



ESSENTIAL CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE I

CSAP 541 & CSSR 541 (2 Units) On-Campus & Livestream • Course Outline • Spring 2021
Jan 12, 2021 - Feb 27, 2021 • Tuesday 6:30-9:20 P.M.

I. PROFESSOR & CLASS INFORMATION

Professor: Kevin Lewis

Course Title:	Essential Christian Doctrine I & Christian Thought I	
Course Code:	CSAP 541 & CSSR 541	Credit Hours/Units: 2 Units
Term:	Spring 2021	Class Days & Time: 1/12-2/27 (Tuesday) 6:30-9:20 PM
Location:	Biola Campus & Livestream	Dept. Secretary: Megan Stricklin (562) 906-4570
Office Phone:	562-903-6000 X5506	Secretary Email: megan.stricklin@biola.edu
Office Hours:	By Appointment	Office Location: Biola Professional Building
E-Mail:	kevin.lewis@biola.edu	Office Mailing Address: Biola University, Christian Apologetics Program, 13800 Biola Avenue, La Mirada, CA 90639
Course Website:	www.theolaw.org	ITL Website: www.itlnet.org
Dept. Website:	http://biola.edu/apologetics	
School Website:	www.biola.edu	

II. COURSE EXPECTATIONS

This is a required, one-semester core apologetics course. For this course students must carefully read the course outline, view recorded video lectures, attend seven supplemental class lectures, complete the assigned readings, take a final exam based on the lectures, take two online exams based on one of the textbooks, and submit a paper for the other assigned text. (2 units)

III. COURSE DESCRIPTION & TOPICS

Essential Christian Doctrine I (CSAP 541 & CSSR 541)

A presentation and biblical defense of the essential Christian doctrines with special reference to contemporary criticism of the value and truth of doctrinal assertions. Required of M.A. students. (This course is offered every school year.)

Topics: The Essential Christian Doctrine sequence of the Apologetics program surveys the vital topics of Systematic, Elenctic and Polemical Theology. Essential Christian Doctrine I will address the doctrines of Theological Prolegomena, which includes the definitions, divisions and method of theology, and the first part of Theology Proper, which includes the existence of God, the definitions of God, the Knowability of God, the Names of God, the Attributes of God, Deficient Views of God, the Trinity, the Divine Decree, Creation, Providence, and Miracles.

IV. REQUIRED & RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS

A. REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Duncan, J. Lingon, David Hall, *et al.* *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, Global Publishing Services, 2000.
2. Lewis, Kevin. *Essential Christian Doctrine Syllabus*. (Spring 2021 Version). Available online on my Biola faculty webpage at www.theolaw.org.
3. Shedd, W.G.T. *Dogmatic Theology*. 3rd Ed., Grand Rapids: P & R Publishers, 2003.

B. RECOMMENDED TEXTS

1. Beilby, James and Paul Eddy, Eds. *Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views*. Intervarsity Press, 2001.
2. Elwell, Walter A., Ed. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017.
3. Muller, Richard A. *Dictionary of Latin & Greek Theological Terms*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017.

V. DISABILITY SERVICES

Disability Services exist to assist any student who thinks he or she may need such assistance. Students desiring accommodations for this class on the basis of physical learning, psychological and/or emotional disabilities are to contact The Learning Center which houses both learning assistance and disability services. The Learning Center is located in the Biola Library, Upper Level, Room U-137, and this department can be reached by calling 562.906.4542 or by dialing extension #4542 if calling from on campus.

VI. NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

As Christian scholars, we are keenly aware of the power of language, and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable and prejudice free. Good writing and speech do not make unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, sex, or sexual orientation. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the Biola community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of invitation.

Avoid the use of stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, ethnicity, gender, race, language or national origin. Avoid drawing attention to irrelevant identifiers of race or gender. Avoid gender-specific language when referencing people

in general. Avoid terms that assume the universality of human experience, and in particular presume the normativity of the socially dominant group. (Biola Policy Statement)

VII. BIOLA UNIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT

TRUTH~TRANSFORMATION~TESTIMONY

The mission of Biola University is biblically-centered education, scholarship, and service; equipping men and women in mind and character to impact the world for the Lord Jesus Christ.

VIII. COURSE ALIGNMENT WITH PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

Essential Christian Doctrine I (CSAP 541 & CSSR 541)

This master's-level course is a core course required of M.A. Apologetics and M.A. Science & Religion students offered every Spring semester and sometimes in other school terms. Successful completion of this course will prepare students to demonstrate proficiency toward the accomplishment of relevant Program Learning Outcomes listed in the next section.

Apologetics Program Learning Outcomes

1. To Build an intellectual framework, to demonstrate students' understanding of the faith; and to formulate responses to future challenges
2. Display and practice Christ-like character, so as to present and defend the gospel in a winsome manner and gracious spirit
3. Argue effectively to correct misconceptions about historic Christianity; to answer the perennial problems that are offered to discredit Christianity intellectually; and make the case proactively that it is reasonable to put one's faith in Christ

IX. COURSE OBJECTIVES AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

By completion of this course including viewing the video lectures, class participation during the livestream supplemental lectures, assigned readings with assigned student responses, and the practical application of doctrines learned, students will accomplish the following objectives and the following learning outcomes will be assessed and demonstrated:

IDEA Objective #1: Gaining factual knowledge (biblical and theological facts, terminology, and topics) about Theological Prolegomena, which includes the definitions, divisions and method of theology, and the first part of Theology Proper, which includes the existence of God, the definitions of God, the Knowability of God, the Names of God, the Attributes of God, the Deficient Views of God, the Trinity, the Divine Decree, Creation, Providence, and Miracles. (*Essential* emphasis).

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (The learner will demonstrate that he or she has satisfactorily fulfilled IDEA Objective #1 by being able to):

1. **Identify, define and investigate** essential terminology in the assigned theological topics listed above. (Fulfilled by classroom lectures and the Shedd Exams.).
2. **Investigate** some selected topics in the theology of creation (Fulfilled by Duncan paper.).

IDEA Objective #2: Learning Bible doctrines about the assigned theological topics listed above and interrelating these doctrines into a defensible theological system (*Essential* emphasis).

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (The learner will demonstrate that he or she has satisfactorily fulfilled IDEA Objective #2 by being able to):

1. **Explain** briefly the major doctrines of the assigned theological topics listed above. (Fulfilled by the Shedd Exams & Duncan paper).

IDEA Objective #4: Developing skills in communicating doctrines about the assigned theological topics in written form (*Important* emphasis).

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (The learner will demonstrate that he or she has satisfactorily fulfilled IDEA Objective #4 by being able to):

1. **Produce** appropriate theological responses to theological questions by means of the Shedd Exams and be able to state the essence of a particular theological doctrine by means of the Duncan paper.
2. **Develop** in written form an inventory of the student's own ability to argue for these doctrines by means of their Shedd Exams & Duncan paper.

X. ACADEMIC HONESTY

Biola University is committed to ethical practice in teaching, scholarship, and service. As such, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please see the undergraduate/graduate student handbook and/or the departmental/program/school policy on academic honesty. It is imperative that you present all written, oral, and/or performed work with a clear indication of the source of that work. If it is completely your own, you are encouraged to present it as such, taking pleasure in ownership of your own created work. However, it is also imperative that you give full credit to any and all others whose work you have included in your presentation via paraphrase, direct quotation, and/or performance, citing the name(s) or the author(s)/creator(s) and the source of the work with appropriate bibliographic information. To do otherwise is to put oneself in jeopardy of being sanctioned for an act or acts of plagiarism that can carry serious consequences up to and including expulsion from the university.

<http://studentlife.biola.edu/handbook/policies-procedure/academic-integrity/>

XI. LEARNING TASKS (ASSIGNMENTS)

A. COURSE OUTLINE

The student must carefully read the entire course outline prior to the commencement of the course.

B. ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION IN-CLASS OR LIVESTREAM SUPPLEMENTAL LECTURES

1. The student must regularly attend the class and be prepared to participate in the livestream supplemental lectures and class discussions when appropriate. See the course policies below for an expanded discussion of the attendance requirements.
2. Note that the ECD lectures will be livestreamed remotely for the Spring 2021 semester based on Covid 19 concerns and related Los Angeles County and Biola policies.
3. The professor will post links to the livestream lectures on Canvas as needed for each class session.

C. RECORDED VIDEO LECTURES

1. Students shall view the recorded Essential Christian Doctrine (ECD) lecture videos in accordance with the schedule provided for this course. The in-class or livestreamed lectures will supplement the recorded lectures.
2. The lectures are based on and follow the ECD course syllabi (e.g., ECD Prolegomena Syllabus) which can be downloaded at www.theolaw.org.
3. The ECD lecture videos can be found on the professor's Youtube channel (The Institute for Theology & Law) at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCaDSLRpMvZwru7t3u-fzc3Q/videos>
4. A detailed schedule for viewing the ECD lecture videos with links to each video and the corresponding syllabi necessary to follow the lecture content will be posted on Canvas prior to the beginning of the course.

D. FINAL EXAM

There will be an online, objective final exam taken on Canvas. The exam will include material from the ECD course syllabi and class lectures. A study guide will be given prior to the exam. Note the final exam will not include materials from the course textbooks.

E. READING

You will complete the assigned reading for the course as listed in the course schedule. You will also complete certain written assignments in connection with your reading. (See discussion of these assignments, *infra*.)

F. SHEDD EXAMS (DOGMATIC THEOLOGY TEXT)

1. Introduction

Before reading the general guidelines for this assignment, please read in their entirety the extended entries at the end of this course outline on choosing a systematic theology text and the nature of theological education at Biola University. These sections are entitled: "Theology Textbooks & Shedd" and "Teaching & Learning Theology at Biola."

2. General Exam Guidelines

- a. The student must read the assigned pages of Shedd listed in the Shedd Exemplars.
- b. In connection with your reading of Shedd's *Dogmatic Theology*, there are questions and answers provided in each section of the Shedd Exemplars for you to study for the two Shedd Exams.
- c. There will be a Shedd Exam Part 1 and a Shedd Exam Part 2 that the student will take online on Canvas by the assigned date.
- d. Note that the Shedd Exemplars are the study guide for the Shedd Exams, containing the questions and answers you will need to study for the Shedd Exams.
- e. The Shedd Exemplars are available for download from my Biola faculty website at <http://www.theolaw.org>. Please check to ensure you are downloading the correct versions of the Shedd Exemplars for this course.
- f. The Shedd Exams are open book and open note (e.g., Shedd Exemplar). They are also objective exams with True-False and Multiple Choice questions, based on the study questions and answers assigned for Shedd and provided in the Shedd Exemplar.

G. REACTION PAPER (DUNCAN TEXT)

The student will write a reaction paper for the Duncan text. For the paper, please observe the following procedure:

1. Guidelines

- a. The student must read the entire text. If there is a preface, introduction, or appendices, for the assigned text, the students must read these sections of the book.
- b. The word count for the paper should be 750 words (+ or – 50). Place the word count on the first page of your report.¹
- c. Note that the student may elect to include or exclude the headers, footnotes, and student information in the reported word count.
- d. The paper must be typed, double-spaced with one inch margins, using a 12 point font. It must have page numbers at the bottom of each page.
- e. **Headers:** Use appropriate headers to make your paper's structure evident at a glance. This means each of the three sections of the paper should have a header.
- f. **Format**
 - (1) The student *must* submit papers in the format specified in this course outline.
 - (2) At the top of the page, type the title of the assignment, your name, student number, course information (e.g., ECD I, *et al.*), and the word count (e.g., 750).
 - (3) See the example, *infra*, for formatting details.
- g. Spelling and grammar count. See the explanation, *infra*, for details.
- h. **Footnotes**

Be certain to footnote your work. That is, when you directly quote or allude to any

portion of the book, properly reference your material. Failure to properly footnote your points will result in a reduction of the paper grade.

2. **Substantive Content of the Reaction Paper – Read Carefully Here!**
 - a. Select the three (3) most important facts, truths, arguments, or principles you learned from reading the text. Here “important” can mean that they had the greatest impact on you or you thought they were the most important points the author made or, perhaps, they were the most helpful to you in some way.
 - b. For each of the three points:
 - (1) Describe and explain the author’s point you selected.
 - (2) Explain why the point was helpful, important, or impactful to you.
 - c. Do not include either an Introduction or Conclusion section in this paper. Just write on the three selected points.
 - d. Each of the three sections should be approximately 250 words. Give the word count for each of the three sections.
 - e. See the sample outline and example paper at the end of this document for an example before writing and submitting your paper.

H. SUBMITTING WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

1. Required Information

Students must have their student name, student number, course name, semester, title of the assignment, and any other required information on each submitted assignment.

2. Submitting Assignments on Canvas

- a. For all assignments, please submit them on Canvas—on or before the due date.
- b. All assignments must be submitted as Microsoft Word documents.

3. Required Labeling of Student Assignments [READ CAREFULLY HERE]

- a. Each assignment you send as a MS Word document must be properly labeled.
- b. The file name shall contain the following information:
 - (1) Semester
 - (2) Course Name
 - (3) Assignment Name
 - (4) Full Student Name (last name first name)
- c. **Reaction Paper File Name**
 - (1) File Name: SPR21 ECD1 C Duncan Last Name First Name
 - (2) Example: SPR21 ECD1 C Duncan Lewis Kevin

d. **Naming Clarification**

- (1) Please do not include quotation marks, hyphens, or underlining in your subject line or file names.
- (2) In sum, please use spaces between words, rather than hyphens, dashes, or underlining, when writing your Subject Lines and File Names.
- (3) Please follow the guidelines for emails and naming files as it helps me organize the large number of student emails and files I receive each semester.

XII. IMPORTANT DUE DATES

Week	Date	Events & Assignments Due
1	1/12	Course Introduction/Lecture
2	1/19	Lecture
3	1/26	Lecture
4	2/2	Lecture
5	2/9	Lecture
6	2/16	Lecture
7	2/23	Lecture
	2/25	Final Exam Due
	2/27	Duncan Reaction Paper & Shedd Exams Due

XIII. ASSESSMENT (GRADING)

A. GRADING CHART (ASSIGNMENT WEIGHT)

The value of each assignment as it relates to your final grade can be seen in the following scale:

Assignment	% of Final Grade
Duncan Reaction Paper	20%
Shedd Exam Part 1	20%
Shedd Exam Part 2	20%
Final Exam	40%

B. GRADING CRITERIA

1. **Quality of Student Work [Read Carefully Here]**

- a. In order for a student to receive an “A” grade on any assignment, the student must do outstanding, graduate level work.
- b. If the student submits failing, below average, average, or above average graduate level work, the assigned letter grade will reflect the quality of the work submitted.

2. **Grading Standards for All Written Work**

Whereas Biola University desires to maintain the highest standards with respect to the composition of all written work, any student paper exhibiting poor grammar, spelling errors, typographical errors, or other substandard academic expression shall have the overall grade for that paper reduced accordingly. Generally, a paper will be deemed substandard and ineligible to receive an “A” grade when it averages three or more compositional errors per

page. Moreover, at the discretion of the professor, the substandard paper may be returned to the student for correction and resubmission with appropriate grade penalties. Graduate papers are expected to demonstrate a higher level of academic expression than undergraduate papers. Students deficient in writing skills may seek assistance at the Biola Writing Center.

3. Formalities & Mechanics of Assignments

a. **Format & Required Information:** At the top of the first page of all written assignments the student *must* have the:

- (1) Title of the assignment,
- (2) Student's name,
- (3) Student's identification number,
- (4) Title of the course,
- (5) Date of the course (e.g., Spring 2021),
- (6) Name of the professor, and
- (7) SEE EXAMPLES:

For any additional information requested for a specific assignment (e.g., word count), the student may examine the specific assignment criteria and the sample outline of the assignment given at the end of this Course Outline.

b. **Following Instructions & Grade Penalties**

- (1) The grade for all student assignments will be reduced if the student fails to follow the directions listed in this course outline. Please consult the course outline when completing your assignments.
- (2) Note that the grade for all assignments will be reduced one point for each instance of a failure to conform to the guidelines.
- (3) Note that all of the requirements listed in the course outline are mandatory, not discretionary, for students. All assignments will be graded according to the criteria listed in this course outline.
- (4) Please check your work carefully before you submit it for grading.

4. Late Work

- a. All assignments, including Confirmation Emails and Reading Reports, must be submitted on time. All late assignments will *be reduced one percentage point* for each calendar day they are tardy.
- b. Written assignments must be emailed on or before the due date.
- c. Only in the case of *unanticipated* emergencies will an exception to this policy be granted. If you believe you meet the requirement for an exception, submit a detailed explanation to the professor via email.

5. Academic Dishonesty

- a. University Policy: See above.
- b. Professor’s Class Policy: Any student who represents the words or ideas of another as his or her own without giving credit for the source (i.e. plagiarism) or who cheats on an exam will not receive credit for the course and will be referred for additional disciplinary action.

6. Guidelines for Citations in Written Assignments

- a. The student must cite the source (e.g., have a footnote) for any idea found in the student’s paper that is not the student’s original idea or a matter of common knowledge.
- b. Secondary source citations must be properly cited with reference to the primary text. Thus, if an author cites another author, the footnote must reflect this citation-in-a-citation relationship. See the footnote below for an example.²

7. Additional Grading Criteria for Written Work

The student must examine and employ the criteria listed in the Written Assignment Code Key when preparing written assignments. See the Code Key at the end of this course outline, *infra*. The quality of the written assignments will be measured by the applicable criteria in the Code Key.

8. “Incomplete” Grade

- a. A temporary mark of "IN" (Incomplete Grade) will be issued in special cases when approved by the Associate Provost of Academic Administration for undergraduate students or the dean of the respective graduate school. “IN” grades course assignments are normally completed no later than five weeks after the end of the term. In the event of the inability of a student to complete the coursework by the approved deadline, the Office of the Registrar will assign the grade which the student has earned by the end of term.
- b. To read more about Biola’s policies and procedures regarding absences, view [Biola’s Student Handbook](#).

B. GRADING SCALE

Final grades will be awarded according to the following scale:

Graduate	Scale
A = 96-100 points (Excellent)	C = 78-80 points (Average)
A- = 93-95 points	C- = 75-77 points
B+ = 90-92 points	D+ = 73-74 points
B = 87-89 points (Above Average)	D = 71-72 points (Below Average)
B- = 84-86 points	D- = 69-70 points
C+ = 81-83 points	F = 0-68 points (Fail)

² Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, first ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 109, cited in Walter Martin, *The Maze of Mormonism*, revised and enlarged edition (Ventura: Regal Books, 1978), 178-179. [Example of a secondary source citation]

C. THE PRIVACY ACT

In order to comply with the Privacy Act, professors are not able to leave graded papers and exams in offices or designated areas for the purpose of returning those items to students.

XIV. GENERAL CLASS RULES & PROFESSOR POLICIES

A. DOCTRINAL EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS: BIOLA’S ARTICLES OF FAITH & STATEMENT OF BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

1. Since its inception, Biola has been a conservative evangelical protestant institution. Biola’s theological views are affirmed in its Articles of Faith & Statement of Biblical Principles (AFSBP), which function as the doctrinal standard for the university. This course is taught with a presumption that these doctrines are true. As such, students may not actively argue against Biola’s doctrinal views in this course. Biola’s AFSBP can be viewed at <http://www.biola.edu/about/doctrinal-statement/>.
2. Since Biola’s AFSBP does not address every possible theological issue, the university permits a diversity of opinion on issues not covered by the AFSBP, such as the doctrines involved in the Calvinism-Arminianism debate.
3. Finally, note that this expectation is not intended to hinder important reflection, discussion, or queries on these matters. Students are encouraged to engage in candid discussions, ask questions about any theological issue, raise counterarguments they have encountered, or even express genuine doubts or confusion about these items. The goal is to foster genuine camaraderie, unity, and *koinonia* among students as fellow travelers in their theological education.

B. LECTURES, SYLLABUS & COPYRIGHT

1. The course syllabus, handouts, Power Point presentations, and class lectures are the intellectual property of the professor. As such they are subject to the protections of Federal Copyright Law (Title 17 of the United States Code).
2. Students desiring to copy course materials, printed or electronic, or record lectures must first obtain permission from the professor. The professor reserves all rights unless explicitly waived.

C. MISCELLANEOUS POLICIES

1. ***Technology in the Classroom***
 - a. ***Cell Phones:*** Please turn off or set to silent mode all devices, electronic or otherwise, that may cause a distraction in class. Items include, but are not limited to, cell phones, PDAs, IPods, and pagers. It is an expectation that both faculty and students will neither take calls, nor leave the classroom to take calls during class—except in the case of emergencies.
 - b. ***Cell Phones & Exams:*** Cell phones and related items must be switched off and put away during exams, unless the professor gives explicit permission otherwise. Students with cell phones or related items on during exams will receive a failing grade for that exam.

- c. *Computers:* Computers and PDAs may be used during class for note taking purposes. Any other use, such as for email, is not permitted. Students must wait for breaks or the end of class to use their computers for non-note taking purposes.

2. *Minimizing Interruptions and Distractions*

- a. Talking: Please do not talk in class. It is a distraction for me and your fellow students.
- b. Work: Please do not work on assignments for other classes while in the classroom.
- c. Punctuality: Please try to be punctual.
- d. Leaving Early: If a student must leave the class before the scheduled ending time, the student must inform the professor of this fact and sit as close to the door as possible to minimize the interruption to the class when she leaves.

3. *Classroom Etiquette*

- a. Do not interrupt either the professor or a fellow student when they are talking.
- b. Students must raise their hands to ask a question. Often, I will not answer a question immediately if I am in the middle of a lecture. When I have finished a particular section of the lecture, I will ask for questions.

4. *Fairness to All Students*

- a. Please do not request an exemption from the rules or to have a deadline extended unless there is an unanticipated emergency. It is presumed that all students and faculty are busy with jobs, church, family and other issues. Students must adjust their schedules to meet the deadlines. If not, they will receive the appropriate grade penalty.
- b. Please do not ask me to change your grade unless I have made an error in calculating the grade. There is a single grading standard for all students. I will not create a different grading standard for any individual student.

5. *Missing Class*

- a. The student is responsible for all lecture materials covered in class. If the student misses class or is tardy, the student should ask a fellow student for his or her notes for that missed class or portion of the class. After the student has carefully reviewed the notes, the student may request clarification from the professor.
- b. If the student knows he will miss a class, the student does not need to contact me in advance. I will take attendance at each class session.

6. *Email Etiquette*

- a. Please treat your emails as formal communications. Use complete sentences. Do not use a “texting” style for your messages.
- b. Be certain to include your full name and the course name in each email until I direct you to do otherwise.
- c. Be certain to include the program in which you are enrolled such as Talbot, or the M.A. Apologetics Program.

D. ATTENDANCE

1. Regular attendance of the course is required. I will take attendance in each class session to verify your presence or absence.
2. Per University policy, if you miss more than 20% of the class sessions for a course you will not be able to receive credit for the course.
3. The specific number of classes you are permitted to miss and still receive credit for the course is as follows:
 - a. For the Cults of America course that meets 15 times, you may miss up to, but no more than, 3 class sessions and still receive credit for the course.
 - b. For the Essential Christian Doctrine course that meets for 7 weeks, you may miss up to, but no more than, 1.4 class sessions and still receive credit for the course.
4. Arriving late or leaving early counts as a partial absence in proportion to the time you missed.
5. If other commitments prohibit the student from meeting the attendance requirement as outlined above, the student should drop the course and take it when the student is able to meet the attendance requirement.
6. Note that the professor has no discretion to grant an exception to this policy.

XV. SAMPLE OUTLINE & PAPER

A. SAMPLE STUDENT REACTION PAPER (NOTE: THIS IS AN A+ PAPER.)

CIVIL GOVERNMENT

By Robert Culver

Student Name: Luther Martin

Student Number: 103117

Theology of Civil Government

Fall 1517 – Professor Kevin Lewis

Culver Reaction Paper

Word Count (Excluding Headers, Footnotes, and Student Information): 799

Fact #1: Paul Was a Shrewd Evangelist in Deciding Where to Travel (Word Count: 274)

1. Issue. Culver’s explanation of the four levels of Roman society—slave, *peregrinus*, *Latinus*, and *civitas*—and their corresponding legal rights was quite enlightening.³ For example, it helped me to better understand why Paul, a full citizen (*civitas*), was exempt from crucifixion and therefore beheaded, while Peter, a free man but only a provincial *peregrine*, was crucified.⁴

Even more fascinating, however, was Culver’s observation that “Paul was careful to move not only within the bounds of the empire (long observed), but within certain administrative districts and municipalities. . . . [W]herever Christianity had been preached, Roman authorities had come forward to restrain the evil forces seeking to destroy it.”⁵ I was unaware that Paul concentrated his ministry on the most fully “Romanized” elements in the population of the cities he visited.⁶ I was also unaware that Paul intentionally *avoided* particular cities during his travels

³ Robert D. Culver, *Civil Government: A Biblical View* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000), 212.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 220, 239.

⁶ Ibid., 221.

(e.g., Commagene), specifically those where the Roman rule of law was less likely to be followed, and that he targeted Roman cities where his legal rights would be upheld.⁷

2. Importance. It was instructive to see the shrewd manner in which Paul made use of the legal rights and protections granted to him by the Roman government.⁸ Given Jesus' execution at the hands of Pontius Pilate and Nero's brutal persecution, I was surprised to learn that Rome's system of religious tolerance, due process of law, and orderly civil government was the church's *ally* during its early decades. Sadly, these same religious liberties that faded in the first century are now beginning to fade in the West. Nevertheless, I came away with some practical biblical guidance for utilizing secular legal protections when conducting ministry.

Fact #2: Romans 13:1–7 Can Be Squared with the American Revolution (Word Count: 268)

1. Issue. Culver states that Romans 13:1–7 is the most important text for understanding “the subject of the place of human civil government in the providence of God.”⁹ Culver interprets this passage as “a strong demand that every Christian must obey the *de facto* government”¹⁰ in the region where he lives, because “resistance to constituted government is resistance to God's ordinance.”¹¹

What then of the American Revolution? As Englishmen, the American colonists still retained a number of legal rights and freedoms.¹² Moreover, King George III never demanded from his subjects the devotion that belongs to God alone. Nevertheless, American ministers were essential in convincing the American population to support independence. As William

⁷ Ibid., 221.

⁸ Ibid., 222.

⁹ Ibid., 244.

¹⁰ Ibid., 248.

¹¹ Ibid., 251.

McLoughlin observes, the American Revolution was “a Religious Revival,”¹³ and among Protestant sermons “religious motives were paramount.”¹⁴ How is this consistent with Romans 13:1–7?

Culver offers a clue in his earlier chapter on Messianic expectations: “[T]he American Revolution [was] [a] conservative revolution[], not [a] radical one[]. . . [It was] the act[] of official civil authorities who thought of themselves as acting in the interests of and as agents of orderly, legal government[.]”¹⁵

2. Helpfulness. What stands out to me is the distinction between *forceful resistance* to legitimate government, such as the *coup d'état* of the Bolshevik revolution, and peaceful civil disobedience. Those who signed the Declaration of Independence took up arms *after* the British attacked, not before, and sought “to preserve the values and established order of the past rather than to destroy them.”¹⁶ It seems that the Founders launched the *right kind* of revolution, and in doing so they acted consistently with Romans 13:1–7.

Fact #3: Rehabilitation Theories of Criminal Punishment Are Flawed (Word Count: 257)

1. Issue. One of my legal casebooks remarks that “utilitarian ideas [such as rehabilitation] were absorbed into a religiously inspired humanitarian reform movement that identified punishment with penance and spiritual redemption.”¹⁷ As Culver notes, this thinking is

¹² “[T]he American colonists fought for freedom as some of the freest and most prosperous people of their time.” Os Guinness, *A Free People's Suicide: Sustainable Freedom and the American Future* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 45.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 109, citing William G. McLoughlin, “The American Revolution as a Religious Revival,” *New England Quarterly* 40 (March 1967): 99–110.

¹⁴ Culver, *Civil Government*, 109, citing Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind from the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), x, 668.

¹⁵ Culver, *Civil Government*, 108.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ John Kaplan, Robert Weisberg, and Guyora Binder, *Criminal Law: Cases and Materials*, 6th ed. (New York: Aspen Publishers, 2008), 32.

deeply misguided: “The state is not to shape [men’s] opinions. Nor should the state forgive their crimes. This is God’s prerogative. . . . Civil government by itself cannot reform individuals.”¹⁸

2. Helpfulness. I thought Culver did an excellent job of marshalling the biblical data to demonstrate that the government has no legitimate role in *reforming* criminals. Culver’s warning that “government cannot make [men] industrious, wise, or good, for government powers cannot touch the heart of man wherein lie the springs of emotion”¹⁹ is a sound one. Consequently, I agree that the government “should never be in direct charge of moral instruction.”²⁰ While we should expect the government to restrain violent men and provide legal protections for life and property, only the church and families can serve as reformatory agents for criminals, for these are God’s intended vehicles of transformative grace.²¹

Culver’s theology of civil government therefore has significant implications for prosecutors, defense counsel, criminal jurisprudence, prison reform, sentencing guidelines, and the like. Government efforts at rehabilitation are not noble; they wrongly blend criminal justice with spiritual redemption in an act of secular hubris that is doomed to fail. Should I ever find myself in a position to shape public policy, Culver has provided me with sound reasons for advocating retributive theories of justice that reflect the proper relationship between God, man, and state.

¹⁸ Culver, *Civil Government*, 275.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 275–76.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 276.

²¹ *Ibid.*

B. EXAMPLE OF FORMAT FOR CREATION REACTION PAPER***THE GENESIS DEBATE***

By J. Lingon Duncan, *et al.*

Student Name: Student Name
Student Number: Student ID #
Essential Christian Doctrine I
Spring 2021– Lewis
Word Count (Total): *e.g.*, 750

A. Argument/Point/Truth/Etc. One: Title (Word Count: 247)

This section will be a brilliant, but concise summary of one of your selected best arguments, *etc.* followed by the reasons why you believe it was a persuasive and helpful argument.

1. *Summary of the Argument*
2. *Reasons Why the Argument was Persuasive*

B. Argument/Point/Truth/Etc. Two: Title (Word Count: 253)

This section will be a brilliant, but concise summary of one of your selected best arguments, *etc.* followed by the reasons why you believe it was a persuasive and helpful argument.

1. *Summary of the Argument*
2. *Reasons Why the Argument was Persuasive*

C. Argument/Point/Truth/Etc. Three: Title (Word Count: 249)

This section will be a brilliant, but concise summary of one of your selected best arguments, *etc.* followed by the reasons why you believe it was a persuasive and helpful argument.

1. *Summary of the Argument*
2. *Reasons Why the Argument was Persuasive*

XVI. THEOLOGY TEXTBOOKS & SHEDD

A. WHY CHOOSE SHEDD AS A TEXTBOOK?

1. Students should note that Shedd is a Reformed (i.e., “Calvinist”) theologian. As such, *Dogmatic Theology* proffers a Reformed view on the respective doctrinal issues, such as election, and engages in polemic against contrasting views, such as types of Arminianism and Lutheranism. Students should also note that Shedd was selected as a textbook due to his extensive, detailed discussions of essential doctrines such as the Trinity, Deity of Christ, the Atonement, and his breadth and depth as a theologian, and *not* for his polemic against competing evangelical traditions.
2. Also, please note that selecting a systematic theology text for a school like Biola is difficult because it is an interdenominational-non-denominational school with a minimalist evangelical doctrinal statement. As such, at Biola we have 4 Point Calvinists (Amyraldians), 5 Point Calvinists, simple foreknowledge Arminians, Molinistic Arminians, Wesleyan Arminians, Charismatics, Cessationists, and so forth. As such, no single theology text will make everyone happy as there is no multi-denominational systematic theology that has been written. The closest book to a comparative systematic theology is F. E. Mayer’s, *The Religious Bodies of America*. This was published in 1961 by a Lutheran theologian. The basic information it gives on each theological group is accurate and helpful, but it is not a full systematic theology text.
3. I also understand that some of the vocabulary in Shedd is difficult for beginning theological students. However, every graduate discipline and profession, such as law or medicine, has its own technical vocabulary. It is no different for graduate level theology students. For this reason, I recommend Richard Muller’s *Dictionary of Latin & Greek Theological Terms* in the course outline. Muller was written for the purpose of helping graduate theology students understand technical terms in works like Shedd and Turretin.

B. WHY NOT USE GRUDEM’S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY?

1. Many students have asked me why I do not use a text like Grudem’s Systematic Theology, which is easier to understand.
2. I know many undergraduate professors and some graduate professors use Grudem as a text.
3. I heartily concur that Grudem is a clear and easy to read systematic theology text. It is one of the most popular texts around today. However, this text was intentionally written as a high school to undergraduate level text, even though Dr. Grudem, an excellent scholar and theologian, could have written it at a higher level. As such, I elect not to use it for a graduate level theology course.

C. SHEDD & ARMINIANISM

1. One item students will read in Shedd that requires clarification is his use of the term “Semi-Pelagian” with respect to Arminianism. Regarding the accusation of Semi-Pelagianism, Monergists (including Calvinists), have often labeled Arminianism as a Semi-Pelagianism theological system because, (1) in some cases some popular “Arminians” (such as Charles Finney), crossed the theological line into the Semi-Pelagian, but were not explicitly rejected as Arminians by their fellow Arminians (generally) and (2) Monergists tend to reject the sufficiency of the explanations and distinctions proffered by Arminians against the charge of Semi-Pelagianism.
2. This is one area where Shedd needs to be more precise in his critique. Classic and Wesleyan Arminians and Calvinists both affirm human moral inability after Original Sin, the inability of the natural man in spiritual matters, and the absolute necessity for prevenient grace for salvation. And with the Calvinists, Arminians agree that apart from God’s grace no one would willingly come to Christ, which distinguishes the Classic and Wesleyan Arminian views from Semi-Pelagianism and Finneyism, both of which reject the absolute need for prevenient grace.
3. In sum, I disagree with Shedd’s use of the term “Semi-Pelagian” as applied to all Arminianism. Each Calvinistic, Lutheran, Arminian, Wesleyan Arminian, and Amyraldian theologian or student should be assessed as individuals according to the arguments they actually proffer, not on the basis of the group to which they belong.

XVII. TEACHING & LEARNING THEOLOGY AT BIOLA

A. TEACHING & LEARNING THEOLOGY AT AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL UNIVERSITY

1. Unlike other academic disciplines, there are inherent pedagogical difficulties associated with teaching theology at an interdenominational Christian university.
2. Unlike a Greek or Hebrew course, all students arrive at Biola holding a wide variety of ideas about Christian theology and what it ought to be. This is not true of most other disciplines. For example, most new NT Greek students will not have an opinion about whether New Testament Greek should have a 5 case or 8 case system, but just about everyone has an opinion on issues such as young or old earth creationism, charismatic gifts, or the Calvinism & Arminianism issue.
3. As such, it is common for Biola students to be in disagreement with each other and the professor on discretionary theological issues, that is, doctrinal topics not covered by the Biola Doctrinal Statement and Explanatory Notes.
4. The key for the Biola community is to be charitable towards other believers regarding discretionary theological matters permitted by the Biola doctrinal statement. See the ECD Course Outline regarding doctrinal expectation for students.

B. THIS IS A SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY COURSE.

1. This course is primarily a systematic theology course. It is not a philosophy, philosophy of religion, or general apologetics course.
2. As such, the methodology and substantive content of the course will reflect this fact. Other academic disciplines and methodologies, such as those employed in philosophy, will be considered and employed at the discretion of the professor.
3. The goal for this course is for the student to learn essential Christian doctrine.

C. BIOLA IS A CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICAL PROTESTANT UNIVERSITY.

1. Biola is a conservative evangelical Protestant university.
2. As such, it is defined by the distinctives of the Protestant Reformation. These include, but are not limited to, the following doctrines:
 - a. Justification is by Grace alone (*Sola Gratia*),
 - b. through Faith alone (*Sola Fide*),
 - c. in Christ alone (*Solus Christus*),
 - d. to the Glory of God alone (*Soli Deo Gloria*); and
 - e. *Sola Scriptura*
 - (1) *Sola Scriptura* means the Sixty-Six Books of the Protestant Canon of Scripture are both necessary and sufficient for all matters pertaining to the Christian life.
 - (2) They are the final say on all matters they address (*Sola Scriptura*).
 - (3) The writings of the church fathers, creeds and confessions, and a ministerial use of philosophy can be helpful in the task of doing systematic theology, but they are secondary authorities.
3. Since the student has decided to enroll in this type of institution, that is, a conservative, evangelical Protestant institution, the expectation is that each student will reflect these and other relevant theological presumptions in their work.