

**REL 352 Christian Beliefs and History**  
**Sample Syllabus**  
**Professor John Duff**  
**Phone: 1202**

**Catalog Course Description**

A survey of the primary teachings of Christianity. Taught from a practical viewpoint, the course is designed to aid the junior level student in his/her development of a Christian philosophy of life based on the great truths of the Bible. Prerequisites: REL-104, REL-204or REL-130, REL-236 and PHI-211, and Junior standing.

**Course Resources**

1. Erickson, Millard. *Introducing Christian Doctrine*. Edited by Arnold Hustad. Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, 1992.
2. Shelley, Bruce. *Church History in Plain Language*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Thomas Nelson: Nashville, 2008.
3. Assorted readings
4. Doctrinal Statement of student's local church fellowship

**University Educational Goals and REL 352**

The University has broad educational goals for each student. The core classes intentionally seek to achieve those goals. REL 352 is specifically charged with contributing to the following educational goals of the University.

- Understand Christian beliefs and expressions of historical orthodoxy.
- Contribute to the advancement of justice, the proclamation of the gospel, and the renewal of creation.
- Understand the significance of the *imago dei* and its relation to cultural calling.
- Demonstrate a healthy sense of biblical sexuality

**Course Goals**

Although I've listed the objectives below in more formal educational language, my ultimate objective is for you to love God and your neighbor better as a result of this course. Hopefully you will love God more because you will know him more deeply and appreciate what he has done more fully. You will love your Christian neighbor and non-Christian neighbor more intelligently, thoughtfully and compassionately because you will understand them more biblically than before. Love of God and love of neighbor—on these hang all the content of this class.

*Cognitive*

1. You will explain the core beliefs of Christianity using standard theological vocabulary.
2. You will distinguish between/among differing theological positions with respect to certain Christian beliefs.

3. You will identify key moments/individuals in church history that have had lasting significance for the church's institutional and theological development.
4. You will discriminate between precise theological statements and vague ones.
5. You will describe the relationship between beliefs and practice.
6. You will locate your own theological positions within the trajectory of Christian thought.
7. You will categorize beliefs by order of importance.

*Affective*

1. You will appreciate the historical development of Christian doctrine.
2. You will value the impact theology has within the life of the Church of Jesus Christ and within your own personal life.

### Course Assessment

**Assessment Philosophy:** The content of theology is primarily about beliefs; that is, theology is a cognitive exercise. One engages in theology by thinking, thinking carefully, about what Christians believe. Obviously, our thinking will have tremendous impact on how we behave and how we interpret our own and others' experiences. My goal is to help you learn to think about your faith more thoroughly by exposing you to the nuances and distinctions that the Bible reveals about what you believe and alert you to the theological conversation that has gone on for centuries and will continue to go on until Christ returns. Hence, *the assessments are based mainly on your mastery of content*—biblical (what does the Bible tell us?), historical (how has the Bible been understood in the past?), and theological (what conclusions have been reached and why?).

**Attendance.** Your regular and prompt attendance will ensure that you make the most of this course. I will take attendance at each class session because, per University policy, any student absent for one-third of the class sessions will automatically fail (in this class, one-third will be 12 class sessions). In the event of an absence, it is the **student's** responsibility to contact **another student** for any information missed.

**Two One-hour Examinations: 30% of final grade.** These exams demonstrate the level of mastery of course concepts and vocabulary. (See cognitive objectives #1, 2, 3, 4)

- The exams will include multiple-choice, short answer and essay questions.
- Questions can be taken from the class lectures as well as the textbooks.
- Make-up exams will not be given except in the cases of personal serious illness, family crisis that requires you to leave campus, or travel due to University athletic/ministry trips.
- Make every effort to be 'on time' especially on exam days since we will begin class with the exam and I will collect the exams at the end of the exam hour regardless of when you arrived.

**Final Exam: 20% of final grade.** This exam demonstrates the level of course mastery. (Cognitive objectives #1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

- Selectively cumulative
- You cannot final exams early so make travel plans accordingly.

**Church History in Plain Language Questions: 20% of final grade.** (Cognitive objectives #2, 3, 6 and Affective objective #1)

- You will be provided one key question per chapter to guide your reading. You should take notes on the chapters to help you answer the question. Consider this one key question as a study guide for exam preparation purposes.
- You will take an online assessment each week over the chapters assigned. You may use your book. This assessment can be submitted only once and needs to be finished in one session (cannot log in and out of the assessment multiple times).
- The assessment will be timed and you will be allowed only one opportunity to take it. The questions must be COMPLETED BY THURSDAY AT 11:00 pm.
- **As you answer the questions, record your answers both on the computer and on a sheet of paper just in case you lose connection during the middle of your session!!!!**
- These assessments are to be done individually; they are not group (of any size) projects.

**“I Believe” Paper: 15% of final grade.** (Cognitive objective # 1, 4, 7 and Affective objective #2)

- Write a statement of faith that clarifies what you believe to be the essential doctrines of Christianity.
- Due: 11/4 at class time.
- For further details about this paper, see Odyssey.

**Reading: 15% of final grade.**

Points will be awarded for reading your *Introducing Christian Doctrine* assignments on the schedule using the following scale.

- 10 points: read the assignment fully and answered the review questions in writing. I will collect the review questions.
- 8 points: read the assignment fully
- 6 points: read more than half of the assignment but not the full assignment
- 3 points: read less than half of the assignment
- 0 points: did not read the assignment

If you are absent but did the reading for the day, you may email me your points provided the email is before the next class period.

**Extra Credit:** Extra credit is not an option for this course. However, I will drop your lowest reading grade if you write a two-page essay on a theological topic of interest to you (and approved by me). You must consult two scholarly sources. I will drop your lowest CHiPL assessment if you write a two-page essay on a church history topic of interest to you (and approved by me). You must consult three scholarly sources.

**Grading**

According to the University academic catalog, letter grades should be interpreted as follows.

A=Exceptional  
B=Good  
C=Average  
D=Below Average

The following grading scale will apply in this class.

94-100: A  
90-93: A-  
87-89: B+  
83-86: B  
80-82: B-  
77-79: C+  
73-76: C  
70-72: C-  
67-69: D+  
63-66: D  
60-62: D-  
59 and below: F

### Other Miscellany

1. The Learning Center is available for tutorial and study assistance.
2. Generally, we will not be using laptops during class. I will inform you when to access your laptop.
3. **Please bring a hard copy of the Bible to class every day.** Since no electronic devices are to be accessed during class, a digital Bible will not suffice. I recommend buying an inexpensive small Bible you can keep in your book bag permanently.
4. I do not accept late work.
5. I will normally place all course documents on Odyssey.
6. Please turn off all cell phones, pagers, etc. before class.
7. Any student eligible for accommodation needs to submit the appropriate forms to me as soon as possible.

### Declarations

1. COPYRIGHT VIOLATION and PLAGIARISM have serious ramifications for Cornerstone students, both legally (the former) and ethically (the latter). Unauthorized copying or use of copyrighted materials, including downloaded files of various kinds, can result in criminal charges and fines. Plagiarizing another's words *or ideas* (passing them off as your own) can result in loss of grade or failure. For a fuller explanation of these issues or of CU's copyright policy, see Miller Library's website under ["Research: Copyright Questions."](#)

2. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords students certain rights with respect to their educational records. A detailed description of these rights can be found in the current Cornerstone University Student Handbook.
3. Integration of Faith and Content: Christianity is more than a series of beliefs, but beliefs are critical to the formation of Christ-like character. Christians are to think correctly as well as act correctly. This class assists in the formation of Christian character by examining the fundamental beliefs of Christianity and their impact on life.
4. The university will make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities, in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The purpose of accommodation is to provide equal access to educational opportunities to students affected by disabilities, and the university does not intend that the standards be altered, nor that the essential elements of programs or courses be changed. Students having documented disabilities may apply for accommodations through Student Disability Services (SDS), which is part of the Cornerstone University Learning Center located in Miller Hall on the main campus.

In the event that students have questions regarding whether they are eligible for accommodations, how they might provide appropriate documentation of disabilities, or how they might handle a disagreement with a professor over questions of accommodation, the Director of Academic Support should be contacted immediately at (616) 222-1596 or via email at [learningcenter@cornerstone.edu](mailto:learningcenter@cornerstone.edu). Further information about applying for and utilizing accommodations is provided in the Student Handbook and on the university's website.
5. Learning Center services for traditional undergraduate students include
  - a. One-on-one tutoring
  - b. Proctored tests
  - c. CLC 100 Learning Strategies
  - d. ESL support
  - e. Accommodation support for SDS registered students
6. The Academic Grievance Policy and the Academic Integrity Policy are available online at <http://tinyurl.com/CUStudentPolicies>.
7. **THE RIGHT TO CHANGE THIS SYLLABUS.** This syllabus represents a guideline, as opposed to a contract, and is subject to change at the instructor's discretion as circumstances warrant.

Tentative Course Schedule: REL352  
Fall 2011

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic(s)</b>	<b>ICD</b>	<b>CHiPL</b>	<b>Additional Reading</b>
Wk. 1	9/7	Course Introduction What is theology? Why is theology valuable? What objections to theology exist? What is the value of church history?			
	9/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Spread of the Church</li> <li>• What did 'catholic' mean?</li> <li>• The Age of Persecution</li> </ul>		1-4	
Wk. 2	9/12	Where has God spoken? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General revelation</li> <li>• Special revelation</li> </ul>	4-5		
	9/14	What makes Scripture unique? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspiration</li> <li>• Inerrancy</li> </ul>	6-7		Chicago Statement on Inerrancy
	9/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confronting error: orthodoxy</li> <li>• Recognizing the canon</li> <li>• Leadership emerges</li> <li>• Two responses to culture</li> </ul>		5-8	Apostle's Creed
Wk. 3	9/19	How should we respond to Scripture? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The authority of Scripture</li> <li>• Propositional revelation</li> </ul>	8		
	9/21	What is the doctrine of the Trinity and why does it matter?	12		Athanasian Creed
	9/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consequences of Constantine</li> <li>• Who is God?</li> <li>• Who is Jesus?</li> <li>• Why monasticism began</li> </ul>		9-12	
Wk. 4	9/26	Who is God? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attributes of God</li> </ul>	9-11		
	9/28	Who is Jesus? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• His deity</li> <li>• His humanity</li> </ul>	24-25		Nicene Creed

	9/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Augustine: one of the greatest</li> <li>• Rise of the papacy</li> <li>• Icons and more</li> <li>• Christianizing Europe</li> </ul>		13-16	Creed of Constantinople
Wk. 5	10/3	Who is Jesus? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• His person</li> </ul>	26		Definition of Chalcedon
	10/5	Exam #1			
	10/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gregory the Great</li> <li>• The Idea of Christendom</li> <li>• The Crusades</li> <li>• The Rise of Universities</li> </ul>		17-20	
Wk. 6	10/10	What are the works of God? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• God's plan</li> <li>• Creation</li> </ul>	13-14		
	10/12	What are the works of God? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providence</li> <li>• Problem of Evil</li> </ul>	15-16		
	10/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Way of Poverty</li> <li>• Why the Papacy Declined</li> <li>• Early Reformers: Hus &amp; Wycliffe</li> <li>• Luther's Legacy</li> </ul>		21-24	<a href="http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1519luther-tower.html">http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1519luther-tower.html</a>
Wk. 7	10/17	FALL BREAK			
	10/19	What is it to be human? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Image of God</li> <li>• Human constitution</li> </ul>	18-20		
	10/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Radical Reformation</li> <li>• Calvin</li> <li>• Church of England</li> <li>• The Catholic Reformation</li> </ul>		25-28	
Wk. 8	10/24	How has sin affected humanity?	21-23		

	10/26	What did Christ come to accomplish? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The importance of his life</li> <li>• The significance of his death</li> </ul>	27-28		
	10/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• America and Asia Evangelized</li> <li>• Puritans</li> <li>• Why Denominations?</li> <li>• The Enlightenment</li> </ul>		29-32	
Wk. 9	10/31	What does it mean to be saved? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predestination</li> <li>• Calling</li> <li>• Conversion</li> <li>• Regeneration</li> </ul>	32-33		
	11/2	What does it mean to be saved? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Union with Christ</li> <li>• Justification</li> <li>• Sanctification</li> </ul>	34-35		
	11/4	Exam #2		33-36	
Wk. 10	11/7	What is the church? What is the church's mission?	36		
	11/9	How should the church be led?	37		
	11/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Christian America?</li> <li>• Liberalism</li> </ul>		37-40	
Wk. 11	11/14	How has the church understood baptism and the Lord's Table? Pt. 1	38		Second London Confession
	11/16	TBA			
	11/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American Evangelicalism</li> <li>• Ecumenism</li> </ul>		41-44	
Wk. 12	11/21	How has the church understood baptism and the Lord's Table? Pt. 2			TBA
	11/23 :no class	Thanksgiving break			

	11/25	Thanksgiving break			
Wk. 13	11/28	What does the Spirit do? Pt. 1	30		
	11/30	What does the Spirit do? Pt. 2	TBA		
	12/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vatican II</li> <li>• Global Christianity</li> </ul>		45-48	
Wk. 14	12/5	What happens when we die?	39, 42		
	12/7	What do we know about Christ's return?	40		
	12/9	How will human history end?	41		
Wk. 15 Final exams	8:45 Section: Final exam is 12/14 (Wednesday) at 7:45 am 1:30 Section: Final exam is 12/12 (Monday) @ 12:45 pm				