



**WAYLAND BAPTIST UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY
WBUONLINE**

Wayland Mission Statement: Wayland Baptist University exists to educate students in an academically challenging, learning-focused, and distinctively Christian environment for professional success, and service to God and humankind.

Course Title and Number: RLGN 5313 Contemporary Issues in Theology

Term: Summer 2017 (29 May – 12 Aug)

Name of Instructor: Dr. Ben D. Craver, Professor of Religion and Philosophy

Office Phone Number and WBU Email Address: 210-826-7595; craverb@wbu.edu

Office Hours, Building, and Location: Office at 11550 IH 35 North; San Antonio, Texas
Hours: Monday – Thursday, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm; Friday, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm.

Class Meeting Time and Location: Online, asynchronous class

Catalog Description: Research in issues in contemporary theology based upon the writings of major twentieth-century theologians. The issue for this term is “Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom in Contemporary Christian Thought.”

Required Textbook(s) and Resource Material:

- Paul Helm, *The Providence of God, Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1994); ISBN: 978-0830815333.
- Paul Kjos Helseth, Gregory A. Boyd, Ron Highfield, and William Lane Craig, *Four Views on Divine Providence, Counterpoints: Bible and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011); ISBN: 978-0310325123.
- Hugh J. McCann, "Divine Providence," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2009 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/providence-divine/>
- Timothy George, "Providence," *Holman Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1991); URL: <https://www.studylight.org/dictionaries/hbd/p/providence.html>.

Course Outcome Competencies:

1. Understand and expound the biblical foundations upon which divine providence has been traditionally formulated
2. Explain the history of theological thinking related to divine providence
3. Analyze the impact of philosophical formulations upon divine providence
4. Describe how divine providence intersects critical aspects in contemporary Christian life
5. Develop a personal view of divine providence and be able to defend it

Attendance Requirements: WBU expects students to participate in all required instructional activities in their courses. Online courses are no different in this regard; however, participation must be defined in a different manner.

Student “attendance” in an online course is defined as *active participation* in the course as described in the course syllabus. Instructors in online courses are responsible for providing students with clear instructions for how they are required to participate in the course. Additionally, instructors are responsible for incorporating specific instructional activities within their course and will, at a minimum, have weekly mechanisms for documenting student participation. These mechanisms may include, but are not limited to, participating in a weekly discussion board, submitting assignments in Blackboard, or communicating with the instructor.

Students aware of necessary absences must inform the professor with as much advance notice as possible in order to make appropriate arrangements. ***Any student absent 25 percent or more of the online course, i.e., non-participatory during 3 or more weeks of an 11 week term, MAY [and likely WILL] receive an F for that course.*** The instructor may also file a **Report of Unsatisfactory Progress (ROUP)** for students with excessive non-participation.

Any student who has not actively participated in an online class prior to the census date for any given term is considered a “no-show” and will be administratively withdrawn from the class without record. ***To be counted as actively participating, it is not sufficient to log in and view the course. The student must be submitting work as described in the course syllabus.*** Additional attendance and participation policies for each course, as defined by the instructor in the course syllabus, are considered a part of the university’s attendance policy.

Disability Statement: In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), it is the policy of Wayland Baptist University that no otherwise qualified person with a disability be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational program or activity in the university. The Coordinator of Counseling Services serves as the coordinator of students with a disability and should be contacted concerning accommodation requests at (806) 291- 3765. Documentation of a disability must accompany any request for accommodations.”

Plagiarism: Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, forgery, or plagiarism. Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work. It is the student’s responsibility to be familiar with penalties associates with plagiarism stated in the catalog.

You can avoid plagiarism by simply citing your sources. In this class, you will be writing a book analysis and a research paper. Research involves necessarily searching through various sources for the information in your paper. Again, just cite the source and you will not be guilty of plagiarism. More about sources, paper requirements, etc., on the following pages.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, Examinations, and Assignments:

Providence		
1 - w/o* 29 May	<i>Why Providence?</i> ^HPOG ch 1; George online article	+DB1
2 - w/o 5 June	<i>Providence: Risky or Risk Free?</i> HPOG ch 2	DB2
3 - w/o 12 June	<i>The Theological Framework</i> Assignment due: Hymnody Report HPOG ch 3	DB3
4 - w/o 19 June	<i>Providence in Creation, Fall and Redemption</i> HPOG ch 4	DB4
5 - w/o 26 June	<i>Providence and Guidance</i> HPOG ch 5	DB5
6 - w/o 3 July	Assignment due: Book Analysis DB6 will relate to the book	DB6
7 - w/o 10 July	<i>Prayer and Providence</i> HPOG ch 6	DB7
8 - w/o 17 July	<i>Providence and Accountability</i> HPOG ch 7	DB8
9 - w/o 24 July	<i>Providence and Evil</i> HPOG ch 8	DB9
10 - w/o 31 July	Assignment due: Research Paper McCann online article; DB 10 will relate to McCann	DB10
11 - w/o 7 Aug	<i>Reckoning with Providence</i> HPOG ch 9	DB11
^HPOG = Helm, <i>The Providence of God</i> and assigned chapters * = week of + = Discussion Board (DB)		

Course Requirements and Grading Criteria: [*DETAILS FOLLOW IN THE SYLLABUS!]

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|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. Hymnody Report* | 50 pts |
| 2. Book Analysis* | 75 pts |
| 3. Research Paper* | 100 pts |
| 4. Class participation in Discussion Boards* | (10 pts per DB) <u>110 pts</u> |
| TOTAL 335 pts | |

Course Evaluation (Method of Determining Grade)**Of a TOTAL of 335 possible points:**

A	335-301 points	I	INCOMPLETE**
B	300-268 points	WP	WITHDRAWAL PASSING
C	267-234 points	WF	WITHDRAWAL FAILING
D	233-201 points	W	WITHDRAWAL
F	BELOW 201 points		

**A grade of incomplete is changed if and when the deficiency is made up by midterm (or the agreed upon time) of the next regular semester; otherwise, it becomes "F". This grade is given only if circumstances beyond the student's control prevented completion of some particular assignment during the semester enrolled. Further, in order to qualify for an "I," the student must be passing the course at that point and all attendance requirements have been met. An Incomplete cannot be given simply because a student is behind in assignments. Incompletes are the exception, not the rule.

RLGN 5313—CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN THEOLOGY
INFORMATION FOR DISCUSSION BOARDS

Discussion Boards (DBs) will be provided every week of the term. At 10 points each, the total points to earn are 110, assessed as follows:



- Responded directly to question 3
- Provided substantive comments 4
- Utilized good grammar and style 3

As a graduate course, substantive comments are required for each DB. Substantive means that I will be expecting more than a few sentences and much more than a simple, non-reflective answer.

I will also expect that you will compose, read, and re-read your comments for sense, accuracy, spelling, grammar, and matters of style. So, when you compose a response, put some thought into it. DBs are informal in nature, but I expect good thinking to go into your comments, with good form.

What am I looking for? Specifically, I'm looking to see if you **ANSWER THE QUESTION(S)**. That may sound silly, but my experiences over the years have shown me that students often “beat around the bush” and respond to issues but not the question(s). *So, make certain that you answer the question(s) posed in the posted DB.*

As for word count, I am expecting more than a few sentences as noted above; to be more specific, between **350 - 400 words**.

The DB will close at the end of seven days; typically on Monday or Tuesday at the end of the day. I encourage you to make your responses in a timely manner. Once it closes, no one will be able to add comments or review previous ones.

RLGN 5313—CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN THEOLOGY
GUIDELINES FOR HYMNODY REPORTS

Each student will write a report based on conclusions drawn from the hymn *God Moves in a Mysterious Way*, by William Cowper (1774).

Although the paper is due early in the term, students are to examine the lyrics of the hymn for statements and implications of divine providence. Some are obvious; others are more implicit. Select five of Cowper's lyrics on which to focus. Copy the lyrics you choose; then provide a brief analysis of these lines from the perspective of what you understand about divine providence at this point in the term. For example:

“God moves in a mysterious way” I will not always understand God's actions in the world or on my behalf; what he does remains a mystery known only to him unless he chooses to make it plain to me.

Have fun with this one! You can find it online at:

http://library.timelesstruths.org/music/God_Moves_in_a_Mysterious_Way/

Due date: *w/o 12 June; NLT end of the day, SATURDAY, 17 JUNE*

RLGN 5313— CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN THEOLOGY
GUIDELINES FOR BOOK ANALYSIS

These guidelines are to be used in preparing your analysis of *Four Views on Divine Providence*, by Helseth, Boyd, Highfield, and Craig. Carefully consider each directive as the analysis progresses.

- **General:**

The paper shall be at least **2,000** but no more than **2,500 words**, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt font, based on information found in your reading. For matters of style and form, consult WBU's *Digest of Writing* or, for more detail, Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. As religion students, you must follow this format. Remember, APA or MLA will NOT be accepted for any assignment!

Due date: *Week of July 3; NLT end of the day, SATURDAY, 8 JULY*

- **Substantive:**

It should be descriptive in approach that is, describe what you're reading. Focus on the thinking and conclusions of the authors. As you write, select quotes which adequately characterize what they are trying to present and/or propose about divine providence. To reference the quote, simply put page numbers in parentheses at the end of the sentence (76).

In particular, be sure you name and explain the particular position that an author is espousing. This means that in the end, you will identify specifically and clearly the four views on divine providence. I am less concerned *at this point* with the responses to a particular position. To me, what's more important is that you identify and clearly explain the four positions as indicated by the authors.

However, a book review means that you interact with the authors. Where do you think they are right? Wrong? What do they not cover adequately? What do they fail to explain to your satisfaction? Based on the responses from the other authors, summarize those positions.

Because none of us are theological scholars, you must check out what other reviewers may have written about this book and the authors' conclusions. To do so, visit the Wayland LRC (use link below) and look for other book reviews. Most scholarly journals contain these sorts of reviews, too, if you have them nearby. Please reference any that you may use formally in footnotes and in a bibliography.

In your concluding comments, identify at least three, but no more than five, meaningful ways to relate this information *to the ministry of the church*.

PLEASE NOTE: I will be intently looking for all of the above. That means:

- Substantive and accurate explanation of ALL four positions
- Responses to the authors of those specific positions
- Appearance of at least two book reviews from journals
- Appropriate documentation in the form of footnotes and bibliography, and
- Concluding summary

If they are not there, points will be deducted.

RLGN 5313— CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN THEOLOGY
GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH PAPER

These guidelines are to be used in preparing your Research Paper. Carefully consider each directive as the review progresses.

- **General:**

The paper shall be at least 3,500 words but no more than 4,500 words, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt font, based on information found from your research. For matters of style and form, consult WBU's *Digest of Writing* or Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. As religion students, you must follow this format. **APA or MLA will NOT be accepted for any assignment!**

Due date: w/o 31 July; NLT end of the day, **SATURDAY, 5 AUG**

- **Substantive:**

Like the book review, the research paper should be *descriptive* in approach that is, describe the issue or doctrine assigned from a ***theological perspective***.

Sources are absolutely essential. Select them with great care; they ***must be*** of a **scholarly nature** and support your topic. Be sure to utilize and cite sources that specifically address the topic directly.

Your textbook is a key source—use it! Besides the textbook, I expect you to read and incorporate into your paper at least 10 additional sources—**at least six must be scholarly books and the other four must be scholarly articles.**

The Bible, although it is ***the*** source of theological study, will ***not count*** as a source. Please do not footnote a biblical reference. Simply include it in text of the paper like this (John 3:16 NASB).

The following TOPIC is the assignment for EVERYONE in the course:

**DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMAN FREEDOM IN TENSION:
IS A RESOLUTION POSSIBLE?**

Please use the exact phrase above as the title to your paper. Also, be sure that you address each of these aspects of the providence of God; these three will serve as ***formal sections*** within the paper.

- ❶ **For the DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY section of the paper**, provide a thorough interpretation of the meaning of divine sovereignty. In particular, how does God's knowledge affect this "tension" as noted above? What role does evil play? What does Scripture tell us about it?
- ❷ **For the HUMAN FREEDOM section of the paper**, provide a thorough interpretation of the meaning of human freedom. In particular, and based on your analysis of God's sovereignty, is human freedom even feasible? How does God's power to intervene in human affairs affect human freedom?
- ❸ **For the RESOLUTION section of the paper**, use your positions above to argue either for a resolution or that a resolution simply is not possible. Take a try at developing your own theodicy.

Finally, wrap up your paper in a formal conclusion entitled AN ASSESSMENT, in which you explain whether you think a project such as this has merit. If so, is it only an academic exercise? Why or why not? Might it have benefit in a church context? How so, or why not?

Please see the books and articles section below. **Farley's book*** will provide you with a good overview of the doctrine of providence along with some specifics.

The WBU Library can find **Farley's book** or any of the others regardless of how many of you may request it. They will simply find the book at other libraries and mail it to you. The service is FREE and the return postage provided. **I will accept NO EXCUSES for not finding books or articles.**

FOR A THOROUGH LIST OF BOOKS AND ARTICLES that will be helpful in writing your paper, click on the following link: <http://timmybrister.com/2006/05/bibliography-the-providence-of-god/>. Here you will find **88** books and **56** articles! What a goldmine!

This list is not a set of "easy" reads. It does, however, provide you with some key sources you may choose to use in your paper. In particular, try:

- Berkhouwer, G.C. *The Providence of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952.
- ***Farley, Benjamin W. *The Providence of God*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988.**
- George, Timothy. "Providence" in *Holman Bible Dictionary*. ed. Trent C. Butler, Nashville: Holman, 1991.
- Helm, Paul. *The Providence of God*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993.
- Parker, T.H.L. "Providence of God," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. ed. Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984.
- Vanhoozer, Kevin J. "Providence" in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*. ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.

***Please begin with your TEXTBOOKS first.
Then, go the DICTIONARIES for a concise look at providence.***

A few other **VERY IMPORTANT** matters:

- As noted above, all sources must be properly cited and comply with WBU's *Digest of Writing Instructions for Papers and Research Projects in the Division of Religion & Philosophy*. The WBU *Digest of Writing Instructions for Papers and Research Projects* may be accessed at:
 - http://www.wbu.edu/academics/schools/religion_and_philosophy/student_help/documents/Digest.pdf

The following will be **heavily considered** when determining the paper's grade:

- **FORM**—how the preliminary parts, text, and reference matters within the paper adhere to acceptable scholarly standards as noted above (*you will be double-spacing these pages*). **25 points**
- **STYLE**—how the paper complies with proper rules of grammar, syntax, punctuation, and spelling. **25 points**
- **CONTENT**—how the paper addresses relevant, scholarly data related to the topic. Included here will be the adequate and judicious use of sources and the length of the text. **40 points**
- **PUNCTUALITY**—late papers will be penalized 10 points per week—*no exceptions for any reason, starting with **day one, minute one***. **10 points**