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This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.

### **MALA 60970-480: Religion and Secularity in Contemporary Thought (Syllabus)**

<p><b>Semester/Year:</b> Fall 2014 <b>Class location:</b> online <b>Class Meeting time(s):</b> Aug. 25 to Dec. 19 <b>Instructor Name:</b> Charles Bellinger, Assoc. Prof. of Theology and Ethics (Brite Divinity School) <b>Office:</b> Library <b>Telephone:</b> 817-257-7668 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:c.bellinger@tcu.edu">c.bellinger@tcu.edu</a></p> <p><b>Office hours:</b> by appointment</p>	 A portrait photograph of Charles Bellinger, a man with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a blue collared shirt and a grey suit jacket. He is looking directly at the camera against a solid purple background.
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#### **Required texts and additional resources**

Chesterton, G. K. *Orthodoxy*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 1995. ISBN-13: 978-0898705522 \$11\* [available free on Kindle]

Girard, René, João Cezar de Castro Rocha, and Pierpaolo Antonello. *Evolution and Conversion: Dialogues on the Origins of Culture*. London: T & T Clark, 2007. ISBN-13: 978-0567032522 \$31\*

Hart, David Bentley. *The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2013. ISBN-13: 978-0300166842 \$19\*

Prothero, Stephen R. *God Is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World--and Why Their Differences Matter*. New York: HarperOne, 2010.

ISBN-13: 978-0061571282 \$14\*

Wilson, A. N. *God's Funeral*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1999. ISBN-13: 978-0393047455 \$4\*

\*these are list prices; books can often be obtained for less through various vendors.

There will be additional online readings provided by the instructor.

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### **Course Description**

After an overview of the major world religions and the historical process of secularization in the modern West, this course will address certain key topics, such as: How have religious thinkers responded to the modern critiques of religion? What is the relationship between religion and science? . . . religion and morality? . . . religion and violence? . . . religion and human rights?

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### **Learning Outcomes**

Students will be able to:

- summarize accurately the central beliefs of the major world religions and contemporary secular thought.
- analyze and critique books and essays which defend or attack the continuing relevance of religion in the modern world.
- write a substantive review essay on a book relevant to the issues raised in the course.
- MLA Program Outcome: "Students will develop and execute their ideas of the intellectual connections of major and global issues by relating these issues to one another on a comparative cultural basis using research, analysis, and writing."

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### **Instructional Methods**

#### **Course procedures:**

1. Online discussions of essays and books.

#### **Requirements and grading:**

1. Online participation (threaded discussions 60%, journal entries 20%). Students will post responses to the reading assignments 4-5 days each week. Participation will receive a letter grade each week. Higher grades will be earned

through demonstrating the ability to understand the reading assignments accurately and respond to their arguments in a substantive way. Being able to dialogue with other students in the class respectfully and with philosophical maturity will be valued, but the grading will focus more on the responses to the readings.

2. Review essay (20%). (6-9 pages; research beyond the course assignments is not required or expected)

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### Course Schedule

Week 1, Aug. 25-29	
book	Prothero, 1-130
online essays	Ayaan Hirsi Ali, "How (and Why) I Became an Infidel" Karen Armstrong, "The God of All Faiths"
Week 2, Sept. 1-5	
book	Prothero, 131-202, 243-278, 317-340
online essays	Sam Harris, excerpts from <i>The End of Faith</i>
Week 3, Sept. 8-12	
book	Wilson, ch. 1-5
online essays	John Stuart Mill, excerpts George Eliot, "Evangelical Teaching"
Week 4, Sept. 15-19	
book	Wilson, ch. 7-11
online essays	
Week 5, Sept. 22-26	
book	Wilson, ch. 12-15
online essays	Friedrich Nietzsche, excerpts
Week 6, Sept. 29-Oct. 3	
book	Chesterton, ch. 1-6
online essays	Søren Kierkegaard, excerpts Fyodor Dostoevsky, excerpts
Week 7, Oct. 6-10	
book	Chesterton, ch. 8-9
online essays	Karl Barth, excerpts Martin Buber, <i>The Way of Man</i>

	Simone Weil, "Human Personality"
<b>Week 8, Oct. 13-17</b>	
book	Hart, 1-86
online essays	Richard Dawkins, excerpts et al.
<b>Week 9, Oct. 20-24</b>	
book	Hart, 87-237
online essays	
<b>Week 10, Oct. 27-31</b>	
book	Hart, 238-332
online essays	Elizabeth Anderson, "If God Is Dead, Is Everything Permitted?" Glenn Tinder, "Can We Be Good Without God?"
<b>Week 11, Nov. 3-7</b>	
book	Girard, 1-88
online essays	Mark Juergensmeyer, excerpts from <i>Terror in the Mind of God</i> William Cavanaugh, "Does Religion Cause Violence?: Behind the Common Question Lies a Morass of Unclear Thinking."
<b>Week 12, Nov. 10-14</b>	
book	Girard, 96-225
online essays	
<b>Week 13, Nov. 17-21</b>	
book	Girard, 234-262
online essays	Lynn Hunt on rights Richard Rorty on rights Christian Smith on rights Alan Dershowitz on rights Rowan Williams on rights
<b>Week 14, Nov. 24-28</b>	
	No assignments this week
<b>Week 15, Dec. 1-5</b>	
online essays	Readings to be announced
<b>Week 16, Dec. 8-12</b>	
	Read and respond to essays by other students

## Pearson LearningStudio (eCollege)

- If you have not yet taken the Student Tutorial, please exit this course and do so immediately. Once you have finished, return to this course and continue. The Student tutorial is listed on your personal student homepage. To access it, click on "Exit Course" at the bottom of this page. Then click on the "Student Tutorial" on your home page. Follow the instructions. Good luck!
- If you experience any technical problems during your usage of this online course, please do not hesitate to contact the HELP DESK (at Pearson LearningStudio (eCollege) ). They can be reached by phone or by email 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

email: [helpdesk@tcuglobal.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tcuglobal.edu) phone: **1-800-826-1665**

For questions about logging into Pearson LearningStudio (eCollege) visit the online video:

<http://www.elearning.tcu.edu/resources/howtologinvideo/howtologinvideo.asp>

If, however, you have a course related issue (course content, assignment troubles, quiz difficulties) please contact the professor during office hours by phone or (preferably) by email.

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## TCU Campus Resources for Students

**\*\*TCU Campus Resources for Students:** Many resources exist on the TCU campus that may be helpful to students: Mary Coats Burnett Library (257-7117); Center for Academic Services (257-7486, Sadler Hall. 1022); the William L. Adams Writing Center (257-7221, Reed Hall 419); Student Development Services (257-7855, BLUU 2003); and Office of Religious & Spiritual Life (257-7830, Jarvis Hall), Campus Life (257-7926, Sadler Hall 2006), and the Counseling, Testing, and Mental Health Center (257-7863, Brown Lupton Health Center).

**\*\*Email Notification:** Only the official TCU student email address will be used for all course notification. It is your responsibility to check your TCU email on a regular basis.

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## **TCU Mission**

*To educate individuals to think and act as ethical leaders and responsible citizens in the global community*

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