



15800 Calvary Rd.
Kansas City, MO 64147

Syllabus

Course: RP239D/ND Introduction to Philosophy*
Credit: 2 Semester Hours
Semester: Fall 2026 (Session 2)
Time: 8:00–9:20 P.M., Monday and Friday, October 19–December 11
Location: Calvary University, CABRE 100 and online classroom
Instructor: Joel T. Williamson, Jr., Th.M.
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I. DESCRIPTION

Introduction to Philosophy presents the historical philosophical movements that have been influential on contemporary worldviews. This introductory course focuses on some of the major ideas foundational to Western philosophy. This course also includes an examination of a variety of philosophers who have contributed to beliefs such as naturalism, idealism, pragmatism, existentialism, etc. Moreover, the course compares and contrasts these secular views to a biblical worldview.

** This course is offered in two formats: in-person and online. Students registered for in-person attend the classes in person, online students attend the classes via the online classroom. For both in-person and online students, assignments and interaction outside of the class period are done in the learning management system.*

II. OBJECTIVES

Competencies to be achieved. The basic goal of this course is not knowledge, but knowhow. “Knowledge is not knowhow until you understand the underlying principles at work and can fit them together into a structure larger than the sum of its parts. Knowhow is learning that enables you to *go do*.”¹ When you have knowhow, you are ready to explore the implications of the ideas for yourself. At the very least, knowhow involves the following skills:

- A. Tracing the development of the major Western philosophical systems from ancient times to the present and explaining their impact on the modern worldview. (PLO’s: 1, 4) (Assignments: B, C, D, E)
- B. Defining “philosophy” and other terms basic to its study. (PLO’s: 1, 4) (Assignments: B, E)

¹ Peter C. Brown, Henry L. Roediger III, and Mark A. McDaniel, *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning* (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press, 2014), 158. (The italics belong to the text quoted.)

- C. Constructing logically consistent arguments using both deductive and inductive reasoning. (PLO's: 2, 4) (Assignments: B, E)
- D. Identifying (and correcting) fallacious arguments in your own thinking and that of others. (PLO: 4) (Assignments: B, D, E)
- E. Critiquing philosophical arguments using an accurate understanding of biblical teaching. (PLO's: 1, 4) (Assignments: A, C, D)

III. TEXTBOOKS

A. **Holy Bible.** The Bible is a required textbook in every course at Calvary University. To facilitate academic level study, students are required to use for assignments and research an English translation or version of the Bible based on formal equivalence (meaning that the translation is generally word-for-word from the original languages), including any of the following: New American Standard (NASB, English Standard Version (ESV), New King James (NKJV), or King James (KJV). Other translations and versions based on dynamic equivalence (paraphrases, and thought-for-thought translations like NLT and NIV) may be used as supplemental sources. Please ask me if you have questions about a particular translation or version.

B. **Other Textbooks.**

Anderson, James N. *What's Your Worldview? An Interactive Approach to Life's Big Questions.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014. [ISBN: 978-1433538926 — \$10.99].

Schaeffer, Francis A. *Escape from Reason.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1968 [ISBN: 978-0877845386— \$8.00].

Wiker, Benjamin. *10 Books that Screwed Up the World.* Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2008 [ISBN: 978-1-59698-055-6 — \$27.95].

Wolff, Robert Paul, ed. *Ten Great Works of Philosophy.* New York: Mentor Books, 1969 [ISBN: 978-0451528308 — \$8.95].

IV. ASSIGNMENTS

The assignments you complete for this course will be used to calculate your final grade, but their primary purpose is to help you develop knowhow—a skill that is essential to your spiritual development. With it, you will be able to extract truth from God's word and infuse it into your life; without it, you never will. Of course, knowhow doesn't just happen; you must cultivate it. So take out your spade, and let's get started.

A. Types of Assignments

1. **Reading Journals** (300 points). Knowhow cannot develop without facts. Therefore, one of your primary responsibilities is to gain familiarity with the major thinkers in Western philosophy by reading selections from actual philosophers throughout the semester. You will read these selections before the due date (shown in the Proposed Course Schedule) and write a one or two-page journal tracing your thoughts about the selection. Your journal should note how the material has changed your understanding of the issue, list any questions it has raised, and summarize any insights it has prompted. The professor will grade each of these journals according to the following scale:

0 points. *Incomplete or Late Reading.* If you do not complete all the assigned reading on time, you receive no credit for it at all.

25 points. *Reading without a Journal.* If you complete the reading on time, but do not submit a journal, you receive only half-credit.

33 points. *Nonreflective Reading.* If your journal merely reports or describes the content of a reading, but does not question or interact with it, your journal will receive a grade of C.

42 points. *Reflective Reading.* If, however, your journal shows evidence that you are attempting to learn the reading, it will receive a grade of B. In this case, your journal goes beyond the mere reporting of information and shows your attempt to analyze and understand the ideas developed in your reading.

50 points. *Critically Reflective Reading.* In critically reflective reading, you go even further; you attempt to integrate the contribution of the assigned material into your own understanding and belief system. In your journal, you evaluate your own ideas, assumptions, or values in light of the reading. If you submit such a journal, it will receive an A grade.

(Journals submitted after class time on the due date will not be accepted apart from the professor's special permission.)

2. **Worldview Project** (50 points). In the first two weeks of this course, you will work your way through Anderson's *What's Your Worldview?* In the third week of the course, you will submit a three to five-page report on that work. In it, you will do the following: 1) Identify the worldview that the book assigned to you. 2) Using argument and/or evidence, explain whether you believe the book's diagnosis is correct. 3) Identify the worldview that you think is most prevalent in the modern evangelical church, justifying your opinion with argument and/or evidence. 4) Identify the worldview that you believe dominates our secular society, justifying your opinion with argument and/or evidence. You may submit your paper in class, attach it to an email, or upload it in Canvas. Projects submitted after 11:59 P.M. on the due date will receive a grade of 50 points (out of 100).
3. **Quizzes** (450 points). To help you retain what you learn, you will be quizzed in Canvas (online) over the material each week as shown in the Proposed Course Schedule. These quizzes will be cumulative and cover all previous material from both Tuesday and Thursday classes. Still, each will focus primarily on the material covered since the last quiz. Furthermore, the form of the quiz will vary from week to week. (Understanding, rather than rote memorization is the best guarantee of a good grade.)
4. **Term Project** (100 points). In the seventh week of the course, you will submit a 5 to 10-page, typewritten non-research paper, comparing of the perspective in Francis Schaeffer's *Escape from Reason* with that in Benjamin Wiker's *10 Books That Screwed up the World*. In this paper, you should summarize the main points each author makes, identify the significant similarities and differences between them, evaluate how true and valid the arguments are, and assess how useful the material is. You may submit your paper in class, attach it to an email, or upload it in Canvas. Projects submitted after 11:59 P.M. on the due date will receive a grade of 50.
5. **Cumulative Final Examination** (100 points). The final exam is cumulative and so will evaluate your mastery of the ideas and skills presented in the entire course. While I may supply you with a study guide, you will probably not need it. the cumulative effect of all the quizzes and journals will prepare you much better than last minute cramming. The exam will be administered in Canvas and will be available only during the last week of the semester.

B. Specific Assignments. These are the specific assignments for this course listed in the order according to the week in which they are due:

<i>Week 1.</i> No assignments due.	
<i>Week 2.</i> Journal on Plato's <i>Apology</i>	50 points
<i>Week 3.</i> Journal on Anselm and Aquinas	50 points
Quiz #1	90 points
<i>Week 4.</i> Journal on Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> . . .	50 points
Quiz #2	90 points
Worldview Project.	50 points
<i>Week 5.</i> Journal on Hume, <i>An Inquiry</i> . . .	50 points
Quiz #3	90 points
<i>Week 6.</i> Journal on Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i>	50 points
Quiz #4	90 points
<i>Week 7.</i> Term Project	100 points
Quiz #5	90 points
<i>Week 8.</i> Journal on James, <i>Will to Believe</i>	50 points
Final Examination	100 points
	1000 points

V. METHODS

A. Teaching

1. *Lecture.* As instructor, I will avoid the use of lecture except when introducing or clarifying historical or philosophical facts and background. As much as possible, I will involve you actively in the learning process. Still, the primary purpose of the class sessions is the dissemination of data, and the most efficient way to do that is lecture.
2. *Discussion.* As the basic teaching method, discussion is intended to help you wrestle with profound or difficult issues and to help the instructor analyze the needs of the class. But these ends can be attained only if you approach discussion, whether in class or online, prepared both spiritually and intellectually.

B. Grading

1. Worldview Project	50 points
2. Quizzes	450 points
3. Journals	300 points
4. Term Project.....	100 points
4. Final Examination	100 points
Total	1000 points

C. Calculating the Final Grade

930–1000 points	A	730–769 points	C
900–929 points	A-	700–729 points	C-
870–899 points	B+	670–699 points	D+
800–829 points	B-	630–669 points	D
770–799 points	C+	0–559 points	F

D. Academic Issues and Support

1. **Plagiarism.** Plagiarism is defined as copying any content without identifying the source. This also includes taking another person’s or AI entity’s ideas or constructs and presenting them as your own. Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. Most assignments at Calvary require the student to produce original work. Therefore, unless specifically permitted by the instructor, the use of AI-generated content is prohibited (even if cited) as it does not represent original work created by the student and is an unreliable aggregate of ideas from other sources. AI, however, may be utilized in cases where the instructor has explicitly permitted its use to accomplish specific tasks. It is only in these cases that AI-generated (or modified) content may be submitted by the student. If there are any questions as to the permissibility of AI use for an assignment, please ask your instructor for clarification.
2. **Style.** All class papers must follow the Turabian style according to *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th edition and the Calvary Style Guide, 2019 update.
3. **Assistance.** The Clark Academic Center (learning@calvary.edu), located in the library building, is dedicated to providing free academic assistance for all students. Student tutors aid with all facets of the writing process, tutor in various subject areas, prepare students for exams, and facilitate tests. Please take advantage of this service.
4. **Disabilities.** Students with disabilities have the responsibility of informing the Accommodations Support Coordinator (aso@calvary.edu) of any disabling condition that may require support.