

Appendix A

BEGE-1710 CHRISTIAN LIFE AND THOUGHT

SYLLABUS[170](#)

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I. course description

This Sample syllabus is extracted from Appendix A in *The Professor's Puzzle: Teaching in Christian Academics*
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**This sample syllabus is an excellent example of the
utilization of D. Lee Fink's Taxonomy of Significant
Learning.**

“[BEGE-1710 is] a foundational course designed to introduce the student to a Christian worldview. Attention is first given to the definition, function, formation, and evaluation of worldview. Then Christian responses and applications will be developed from a survey of biblical theology with emphasis upon the teaching about the Creator, creation, redemption, and consummation.”

(Cedarville University Undergraduate Catalog 2010–11, p. 199)

Notes: This course is to teach students how to see the world as a Christian should and live accordingly. There are likely at least two kinds of students in this class: those who realize they have a lot to learn about Christianity and those who think they already know all they need to. In both camps some cleanup is necessary, but the latter group will need special attention right from the beginning. This class must generate interest in deeper study and a love for knowing God and understanding His creation. The description divides it into two parts: worldview and biblical theology.

Part 1: Worldview. “Worldview” is simply shorthand for the recognition that everyone sees the world from his or her own unique perspective. It is a way of talking about how we think about life so that we can more easily make that perspective as much like that of Christ as possible. (The goal is not to become objective; this is impossible for anyone but God.) One might as well talk of a personal theology or philosophy. Our beliefs about the world come from people such as our parents, church leaders, friends, teachers, and celebrities but also our personal experiences, nature, forms of entertainment, socioeconomic status, geography, etc. In short, students must first become aware of the views they hold, where they came from, and why they matter. Finally, beliefs must be evaluated by some standard, in this case the historical understanding of a biblically based Christian faith, which will be discussed in the second half of the course. I believe this first half will prove to be more challenging in its topics and tasks than the latter. Students need to be convinced that this is a process worth undertaking.

Part 2: Biblical Theology. This part of the course is essentially about understanding the Christian metanarrative, the story the Bible talks about how everything in the world fits together, giving it all meaning and purpose. The central characters in this story are God and humanity, the stage is the created world (itself a character of sorts), and the plot is the act of creation, man's fall, redemption through Christ, and His return to restore all things for eternity. There is a great deal of freedom in this part of the course and lots of opportunities to help the students fall in love with God, His people, and the world. However, application must not be neglected here. The goal is to show the students where they fit in the story, the part they must play in the world, and how to play it well.

II. RATIONALE

You see the world differently from everyone else. There is a complex tapestry of ideas and experiences woven together to make you the person you are, to think what you do, and to live according to those beliefs. God designed you to be unique and has a special plan for you; however, there is still a right and wrong way to interpret life. How can you be sure that you see and feel and think and know the way a Christian should? This perspective is called a Christian worldview, and without it you and your loved ones are in danger of being deceived. In fact, some of the most dangerous ideas in our lives are the ones we do not recognize we hold. Worldview studies address how we make sense of what is often a confusing world, how we relate to others who believe differently than we do, how we can find our place in God's plan, and much more.

Notes: This course is foundational to both life and thought, as the class name indicates. As such the principles are so general it can be difficult to make them practical enough to be felt by students. The most tangible value is in what a Christian perspective accomplishes for the person who holds it. This class is required during the first two years of college, and students during this time typically struggle with cementing their own beliefs now that they and their friends are away from their parents. Many will be dealing for the first time with problems they have never dealt with before and systems of beliefs they have never encountered. They need to be assured that they are on the right track without becoming proud or overconfident. (The Christian metanarrative is assumed to be a component of a Christian worldview and therefore merits no explicit mention here.)

III. Course Objectives

Cognitive Objectives

A. The student will identify the essential elements of a distinctly Christian worldview.

Notes: This objective relates to foundational knowledge. Students must be able to distinguish basic Christian beliefs from those of other religions before they can begin assessing the beliefs they hold. It is imperative that they learn a standard by which they can judge belief systems. These are the essential theological doctrines of the Trinity, the incarnation, human depravity (sin), and Christ's return.

B. The student will develop a biblical-theological framework for categorizing new information and assessing its trustworthiness.

Notes: This objective relates to both application and learning how to learn. Students will be bombarded with new information for the rest of their lives. They must have the tools to help them know which sources are trustworthy and how new information relates to what they already believe, maintaining a Christian worldview for the rest of their lives.

C. The student will describe the Christian metanarrative in broad strokes and explain how a given person, subject, or object has meaning and purpose because of where it fits in God's story.

Notes: This objective relates to both foundational knowledge and integration. Christianity is not simply a collection of abstract truths, but it is God interacting with mankind through

creation, judgment, redemption, and glorification. It is this interaction that gives everything meaning. God has a purpose for each student that they can better fulfill if they comprehend the big picture. This not only includes where they fit as people, but their passions and possessions as well.

Affective Objectives

D. The student will value a distinctively Christian worldview as a set of beliefs that are the truest, most beautiful, and of the highest character.

Notes: This objective relates to caring. The Greek philosophers sought after the True, the Good, and the Beautiful, but it is a search that the whole world knows well. The Christian religion paints a picture of reality that is completely true and unfolds a moral guide for successful living. Lives conducted according to God's creative design reflect the beauty of God himself. Students need not only understand this and internalize it but enjoy it! If Christianity were not true or the best or beautiful, it would not be worth believing. As students learn to value these aspects of Christianity, they will grow in their love for God.

E. The student will empathize with those who view the world from outside the Christian faith and explain why such a view might be appealing.

Notes: This objective relates to the human dimension and also contains a cognitive component. It is not enough to know the difference between right and wrong; students must be able to engage with others and understand where they are coming from either as believers or unbelievers. This involves attempting to see from another person's point of view and identifying ways that they have been deceived either about the world or Christianity. Above all students must learn to love others regardless of their differences, following Christ's own example. It is expected that this empathy will naturally help students draw others to Christ.

F. The student will value theological study as a means of pursuing a deeper relationship with God.

Notes: This objective relates to caring. The mind is an important part of who we are, and it must be sharpened for God's use just as much as the body, heart, and soul. Students must see that theology is not an attempt to master God but a way to discover the depth of His love for us and to respond in turn.

IV. Course Textbooks

A. Required

Sire, James W. *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*. 5th ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009. (293 pp.)

Notes: This is the standard overview of different systems of belief, great for purposes of comparing and contrasting the Christian religion with other religions and philosophies. The most important aspect of this course is not so much teaching students what to think (i.e., giving them additional content to learn) but how to think in a Christian way. This reading should help make students aware of different views as well as meet a number of course objectives.

Any English Bible

Notes: Hard to form biblical theology without a Bible. Differences in translation can occasionally bring up issues worth talking about.

B. Suggested

Additional resources will be suggested in class via discussion and handouts.

Notes: My goal is to create and maintain a collection of annotated bibliographies. These will be easier to maintain by topic rather than course, as I add to them constantly and have each list available for multiple classes as needed.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Reading Assignments (10%)

The only textbook for this class is Sire's *The Universe Next Door*. This book is an excellent resource, but we will only read the chapters that are relevant to class discussion. Students will submit a reading report at the end of the semester listing the percentage of the chapter read before the class period.

Notes: The reading is important primarily for awareness of other worldviews. It is not crucial to understanding one's own worldview, thus the relatively low grade percentage assigned.

B. Written Assignments (50% Total, +5% EC)

A Note on Formatting: All paper assignments must be written double-spaced and utilize in-line text citation. Handouts will be supplied in class with specific guidelines.

1. Worldview Journal (20%)

Students will keep a journal of issues related to the class to be submitted for feedback periodically during the semester. You may want to comment on something that stood out in class, something in your own life related to your Christian worldview, a particular issue regarding the Christian metanarrative, etc. Anything goes so long as it is relevant to class; if you are concerned, feel free to contact me. Submissions must contain original thought and not merely repeat what was said in class. Entries that fail to do this will receive no credit. A minimum average of one entry per week is expected at each checkpoint and a minimum of two pages. Due in class on February 8, February 24, April 7, and May 8.

Notes: Keeping a journal is one of the most effective ways I know to force students to reflect and thus help them appreciate and value what they are learning. The check-in times are for feedback and to keep the journals moving along. Virtually anything can be related back to worldview, so the assignment is easy enough provided the student begins to see life in these terms—which will be a major part of the course. Page limits are guidelines for students rather than hard-and-fast rules for grading.

2. Media Analysis Paper (15%)

Each student will write a four- to six-page essay analyzing the worldview of a media presentation of his or her choice. Television, film, music, news, and theater are all examples of acceptable media. Students are encouraged to interact with the media in a group, but papers must be written individually. Due in class on March 29.

Notes: The media exposes people to alternative worldviews perhaps more than any other sphere of life, and it is often done at a nonverbal level. It is important for students to be able to see through the message and the medium to the statements the creator is making—which may themselves be communicated subconsciously. Page limits are guidelines for students rather than hard-and-fast rules for grading.

3. Interview Paper (15%)

Students will interact with a nonbeliever, either through personal interview, published biography, or a collection of creative work (news articles for a journalist, speeches for a political figure, songs for a songwriter, etc.) as approved by the professor. Students will then write a paper explaining elements of that person's worldview and why those beliefs seem right to the interviewee. This paper must be at least four pages long; there is no upper length limit. Due in class on February 22.

Notes: This paper is designed to help students empathize with people who live by non-Christian worldviews. The goal is not to shake their own faith—although there should be freedom in class to express doubts and deal with them in a healthy way. Rather Christians often approach non-Christians with fear, anger, or pride instead of love as Christ commanded. Page limits are guidelines for students rather than hard-and-fast rules for grading.

4. Extra Credit: Biography Paper (+5%)

This is an optional extra credit assignment. Students who decide to write this paper will research a famous person whose specific belief or experience made a pronounced impact on his or her life. This paper is worth up to 5% extra credit, and points will be awarded based on (a) the uniqueness of the experience or the subtlety of the belief or idea addressed, (b) the magnitude of the effect felt in the person's life, and (c) a clear, persuasive argument for the connection between the two. You should be able to accomplish this in a four- to six-page paper. May be submitted at any point during the semester, but no later than May 8.

Notes: This assignment encourages students to investigate the power of beliefs, ideas, and experiences on the way a person lives. Students will hopefully walk away with a greater appreciation for the importance of their own beliefs, ideas, and experiences upon the way they live and view the world. Page limits are guidelines for students rather than hard-and-fast rules for grading.

C. Tests and Exams (35% Total, +4% EC)

1. Exam 1 (15%, +2% EC)

Exam 1 will be given the week before Spring Break (on March 1) and may be taken in groups for 2% extra credit. The focus of this exam is to show that you can discern

beliefs arising from various worldviews and begin to apply Christian thought to problems.

Students may choose to retake the incorrect portions of this exam anytime before exam 2 (April 12) for a higher grade.

Notes: This exam will include multiple choice, short answer, matching, and short essay questions. They will all attempt to demonstrate whether students understand basic worldview issues and can identify which beliefs arise from which worldviews. The test should take an average of 20-30 minutes individually, although in groups this may take longer. Testing time will be limited to the 75-minute class period. My job as a teacher is to make sure they know what will be on the exam (i.e., how to prepare) and to focus the questions on crucial issues.

To retake the incorrect portions, students will be provided a blank exam in which they can answer only the questions they wish to revise. They may bring a list of question numbers to focus on with them. This may only be done individually and not in groups.

2. Exam 2 (15%, +2% EC)

Exam 2 will be given during week 12 of class (April 12) and will cover issues relating to Christian worldview distinctives and biblical theology. The final may be taken in groups for 2% extra credit.

Students may choose to retake the incorrect portions of this exam during finals week for a higher grade.

Notes: This exam will be administered three weeks early to allow time for the exams to be graded and returned before finals week so that students may retake the incorrect portions if they so choose. It will include the same types of questions as exam 1 and be administered in the same format. It will attempt to demonstrate whether students understand the core tenants of the Christian worldview and where they are found in the Bible.

To retake the incorrect portions of the final, students will be provided a blank final in which they can answer only the questions they wish to revise. They may bring a list of question numbers to focus on with them. This may only be done individually and not in groups.

D. Narrative Project (5%)

During the last portion of the semester, students will form groups to creatively demonstrate how a specific subject of study relates the biblical metanarrative. This project can be as simple or complex as the group desires, but every project will be presented in class on April 28. I will be glad to help you choose a subject if need be. Details of the project should be finalized and submitted the class period before presentations (April 26).

Notes: The goal of this project is to get students thinking creatively about the big picture. It is intended to be an inspiring time where students can have fun taking a break from studying and working together. The grade is primarily earned by simply accomplishing the project and presenting it in class; no further restrictions are needed. At the end of the presentations, I will connect the creativity demonstrated in class to that of the Father working with mankind.

E. Class Participation (5%)

Class interaction is an important part of learning, especially when dealing with a person's worldview. Students who do not participate in class may be docked up to 5% of their final grade at the professor's discretion.

Notes: Students will be forced to engage in class, so this should not be an issue. However, it will hopefully encourage them to engage willingly. It also gives me the freedom to push students who need extra motivation.

F. Extra Credit: Grade the Prof (+1% EC)

In an effort to meet your needs as a student and teach the class better, I would love your honest feedback. While I would greatly enjoy meeting with you at any point during the semester to discuss class or get to know you better, I have designed this assignment to give you an extra opportunity to say what is on your mind and earn some bonus points for it. Your response may be delivered anonymously if you prefer, although I hope you will feel comfortable enough to discuss sensitive matters with me in person. Assessments will be accepted anytime from exam 1 until the first class after Spring Break (March 1–15).

Notes: Fairly self-explanatory. Anonymous credit will be given by checking the student's name off in the grade book at the time of accepting the assessment.

VI. Course Policies

A. Letter/Numerical Grade Scale

A 95-100	A- 90-94	B+ 87-89
B 83-86	B- 80-82	C+ 77-79
C 73-76	C- 70-72	D+ 67-69
D 63-66	D- 60-62	E 0-59

Notes: This system is based off of a standard grading scale used in many undergraduate institutions. Students will be graded graciously and given opportunities to improve their grades through extra credit work.

B. Late Assignments

Late assignments will lose a half a letter grade for each day they are late. Exceptions will only be made for unforeseen and unavoidable emergencies at the discretion of the professor.

Notes: This standard is intended to be a stern warning. Students who are consistently late will feel more of its force than a student who perhaps misses only one assignment by one day. I have no intention of punishing students, but beginning students in particular will likely need boundaries to help them establish good study habits.

C. Weighing of Course Requirements for Grading

Assignment	Due Date(s)	Percentage
Sire Readings	(Report by 5/8)	10%
Worldview Journal	2/8, 2/24, 4/7, 5/8	20%
Media Analysis Paper	3/29	15%
Interview Paper	2/22	15%
Exam 1	3/1	15%
Exam 2	4/12	15%
Narrative Project	4/26, 4/28	5%
Class Participation	Report by 5/8	5%
TOTAL		100%
EC: Group Exam 1	3/1	2%
EC: Group Exam 2	4/12	2%
EC: Grade the Prof	4/15	1%
EC: Biography Paper	5/8	1-5%
MAX TOTAL EC		+10%

D. Attendance

Class attendance is essential to learning, especially in courses such as this one. However, it is the student's responsibility to get his or her money's worth out of the class. See university policies for official attendance requirements.

Notes: I believe college students should be treated as adults and responsible for taking initiative in class. This unfortunately can end up giving the student enough rope with which to hang himself. I will engage with the students to encourage class attendance in every way I can, but otherwise they are on their own.

E. Discrimination

CU does not discriminate on the basis of disability, age, gender, color, ethnicity, or weight in either admission or employment. For more information, see the university's full statement on discrimination and diversity or contact Student Services. Special accommodations can be made in advance for students with disabilities.

Notes: My desire is for all students to get as much out of class as possible and to help them personally in any way that I can, especially with regard to those who are often left behind.

VII. Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Assignments
1	Jan 25	Course Introduction & Syllabus Notes: Begin building relationships with students and setting the tone for the semester. Let them know what to expect and alleviate fears as much as possible. Cover no content! Demonstrate love in all things.	

	Jan 27	The Marketplace of Ideas Notes: Define “worldview” and discuss the relationship of worldviews to each other. Show how it is impossible to be truly objective or secular in one’s views.	
2	Feb 1	The True, the Good, and the Beautiful Notes: Relate the goal of a worldview to that of philosophy: to guide you to a proper understanding of what is superlatively True, Good, and Beautiful.	Read Sire Chapter 1
	Feb 3	Worldview Formation Notes: Have students briefly discuss in pairs some of the factors that have most influenced the way they view the world. Collect student answers in classroom discussion. Guide class discussion so that the following groups are identified: revelation, experience, authority figures, and internal reasoning. Discuss how they relate to one another and why we trust them—for better or worse.	
3	Feb 8	Naturalism Notes: Our first worldview discussion is on one of the biggest in America, purported to be what intellectually honest people believe. Discuss Sire reading.	Read Sire Chapter 4 Journal 1 Due
	Feb 10	Faith and Reason Notes: Set up the conflict between Christianity and science. Explain the historic Christian view of faith seeking understanding.	
4	Feb 15	Faith and Reason (cont.) Notes: Continue clearing up misconceptions about the relationship between faith and reason. Demonstrate how reason is a powerful tool if subjected first to faith in God and His Word.	
	Feb 17	New Age Spirituality Notes: The other large non-Christian worldview in America. Summarize with a content chart.	Read Sire Chapter 8
5	Feb 22	In-Class Exercise: Case Studies Notes: Divide the class into work groups and give them worldview case studies to analyze and discuss. In the remaining minutes have them explain their findings to the class.	Interview Paper Due
	Feb 24	Exam 1 Review Session Notes: Explain what will be on the exam in terms of types of questions and content. Answer questions about material	Journal 2 Due

		covered in class thus far.	
6	Mar 1	Exam 1 Notes: See rationale under “exam 1” in course requirements.	Exam 1
	Mar 3	Worldview and Art Notes: Watch a half hour TV program and hold an informal class discussion about the worldview it presents. If a suitable show cannot be found, analyze commercials, YouTube clips, music videos, or some other short form(s) of entertainment. Make sure there is popcorn for the students.	
7	Mar 8 Mar 10	Spring Break: No Class	
8	Mar 15	Christian Distinctives: The Supernatural Notes: Contrast with the lesson on Naturalism.	Read Sire Chapter 2 EC Grade the Prof Due
	Mar 17	Christian Distinctives: The Trinity Notes: Explain what makes the Trinity one of the most unique and difficult doctrines in history. Have students wrestle with this in class discussion. It is not expected that students master this at this time.	
9	Mar 22	Christian Distinctives: The Incarnation Notes: Explain what makes the Incarnation of Christ one of the most unique and difficult doctrines in history. Have students wrestle with this in class discussion. It is not expected that students master this at this time.	
	Mar 24	Christian Distinctives: The Return of Christ Notes: Inspire students with hope about the return of Christ. Shades of the metanarrative discussions to come. Conclude this section with a litany.	
10	Mar 29	Key Doctrines: Inerrancy Notes: Have students discuss what they have been taught about inerrancy and survey the general views, putting the doctrine in perspective.	Media Analysis Paper Due
	Mar 31	Key Doctrines: Human Depravity Notes: Have students discuss what they have been taught about human depravity and survey the general views,	

		putting the doctrine in perspective.	
11	Apr 5	Key Doctrines: Salvation by Grace Notes: Have students discuss what they have been taught about faith versus works and survey the general views, putting the doctrine in perspective.	
	Apr 7	Exam 2 Review Session Notes: Explain what will be on the exam in terms of types of questions and content. Answer questions about material covered in class thus far. Use part of class to play the name game: have students try to describe a figure or doctrine that will be on the exam by asking other students yes or no questions.	Journal 3 Due
12	Apr 12	Exam 2 Notes: See rationale under “exam 2” in course requirements.	Exam 2
	Apr 14	The Christian Metanarrative in Scripture Notes: Demonstrate God’s plan unfolding in Scripture	
13	Apr 19	The Christian Metanarrative in Scripture (cont.) Notes: Demonstrate God’s plan unfolding in Scripture	
	Apr 21	The Christian Metanarrative in Culture Notes: Demonstrate the presence of redemption themes in otherwise secular culture.	
14	Apr 26	The Christian Metanarrative and You Notes: Discuss how students individually relate to God’s story.	Narrative Project Due
	Apr 28	Narrative Project Presentations Notes: Emcee student presentations.	
15	TBD	Finals Week Notes: Allow students to retake exam 2 during this time if they so choose. Paper assignments may be turned in at the office anytime this week.	Journal 4 Due Attendance Sheet Due Reading Report Due EC Biography Paper Due