



**WBUonline**  
**School of Christian Studies**

**UNIVERSITY 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 NUMBER & NAME:**

THST/PHIL 4331 Christian Faith in a Post-Christian World

**TERM:**

Spring 2020

**INSTRUCTOR:**

J. M. Givens Jr., Professor of Theological Studies, Director of Online Christian Studies Programs

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

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**OFFICE HOURS, BUILDING & LOCATION:**

Flores Bible Building office suite

Posted in Blackboard under instructor information

**COURSE MEETING TIME & LOCATION:**

Asynchronous interaction with specific deadlines managed through [Blackboard](#)

**CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

Introduction to contemporary intellectual challenges and concerns, such as the existence of God, the relation of faith and science, the problem of evil and suffering, miracles and the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus, and religious pluralism; consideration of ways Christians can responsibly engage such issues in a biblically and theologically responsible manner.

**PREREQUISITE:**

RLGN 1301 or RLGN 1303, and RLGN 1302 or RLGN 1304.

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOK AND RESOURCE MATERIAL:**

- Paul M. Gould, *Cultural Apologetics: Renewing the Christian Voice, Conscience, and Imagination in a Disenchanted World*, Zondervan

- Alister McGrath, *Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers & Skeptics Find Faith*, Zondervan
- Bible, any modern translation recognized by mainstream Christianity (if unsure, check with instructor)

Texts and ISBN information available from [WBU bookstore](#).

- **INTERNET EQUIPPED COMPUTER**

1. Must conform to [minimum recommended settings](#) identified by WBUonline
2. Should use compatible browser and have [correct settings](#) as recommended by Blackboard
3. Must utilize WBU [student email account](#) for official university communications

- **WBU BLACKBOARD COURSE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE**

1. All assignments and other class issues will be available through [Blackboard](#).
2. WBUonline technical support can assist you with log in issues, such as username and password.
3. Contact to technical support is available on the login page of Blackboard. Support is 24/7 support by phone and available also by chat or creating a case.

- **WBU MABEE LEARNING RESOURCES CENTER**

1. Use the [LRC website](#) to search for book (sent via priority mail), articles, online articles and e-books, and other resources.
2. The website also has tutorials for using their services.
3. [Email](#) the Distance Learning Librarian with questions on LRC and assistance identifying/securing resources for papers.

#### **OPTIONAL MATERIALS**

- Myron Bradley Penner, *The End of Apologetics: Christian Witness in a Postmodern Context*, Baker
- Michael Frost, *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture*, Baker

#### **COURSE OUTCOMES AND COMPETENCIES:**

Students will:

1. Identify contemporary intellectual challenges to Christianity.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of cultural apologetics.
3. Reason, weigh evidence, present and critique arguments for and against the Christian faith.

#### **ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Attendance for online courses is defined fully in the [university catalog](#).
2. Students are expected to participate in all required instructional activities in their courses.
3. Student "attendance" in an online course is defined as active participation in the course as described in the course syllabus (completing weekly assignments).

4. Students aware of necessary absences must inform the professor with as much advance notice as possible in order to make appropriate arrangements.
5. 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 receive an F for that course.
6. 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.
7. When a student reaches a number of absences considered by the instructor to be excessive, the instructor will submit a Report of Unsatisfactory Progress to the student's WBU student email account and to appropriate university personnel.

#### **STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM & ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:**

Wayland Baptist University observes a zero tolerance policy regarding academic dishonesty. Per university policy as described in the academic catalog, all cases of academic dishonesty will be reported and second offenses will result in suspension from the university.

#### **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.

#### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS and GRADING CRITERIA:**

1. *Blackboard Scavenger Hunt.* The hunt is designed to help familiarize you with the essential features of Blackboard. **Complete by Wednesday of Week 1 (3<sup>rd</sup> day of class). 1 point** will be deducted each day for **late submissions**.
2. *Weekly Discussion.* Student interaction through class discussion enhances learning and understanding. Discussion will be over assigned readings. Initial posts should be substantive, informative, and should enhance the learning experience for the student and colleagues. Interaction is expected, so subsequent responses to student posts or to instructor inquiries, and questions to others about their posts to gain clarity or deeper understanding will be part of the evaluation. See weekly grading rubric and the Course Info section of the course in Blackboard for detailed description of expectations.
3. *Case Studies.* Students will discuss theoretical situations and the appropriate Christian witness in each situation. The intent of these studies is to allow students opportunities to think through critical yet hospitable engagement of post-Christian questions and challenges to Christian faith and to evaluate and encourage one another's responses. See weekly grading rubric and the Course Info section of the course in Blackboard for detailed description of expectations.

4. *Research Project.* Students will research a contemporary challenge to Christian faith and write an 8-12 page paper (page count of text, not counting any frontal material or bibliography). The paper will discuss the challenge and their response in light of biblical, theological, and cultural insights. The topic must be selected by student with approval of instructor from options listed in the Course Info section of the Blackboard course. The paper will be submitted for review in stages building up to final submission. Detailed instructions for the assignment will be available in the same location.

**GRADING CRITERIA**

1. Scavenger Hunt.....	2%
2. Weekly Discussion .....	31%
3. Case Studies.....	32%
4. Research project.....	35%

**Grade Appeal Statement:** Students shall have protection through orderly procedures against prejudices or capricious academic evaluation. A student who believes that he or she has not been held to realistic academic standards, just evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course by using the student grade appeal process described in the Academic Catalog. Appeals may not be made for advanced placement examinations or course bypass examinations. Appeals are limited to the final course grade, which may be upheld, raised, or lowered at any stage of the appeal process. Any recommendation to lower a course grade must be submitted through the Vice President of Academic Affairs/Faculty Assembly Grade Appeals Committee for review and approval. The Faculty Assembly Grade Appeals Committee may instruct that the course grade be upheld, raised, or lowered to a more proper evaluation.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

Week 1 – Introduction to Christian Apologetics

- McGrath ch 1
- Gould ch 1
- Penner introduction (provided)

Week 2 – Knowing the Landscape and Audience

- McGrath ch 2, ch 4
- Gould ch 2
- Possible presentation on Penner ch 1
- Research Topic due

Week 3 – Knowing the Faith and Communicating Hope

- McGrath ch 3, ch 5
- Gould ch 3
- Possible presentation on Penner ch 2

Week 4 – Opening Doors and Pointing the Way Part 1

- McGrath ch 6, ch 7
- Possible presentation on Penner ch 3

Week 5 – Opening Doors and Pointing the Way Part 2

- Gould interlude, ch 4, ch 5, ch 6
- Possible presentation on Penner ch 4
- Initial Bibliography Due

Week 6 – Removing Barriers and Obstacles

- McGrath ch 8
- Gould ch 7
- Possible presentation on Penner ch 5

Week 7 – Existence of God

- Case Studies
- Research Rough Draft Due for Reviews

Week 8 – Suffering and Evil

- Case Studies
- Reviews Completed

Week 9 – Faith and Science; Miracles and the Resurrection

- Case Studies

Week 10 – Religious Pluralism

- Case Studies
- Final Research Due

Week 11 – Concluding Thoughts

- McGrath ch 9
- Gould ch 8

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

*I'm a Chap who always liked to know the worst and then put the best face I can on it. So I won't deny any of what you said. But there's one thing more to be said, even so. Suppose we have only dreamed, or made up, all those things – trees and grass and sun and moon and stars and Aslan himself. Suppose we have. Then all I can say is that, in that case, the made-up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones. Suppose this black pit of a kingdom of yours is the only world. Well, it strikes me as a pretty poor one. And that's a funny thing, when you come to think of it. We're just babies making up a game, if you're right. But four babies playing a game can make a play-world which licks your real world hollow. That's why I'm going to stand by the play-world. I'm on Aslan's side even if there isn't any Aslan to lead it. I'm going to live as like a Narnian as I can even if there isn't any Narnia. So, thanking you kindly for our supper, .*

*. . we're leaving your court at once and setting out in the dark to spend our lives looking for the Overland. Not that our lives will be very long, I should think; but that's a small loss if the world's as dull a place as you say.*

– Puddleglum to the Queen of Underland, *The Silver Chair* by C.S. Lewis

*I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it but because by it, I see everything else.*

– C.S. Lewis, “Is Theology Poetry?” in *The Weight of Glory*