AZUSA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY
C.P. Haggard Graduate School of Theology

*Interdisciplinary Seminar in Theology: Exploring Postmodernism*

*Syllabus*

*Rev. Don Thorsen, Ph.D.*

*Spring Semester 2002*
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AZUSA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY
C.P. Haggard Graduate School of Theology

Course Instruction Plan

Course Information

Interdisciplinary Seminar in Theology (GTHE 534)
Spring Semester 2002 (4 units)
Wednesdays, 8:30 a.m.-12:10 p.m.; Ronald Center, Room 113

Professor

Rev. Don Thorsen, Ph.D.

Course Description

In this course we will study a variety of contemporary theological issues, especially those related to the theme of postmodernism. We will study them in relationship to historic and systematic theology as well as scripture, philosophy, psychology, and other behavioral sciences.

Course Outcomes

1. Develop General Knowledge: Students will have the opportunity to develop general knowledge of the study of Christian theology from an interdisciplinary perspective.

2. Develop Specialized Knowledge: Students will have the opportunity to develop specialized knowledge about specific contemporary theological issues, especially those related to postmodernism.

3. Develop Critical Thinking and Reasoning Skills: Students will have the opportunity to develop their critical thinking and reasoning skills pertaining to theology as well as to life in general.

4. Develop the Interpretation and Application of Theology: Students will have
the opportunity to make practical applications of their theological studies to personal life and ministry.

5. Develop Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs Regarding Change/Stability: Students will have the opportunity to study in ways that challenges their mode of learning and how they relate to those who believe differently from them. (See “Breadth and Depth of Higher Education.”)

Textbooks


Recommended Books


Any theological dictionary, for example: *Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology,* ed. Millard J. Erickson (Baker); *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology,* ed. Walter A. Elwell (Baker); *A Handbook of Theological Terms,* ed. Van A. Harvey
Assignments

Two Tracks for Grading: Although everyone is required to write a review of each required textbook, students will have a choice with regard to how they are graded for the course as a whole.

1. First Option: Students will write the required reviews of the textbooks for the course. A grade will be given for each review. If students are satisfied with the cumulative grades they receive for the reviews, then no additional assignments will be required for their final grade.

2. Second Option: If students are not satisfied with the cumulative grades they receive for the reviews, then they may choose to write a research paper, which may serve as the entire basis for their final grade. Students will receive the better grade: either the cumulative grade for the reviews, OR the grade for the research paper. Thus there is no penalty for choosing to write a research paper in addition to the book reviews. Likewise there is no guarantee of a better grade just because students do additional work. (Note: If you choose to write a research paper, then there is no need to write all of the book reviews.)

Instructions for Writing Book Reviews: All students must write a review of the required textbook, due on the day for which it is scheduled for reading and discussion. The review should be typed, double-spaced, and 2-4 pages in length. See the guidelines for writing a (book) review and sample (book) review, located in the syllabus. They will help you to format your review. Although all reviews will be graded, the grades will only count toward the students' final grade, if a student decides not to write a research paper.

Instructions for Writing a Research Paper: If a student chooses to write a research paper, then it will be due Wednesday, May 1—the final day of class—for those who do not want to base their final grade on the book reviews. The research paper must be written on a topic related to subjects studied in the course. The research paper should be typed, double-spaced, 20-30 pages in length, and complete with title page, table of contents, notations, and bibliography or works cited, depending upon the formatting style you use. The research paper should integrate, at least, three sources—along with scripture—in substantiating a thesis. (If you are unclear about the nature of a research paper, then read "What Is a Research
Paper?” See also the “Baker Thesis Machine” with regard to writing a persuasive, single-sentence thesis statement.

**Grading**

The final grade will be calculated one of two ways: 1) Either your grade will be based on the five book reviews (20% apiece); or 2) your grade will be based on the research paper. Grades will be given in accordance with academic policies of the University. Scholarship is ranked as follows: A, exceptional; B, superior; C, average; D, poor; I, incomplete; F, failure; and W, withdrawal. Pluses and minuses may be given, which have an impact upon the calculation of your grade point average (g.p.a.).

**Schedule**

Remember: Students need to read and write a review of each book. They must turn in their review on the day the book is assigned below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January 9</th>
<th>Introductions and Distribution of Syllabi</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 16</td>
<td>The Interdisciplinary Nature of Theology and Introduction to Postmodernism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 23</td>
<td>Let’s Go to the Movies: Movies with Postmodern Themes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| January 30 | Middleton and Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be*  
Due: First Book Review |
| February 6 | *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be* (Continued) |
| February 13 | Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*  
Due: Second Book Review |
| February 20 | *Beyond Foundationalism* (Continued) |
| February 27 | Fowler, *Faithful Change*  
Due: Third Book Review |
| March 6 | No Class: Common Day of Learning |
March 13 | Fowler, *Faithful Change* (Continued)
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March 20 | Basinger and Basinger, eds., *Predestination and Free Will*  
Due: Fourth Book Review
March 27 | No Class: Spring Vacation
April 3 | Basinger and Basinger, eds., *Predestination and Free Will*  
(Continued)
April 10 | Pinnock, et al, *The Openness of God*  
Due: Fifth Book Review
April 17 | Pinnock, et al, *The Openness of God* (Continued)
April 24 | Review: How Shall We Then Live?

**Comments**

_Speak up:_ Please do not hesitate to ask questions or make observations in class. This course is designed with the intent of stimulating faculty and student interaction. Learning, integration of the subject matter, and its application toward life and ministry occur best when done in a context open to dialogue.

**Readings:** Assigned readings are mandatory and should be completed in advance of the classes for which they are scheduled in the syllabus. Knowledge of the readings will be critical for understanding the lecture materials and subsequent discussions, and for preparing the various written assignments.

**Quality of Writing:** Written assignments should be undertaken as though you were preparing them for publication. This discipline should help to improve the quality of your writing. Emphasis in this class will always be placed on the quality rather than the quantity of your work. I appreciate and reward good and lucid writing, and I depreciate and downgrade poor and obscure writing. It is a matter of communication. Clarity and precision of language make communication easier and understanding more pleasurable. I want to enjoy reading what you write!

**Formal Style of Writing:** All assignments should be typed and written in a formal style, for example, no contractions or excessive use of slang. The research paper should include a title page, table of contents (research paper only), notations
Inclusive Language: For the sake of communication, I require that you use inclusive language in all written assignments. By "inclusive" I mean the use of generic terms with reference to both men and women. For example, there are many substitutes which may be used in the generic sense for the words "man," "mankind," and other words that increasingly have an exclusively male connotation. Among these are: humanity, humankind, human beings, humans, persons, people, all, and everyone. Inclusive language is primarily a matter of clarity. Generic terms (e.g., humanity, people) used along with gender specific terms (e.g., men, women) are more precise. There are other reasons for using inclusive language, not the least of which are theological and ethical. For further information, see Don Thorsen and Vickie Becker, Inclusive Language Handbook.

Completion of Work: All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. Extended due dates will be granted only in cases of hardship such as hospitalization or emergency absence from class. Unless such a situation arises immediately before a deadline, arrangements cannot be made after the fact without receiving a reduction in your overall grade. A similar policy applies with regard to course incompletes.

Cheating Policy: Cheating on examinations or plagiarism on written assignments will not be tolerated. For example, anyone who plagiarizes (i.e., presents as one's own work something which has been taken from someone else) may receive an automatic failure on that piece of work and a warning. A second like offense will result in failure ("F") for the final course grade.

Assignment Return Policy: Assignments submitted in class will be graded and then returned in class. Assignments completed at the end of a semester will be placed in the office of the Graduate School of Theology at the University. No assignments will be mailed to students unless a self-addressed, stamped envelope is provided to the professor.

Students with Disabilities: Any students in this course who have a disability that might prevent them from fully demonstrating their abilities should inform the professor and arrange to meet with an advisor in the Learning Enrichment Center (LEC) as soon as possible. At the LEC, students need to initiate disability verification and discuss accommodations that may be necessary to ensure their full participation in the successful completion of course requirements. (The LEC does not provide assessment for students who have a suspected learning disability. Students are required to obtain this information from an outside source such as a licensed psychologist or qualified educational therapist.)
Office: My office is in Room 116 of the Ronald Center for Theology (RCT-116). Please feel free to stop by my office or make an appointment to meet with me even if it is just to become acquainted. I am interested in getting to know you personally as well as teaching the class.

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Critical Thinking

by Robert Putnam
The Elements of Thought in Reasoning

All reasoning has A PURPOSE.

* Take time to state your purpose clearly.
* Distinguish your purpose from related purposes.
* Check periodically to be sure you are still on target.
* Choose significant and realistic purposes.

All reasoning is an attempt TO FIGURE SOMETHING OUT, TO SETTLE SOME QUESTION, TO SOLVE SOME PROBLEM.

* Take time to clearly and simply state the question at issue.
* Express the question in several ways to clarify its meaning and scope.
* Break the question into sub-questions.
* Identify if it is a factual question, a preference question, or a question that requires reasoning.

All reasoning is based on ASSUMPTIONS.

* Clearly identify your assumptions and check for their probable validity.
* Check the consistency of your assumptions.
* Reexamine your question at issue when assumptions prove insupportable.

All reasoning is done from some POINT OF VIEW.

* Identify your own point of view and its limitations.
* Seek other points of view and identify their strengths as well as weaknesses.
* Strive to be fair-minded in evaluating all points of view.

All reasoning is based on DATA, INFORMATION, AND EVIDENCE.

* Restrict your claims to those supported by sufficient data.

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1 Adapted from materials published by the Foundation for Critical Thinking, located at the Center for Critical Thinking and Moral Critique, Sonoma State University, Santa Rosa, CA.
* Lay out the evidence clearly.
* Search for information against your position and explain its relevance.

**All reasoning is expressed through, and shaped by, CONCEPTS AND IDEAS.**

* Identify each concept that is needed to explore the problem, and precisely define it.
* Explain the choice of important concepts and the implications of each.
* Define when concepts are used vaguely or inappropriately.

**All reasoning contains INFERENCES by which we draw CONCLUSIONS and give meaning to data.**

* Tie inferences tightly and directly from evidence to conclusions.
* Seek inferences that are deep, consistent and logical.
* Identify the relative strength of each of your inferences.

**All reasoning leads somewhere, has IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES.**

* Trace out a variety of implications and consequences that stem from your reasoning.
* Search for negative as well as positive consequences.
* Anticipate unusual or unexpected consequences from various points of view.
Taxonomy of Socratic Questions

It is helpful to recognize, in light of the universal features in the logic of human thought, that there are identifiable categories of questions for the adept Socratic questioner to dip into: questions of clarification, questions that probe assumptions, questions that probe reasons and evidence, questions about viewpoints or perspectives, questions that probe implications and consequences, and questions about the question. Here are some examples of generic questions in each of these categories:

* **Questions of Clarification**

* What do you mean by _____?
* Could you give me an example?
* What is your main point?
* Would this be an example: _____?
* How does ______ relate to ______?
* Could you put that another way?
* Would you say more about that?
* Is your basic point ______ or ______?
* Why do you say that?
* What do you think is the main issue here?
* Let me see if I understand you; do you mean ______ or ______?
* How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
* What do you think John meant by his remark? What did you take John to mean?
* Jane, would you summarize in your own words what Richard has said? . . . Richard, is that what you meant?

* **Questions that Probe Assumptions**

* What are you assuming?
* what is Karen assuming?
* What could we assume instead?
* You seem to be assuming ______. Do I understand you correctly?
* All of your reasoning depends on the idea that ______. why have you based your

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2 Adapted from materials published by the Foundation for Critical Thinking, located at the Center for Critical Thinking and Moral Critique, Sonoma State University, Santa Rosa, CA.
reasoning on ______ rather than ______?
* You seem to be assuming ______. How would you justify taking this for granted?
* Is it always the case? Why do you think the assumption holds here?
* Why would someone make this assumption?

Questions that Probe Reasons and Evidence

* What would be an example?
* Are these reasons adequate?
* How do you know?
* Why did you say that?
* Why do you think that is true?
* What led you to that belief?
* Do you have any evidence for that?
* How does that apply to this case?
* What difference does that make?
* What would change your mind?
* What are your reasons for saying that?
* What other information do we need?
* Could you explain your reasons to us?
* But is that good evidence to believe that?
* Is there reason to doubt that evidence?
* Who is in a position to know if that is so?
* What would you say to someone who said ______?
* Can someone else give evidence to support that response?
* By what reasoning did you come to that conclusion?
* How could we find out whether that is true?

Questions about Viewpoints or Perspectives

* You seem to be approaching this issue from ______ perspective. Why have you chosen this rather than that perspective?
* How would other groups/types of people respond? Why? What would influence them?
* How could you answer the objection that ______ would make?
* What might someone who believed ______ think?
* Can/did anyone see this another way?
* What would someone who disagrees say?
* What is an alternative?
* How are Ken’s and Roxanne’s ideas alike? Different?

Questions that Probe Implications and Consequences
* What are you implying by that?
* When you say ______, are you implying ______?
* But if that happened, what else would happen as a result? Why?
* What effect would that have?
* Would that necessarily happen or only probably happen?
* What is an alternative?
* If this and this are the case, then what else must also be true?
* If we that this is unethical, how about that?

Questions about the Question

* How can we find out?
* Is this the same issue as ______?
* What does this question assume?
* How would ______ put the issue?
* Would ______ put the question differently?
* Why is this question important?
* How could someone settle this question?
* Can we break this question down at all?
* Is the question clear? Do we understand it?
* Is this question easy or hard to answer? Why?
* Does this question ask us to evaluate something?
* Do we all agree that this is the question?
* To answer this question, what questions would we have to answer first?
* I'm not sure I understand how you are interpreting the main question at issue.
Breadth and Depth of Higher Education

by Russ Rogers
Structure of a Paper (Essay)
by David Esselstrom and Don Thorsen

I. Introduction

A. Your task: Respond to the directions of the assignment or question asked. In doing so, develop a thesis and defend the reasonableness of that thesis through reference to the reading itself and with collaborating illustrations from other sources or from your personal experience.

B. Be specific: Always be specific and concrete. Refer to ideas or illustrations in the reading directly, using direct or indirect quotes coupled with enough explanation to defend your understanding of what the author is saying. Use specific incidents or situations from your personal experience as supporting evidence or from the experience of others.

II. Structure

A. How to accomplish your task: Structure your essay into an introduction, body, and conclusion.

B. Make sure each section covers the following areas:
   1. Introduction
      a. Demonstrate that you understand the reading and question/assertion, or provide a captivating opening for the subject matter of the paper/essay as a whole.
      b. State your thesis in a short declarative statement as clearly and completely as possible.
      c. Indicate the sub-points or supporting ideas you will cover in the body of your essay.
   2. Body
      a. Develop each sub-point or supporting idea separately.
      b. Provide logical transitions from one sub-point or section to another.
      c. Link sub-points to reading through the inclusion of specifics from the reading.
      d. Use personal experience to illustrate each sub-point.
   3. Conclusion
      a. Re-emphasize the thesis, perhaps paraphrasing it.
      b. Demonstrate how your sub-points or supporting ideas
prove your thesis.

c. Make sure your closing statement relates to the rest of the essay, bringing a fitting sense of closure to the paper/essay as a whole.

C. Proportions of the whole: Introduction (1/5-1/6); Body (3/5-2/3); and Conclusion (1/5-1/6). Note: Longer papers will have a proportionately longer Body.
Baker Thesis Machine \(^3\)

*By Sheridan Baker*

### I. FOCUSING: THESIS SENTENCES

A. **What is a thesis?**

   The term *thesis* comes from the Greek word for "putting" or "position." A thesis simply gives your position on whatever issue you are discussing.

B. **What does a thesis do?**

   In the prewriting stage, a strong thesis can help you focus and develop your own perspective on the issue. As you write, the thesis can serve to keep you "on topic." When you have finished an essay, the thesis acts as a "cue" to guide your reader's interpretation of the paper.

C. **Does all writing require a thesis?**

   No. You need to have a *purpose* in any piece of writing, but sometimes this purpose will not require you to take a strong position on your topic. A simple description, for example, might not require that you take a position regarding whatever you are describing.

   But most of the writing you will do in college—everything from argumentative papers to research projects—requires that you take a definite position on an issue. You will therefore want to be able to express your position in a clear thesis sentence.

D. **How is a thesis created?**

   It depends. If you are writing a take-home paper, your thesis should probably be developed in a tentative and gradual manner—it should be allowed to evolve along with the paper itself. A good writing process involves change: your understanding of the issue should be more profound at the end of your writing process than it was at the beginning. Start out with a rough

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provisional thesis and gradually refine this initial position as you work through the various drafts of your paper.

But sometimes, especially in in-class writing, you simply do not have time to let your thesis evolve in this gradual fashion. You need to have a controlling idea right from the start, even before you begin writing, and you do not have the opportunity to make substantial changes in this thesis. In such situations, the following procedure, one that is admittedly mechanical, may be used to develop a workable thesis quickly on any issue.

II. THESIS MACHINE

Step 1: TOPIC—State the topic under consideration.

a. cats
b. freshman composition
c. grades

Step 2: ISSUE—State the specific issue in the form of a debating proposition.

a.Resolved: Cats should be subject to leash laws.
b. Resolved: Freshman composition should be abolished.
c. Resolved: Grades are unnecessary in college.

Step 3: POSITION—State you position on the issue as a simple "yes" or "no" sentence.

a. Yes, cats should be subject to leash laws.
b. No, freshman composition should not be abolished.
c. Yes, grades are unnecessary in college.

Step 4: RATIONALE (because-clause)—Using a "because-clause," provide a main rationale for your position.
a. Cats should be subject to leash laws because they are inveterate wanderers.

b. Freshman composition should not be abolished because many freshmen are unpracticed writers.

c. Grades are unnecessary in college because students learn more rapidly without them.

**Step 5: QUALIFICATION (although-clause)—Qualify your thesis by using an "although-clause" to concede points that you do not wish to dispute.**

a. Although cats do not present as many problems as dogs, they should be subject to leash laws because they are inveterate wanderers.

b. Although some students may not require help with their writing, freshman composition should not be abolished because many freshmen are unpracticed writers.

c. Although a student's work needs to be evaluated in some fashion, grades are unnecessary in college because students learn more rapidly without them.

**Step 6: REVISE and POLISH—Make whatever changes you wish to improve the tone and precision of your thesis statement; in particular, consider dropping direct use of "because" and "although."

a. Even though cats are less messy than dogs, the crowded nature of city life demands that the cat's instinctive wanderlust be restrained.

b. Although gifted high school graduates should be permitted to test out of freshman composition, most entering students need help in attaining college writing skills.

c. While there may be a legitimate need to evaluate the work of college students, the traditional grading system hinders learning and stifles creativity.

**Step 7: (Optional) REVERSE and TEST—Test the soundness of your thesis and expose potential counter-arguments by reversing your position.**

a. The cat's independent and adaptable nature makes it the only pet capable of living an unrestricted existence within the city.
b. Although introductory composition may have remedial value for some students, most high school graduates possess writing skills sufficient for success in college courses.

c. Traditional grading procedures may offend educational purists, but public school systems require pragmatic approaches to evaluation.
Final Order of a (Research) Paper

A paper should be submitted in a formal fashion. It should be typed and spaced more than single-spacing. Avoid the use of contractions and excessive slang phrases. Shorter papers may be stapled, though longer papers may be submitted in some type of folder or binder. Typically, the completed paper has the following units:

1. **Title Page:** The title of the paper should be centered; your name (social security number, the last four digits), the date, and the course number should also be centered or placed in the lower right-hand corner.

2. **Table of Contents/Outline** (optional): Include a final outline (topic or sentence outline). The outline should correspond to the organization of the paper.

3. **Text of the Paper:** The final copy of the paper should include notes (footnotes or endnotes), charts, and diagrams wherever needed. The numbering of the text usually begins after the title page, with Arabic numerals placed in a consistent fashion at the top or bottom of the page. Section headings (optional) should be clearly distinguished from the rest of the text.

4. **Works Cited (Bibliography, Annotated Bibliography):** The final Works Cited should follow the last page of the text, starting on a separate page.

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Sample Research Paper Proposal

John Wesley’s Concept of Christian Perfection

by 4700

Azusa, California
15 September 1998
John Wesley's Concept of Christian Perfection

Thesis

Although John Wesley's concept of Christian perfection is sometimes confused with absolute sinlessness, Wesley argued that Christians may experience a relative perfection in this life because of the teachings of scripture and the testimony of numerous Christians.

Outline

1. Introduction: I will introduce John Wesley's concept of Christian perfection and various misunderstandings related to the term. I will continue by stating the thesis and describing how I plan to substantiate it.

2. Scripture and the Concept of Perfection: I will begin by discussing relevant scripture passages pertaining to the concept of Christian perfection. In particular, I will investigate those passages dealing with sanctification, holiness, maturity, and so on.

3. Wesley on Christian Perfection: Next I will discuss the concept of Christian perfection in the writings of Wesley, giving special attention to the definition of key theological terms in his discussion of sanctification and holiness. I will investigate his use of scripture as well as his treatment of the testimony of those who claimed Christian perfection.

4. The Possible Impossibility: Finally I will discuss the need to think dialectically rather than univocally in understanding Wesley's advocacy of Christian perfection. This contemporary interpretation of Christian perfection refines Wesley's understanding of the term as relative rather than absolute sinlessness.

5. Conclusion: I will conclude by articulating a finely nuanced definition of Christian perfection, reflective of Wesley's understanding of the term. My definition, however, will draw from but not be limited to Wesley's concept of Christian perfection.
Select Annotated Bibliography


Maddox, Randy L. *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology*. Nashville: Kingswood, 1994. Maddox wrote what is fast becoming the standard reference work on all of Wesley’s theology. He sees the concept of responsible grace as the thread that ties all of Wesley’s theology together, including Wesley’s understanding of Christian perfection.


Truesdale, Al. "Reification of the Experience of Entire Sanctification in the American Holiness Movement." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 95-119. Truesdale argues that the American Holiness Movement misconceived Christian perfection as a 'reification' of religious experience rather than an 'existential' fidelity to it. Instead he argues that the doctrine—if it is to have a healthy future—needs to be recast in much larger terms existentially, ethically, and ecumenically.


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Note: Annotated bibliographies must include a minimum of five books or articles, which does not include materials required for the course. Each annotation should include at least two sentences in description of the book or article.
terms such as perfection, holiness, and maturity.


GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING BOOK REVIEWS

by Don Thorsen

I. Format


B. Biographical background (optional): Provide biographical information concerning the author. Consult Current Biography, Who's Who, and other biographical aids as well as the information on the book jacket. Only provide pertinent information, e.g., dates, professional position, other writings, and so on.


D. Analysis: This should be the heart of your review. How adequately has the author demonstrated the thesis, and by the use of what sources? (See "Questions for Analysis" below.)

E. Conclusion: Briefly sum up your judgments about the book. (Optional: Note any significant reviews of the book at the end with full bibliographic data.)

II. Questions for Analysis

A. What qualifies this author to write a book of this sort? What are the author's presuppositions, assumptions, values and biases, or general point of view?

B. What is the context in which the author writes, e.g., is it a reaction to something or is it a synthesis of several things? For whom is this book written? Does it give evidence of indeed speaking to such an audience?

C. What is the justification for a book of this sort? Is there a need for it?

These guidelines represent a compilation of information gleaned from a variety of sources over a number of years.
D. What is the scope of the book? (That is, how much material does it cover?) Is this scope appropriate given the intended audience and purpose? Why or why not?

E. How does the author organize the material? What is the author's methodology (rules for organizing evidence)? Is this kind of organization appropriate? Are there gaps, which interrupt the flow of thought?

F. What sorts of argumentation does the author use, e.g., historical, philosophical, or sociological arguments? Are the arguments logical? Are there logical fallacies evident? Does the author support the arguments with adequate evidence? Does the author use the evidence in valid ways? How well does the author's point come across? If the book is an older one, how has the passing of time affected the validity of the argument?

G. What about the book's format or structure? Are there adequate maps, indices, footnotes and bibliographies considering the book's purpose and audience? Are there helpful or significant features of the book, e.g., a summary of a chapter or an annotated bibliography?

III. General Comments

A. A book review is an essay whose purpose is to comment on a particular work or a series of works bearing upon a single subject. The most important point to remember about a book review is that it is a commentary, not merely a summary. A book review should spend little time outlining the material covered by the author. The bulk of your review should be an analysis and evaluation of the way the author handled the subject, and a commentary on the book's contribution to your understanding of the issues discussed.

B. It may be necessary to refer to specific portions of the book to illustrate your statements and conclusions, but it is generally not advisable to quote from it.

C. The form of a book review is similar to that of an essay. You should begin by making a list of points you wish to make. Choose aspects of the subject that are general enough to cover the scope of the entire book.

D. Once your list of central points has been compiled, you should take
each one as the focus of a different section of your review. (Do not try to make more points than can be accomplished in a brief book review.) Each section of your review should explain the point, support it with your own arguments and with brief examples from the book under review, and then draw conclusions as to the meaning and importance of the point.

E. Because a book review is generally brief, come to the point directly and confine yourself to a small number of supporting examples. It should be evident to any reader not only that you have read the book but also that you have read and have used your own experience and critical faculties in formulating your comments.
Book Review: Sample


Reviewed by Don Thorsen

In *John Wesley on Religious Affections*, Gregory Clapper provides a critical study of the experiential dimension of Christian life and theology in the writings of John Wesley. Experience plays a key role in the thought of Wesley. Clapper clarifies important terms central to Wesley's vision of Christianity and argues for the continued relevance of his practical theology in a post-modern world.

Clapper speaks of the experiential dimension of Wesley's writings in terms of "the affections." The most common meaning of "the affections" pertains to "the general orientation of the person" (51). This orientation includes the emotions. So it was important to Wesley that theology understand the causes, nature and importance of felt experience within believing individuals in order to provide a holistic vision of Christian life and theology.

Clapper argues that Wesley provides a holistic vision through an affection-laden language, which does not pander "to the masses but is in fact the most true and adequate way to talk about Christianity" (3). In fact, Clapper maintains that Wesley's conception of affectivity is quite sophisticated for several reasons. First, Wesley points out the need for inner *formation* as well as inner *discovery*, recognizing that Christianity involves an "orthokardia" (right heart) as well as "orthodoxy" (right belief) and "orthopraxis" (right action) (154, 160). Second, Wesley's constant emphasis on the patterning, forming and discipling of the affections reveals an area of theological coherence or logic, too often missed by those who caricature him as being unreflective or uncritical in his appeals to experience (162). Third, Wesley provides a uniquely integrated theology which emphasizes the gospel in relationship to the heart and "thus gives a positive vision for the role of
doctrine in the emotional life" (169). These insights, along with others suggested by Clapper, help us to see how the affections, as understood by Wesley, contribute constructively to a more holistic vision of Christian life and theology.

In addition to these insights, Clapper raises several issues, which require further consideration in the study of Wesley. First, it remains questionable whether Wesley—much less Christianity as a whole—would want to say that "affection-laden" language is the most true and adequate way to talk about Christianity, especially since Clapper argues for a more balanced conception which integrates orthodoxy and orthopraxis as well as orthokardia. Second, Clapper points out the influence of Jonathan Edwards in the development of Wesley’s thoughts on the affections, but Clapper limits this analysis to one of the last chapters, putting in doubt the extent of Edwards' influence or the extent of Wesley’s unique contributions on the subject. Third, in arguing for the contributions of Wesley to a "practical theology in a post-modern world" (169), Clapper relies too heavily upon an understanding of religion along cultural-linguistic lines as found in The Nature of Doctrine by George Lindbeck. Although Lindbeck’s cultural-linguistic category of religion may help in the analysis of Wesley and the affections, it does not supply a sufficiently holistic framework with which to meet the criteria for being either "practical" or "post-modern."

*John Wesley on Religious Affections* represents the first volume in the scholarly series on Pietist and Wesleyan Studies published by Scarecrow Press. Clapper’s book represents an excellent contribution to the renascence of Wesleyan studies in the latter half of the twentieth century, and it bodes well of future publications in the series.
Course Themes

**Education**

Education is the fine effect left in us by the things we have forgotten.

Anonymous

**Faith**

I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe, but I believe in order that I may understand.

Anselm, *Proslogium* (11th century)

**Faith and Reason**

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.

Paul, Philippians 2:5 (1st century)

**Critical Thinking**

The critical power . . . tends to make an intellectual situation of which the creative power can profitably avail itself . . . to make the best ideas prevail.

Matthew Arnold, *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time* (19th century)

**Self-Analysis**

Know thyself.

Inscription in the temple of Delphi (from Plutarch, *Morals*, 7th century BCE)

**Consistency**

A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self-Reliance* (19th century)

**Respect**

In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.

Meldenius (17th century)

**Application**

Theology is like the map . . . if you want to get any further, you must use the map. . . . In other words, theology is practical.

C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (20th century)