-date than the on-line version)

Required work:

- Regular, punctual class attendance and preparation for class by doing the assigned readings
- Current event presentation (CEP):

- a) Choose an article from the newspaper, a magazine, or the Web that is related to Christianity in the world. Turn in a copy of the article to the professor.
- b) Present the article in your own words, explain its relevance to our class (and if possible to the topic of the day), give a bit of your own analysis, and propose a question to generate 5-10 minutes of class discussion.
- My Current Event Presentation (CEP): _____
- “This I believe” credo: Due on Thursday, September 24
- Midterm examination: Thursday, October 15
- “This I believe” essay rough draft Due on Thursday, November 26
- “This I believe” essay final draft Due on Thursday, December 10
- Final examination: Thursday, December 18, 12:00-15:00

All written assignments are to be typed, 12pt. TNR font, and double-spaced.

Grading policy:

Current event presentation (CEP):	5%	Midterm examination:	30%
Attendance and participation:	5%	Final examination:	30%
“This I believe” assignments:	30%		

Policy on late-work:

- For every day an assignment is late, five points will be subtracted from the grade.
- If you are to present in class and are unable to do so, you are responsible for switching dates with a classmate and informing the professor of the change.
- If you are unable to attend class, you may send the professor assignments by e-mail, entrust them to a classmate, or leave them in my box in the bookstore/mailroom.

Attendance policy:

Attendance is extremely important, for lectures and class discussion play an integral part in the learning process. Make every attempt to be present and prepared for class, and remember that it is always advisable to inform the professor when one is to be absent. More than three absences will affect your grade.

Academic integrity:

“The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity, such as would be expected at a Jesuit, Catholic institution (...) As members of this community, students, faculty, and staff members share the responsibility to maintain this environment. Academic dishonesty violates (...) not only the mutual trust necessary between faculty and students but also undermines the validity of the University’s evaluation of students and takes unfair advantage of fellow students (...) Where there is clear indication of such dishonesty, a faculty member or administrator has the responsibility to apply appropriate sanctions (...)” (*The Undergraduate Catalog*, SLU, 2003-2005, p56).

Special Accommodations:

Any student who qualifies for special accommodations, due to presence of a disability, and feels it necessary to utilize them in order to meet the requirements of this course as outlined in the syllabus, should contact Counselling/Disability Services. Please phone the office at 91 554-5858 (Ext. 230), or send an e-mail to vandrew1@slu.edu. Students may also stop by the Counselling/Disabilities Services office in the Manresa building. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

SYLLABUS:

Thursday, September 3: Introduction to course and to participants; distribution of syllabus; overview of semester and texts; “The riddle of existence”
Assignment: *Mere Christianity* (MC) XVII-32; *Christian Foundations* (CF) 1-11

“I believe”

Tuesday, September 8: Faith, belief, doubt, and truth. Sign up for CEPs.
Assignment: CF 95-112; MC 138-150

Thursday, September 10: CEP. What is a creed? We believe, I believe. Introduction to credo and essay assignments.

Tuesday, September 15: Guest speaker

(Wed., Sept. 16: Last Day to Drop a Class Without a Grade of W and/or to Add a Class)

“in God, the Father Almighty”

Thursday, September 17, 12:30-13:25: Theology and the existence of God
Assignment: CF 13-29

(Thursday, Sept. 17, 13:30: Mass of the Holy Spirit)

Tuesday, September 22: CEP. Sources for Christian confession about God: Scripture, Tradition, reason and experience
Assignment: CF 47-73

Thursday, September 24: CEP. Revelation, Authority and dissent: the sources, cont’d...
 CREDO DUE

(Fri., Sept. 25: No classes)

Tuesday, September 29: CEP. The doctrine of God
Assignment: CF 31-45

“Creator of heaven and earth”

Thursday, October 1: CEP. The doctrine of Creation and environmental ethics
Assignment: CF 180-194

(Fri., Oct. 2: Last Day to Choose Audit (AU) or Pass/No Pass (P/NP) Options)

Tuesday, October 6: CEP. Theodicy: the question of suffering and evil.
Assignment: MC 35-46; CF 114-130

“and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary”

Thursday, October 8: CEP. “The Jesus of history.” Midterm review

Assignment: CF 76-84. Read one of the Gospels in one sitting, alone or with others, and come to class prepared to discuss this question: “How closely does the portrait of Jesus presented in this chapter correspond with the portrait you had before and after the gospel reading?”

(Mon., Oct. 12: HOLIDAY)

Tuesday, October 13: CEP. “The Christ of faith.”

Thursday, October 15: MIDTERM EXAMINATION

“suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.”

Tuesday, October 20: CEP. Atonement: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ

Assignment: MC 53-65; CF 84-93

“whence He shall come again to judge the living and the dead.”

Thursday, October 22: CEP. Anthropology: the doctrine of humanity

Assignment: CF 132-147

Tuesday, October 27: CEP. Christian life in society: social justice

Assignment: MC 69-93

Thursday, October 29: CEP. Christian life in relationship: sexuality

Assignment: MC 94-133

(Mon., Nov. 2: Last day to drop a class and receive a grade of “W”)

Tuesday, November 3: CEP. Eschatology: the final judgment and Christian hope

Assignment: CF 196-208; MC 134-137

“I believe in the Holy Spirit”

Thursday, November 5: CEP. Pneumatology: the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and spirituality

Assignment: CF 163-169

(Mon., Nov. 9: HOLIDAY; Registration for Spring Semester begins.)

Tuesday, November 10: CEP. The Trinity

Assignment: CF 41-45; MC 153-171

*“the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,
the resurrection of the body and life everlasting”*

Thursday, November 12: CEP. Ecclesiology: marks and models of the Church
Assignment: CF 149-161

Tuesday, November 17: CEP. The communion of saints and popular Catholicism in Spain
Assignment: MC 172-227

Thursday, November 19: CEP. Ecumenism in Spain and the world: the family tree of the Christian faith and variations in belief and practice
Assignment: MC VII-XVI

Tuesday, November 24: CEP. The Sacraments: Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation
Assignment: CF 169-177

Thursday, November 26: CEP. The Sacraments: Reconciliation, Matrimony, the Sacrament of the Sick and Holy Orders
ROUGH DRAFT OF "THIS I BELIEVE" ESSAY DUE

Tuesday, December 1: CEP. Christianity and other religions
Assignment: CF 210-227

Thursday, December 3: Interreligious dialogue. Peer review of "This I believe" essays.

Tuesday, December 8: HOLIDAY

Thursday, December 10: Last day of class. Review for final examination.
FINAL DRAFT OF "THIS I BELIEVE ESSAY DUE"

Friday, December 18: FINAL EXAMINATION, 12:00-15:00

"Amen."

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
 the Creator of heaven and earth,
 and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:
 Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit,
 born of the Virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died, and was buried.
 He descended into hell.
 The third day He arose again from the dead.
 He ascended into heaven
 and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,
 whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.
 I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy catholic church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and life everlasting.
 Amen.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
 maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.
 We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
 the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,
 God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
 begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father ;
 through him all things were made.
 For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
 was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human.
 For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.
 On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
 he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
 He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
 and his kingdom will have no end.
 We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
 who proceeds from the father and the Son,
 who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
 who has spoken through the prophets.
 We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
 We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
 We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.
 Amen.