

Syllabus for
GTHE 638—Contemporary Religious Cults
3 Credit hours
Fall 2015

Modular/Distance Education Program – Blended A Course
Campus visit: October 5-7, 2015

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

An examination of the theological and historical roots of the present-day cult movement. Analyzes various cults in contemporary America and focuses upon their unique doctrines, as compared to orthodox Christianity.

Prerequisites: None.

II. COURSE GOALS

The purpose of this course is to enable the student to do the following:

- A. Learn to converse intelligently on cultic groups studied, and how they deviate from orthodox Christianity.
- B. Learn how to engage cultic members in meaningful dialogue.
- C. Learn to discern cultic doctrines as they are being taught.

III. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THIS COURSE

As a result of successfully completing this course, the student will be able to do the following:

- A. Recognize and respond to areas of agreement with the cultist, while recognizing fully departures from the biblical norm.
- B. Engage the cultist in meaningful exchange.
- C. Express the semantical difficulties inherent in dialogue.
- D. Teach others how to avoid the errors and misconceptions of the cultist.
- E. Establish and share criteria for judging cults through a Christian understanding.
- F. Recognize and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of Mormonism, Seventh-Day Adventists, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baha'i, Unity, New Age, and others.
- G. Reveal an in-depth knowledge of one movement by the preparation of a paper of at least ten pages for presentation in and distribution to the class. This paper requires analysis of the salient historical facts, a history of the most important leaders, a theological evaluation of the major teachings of the cult, and a biblical apologetic, underscoring the major aberrations.
- H. Write a book critique that deals with comparing Mormonism to orthodox Christianity.

IV. TEXTBOOKS

A. Required Materials

1. Textbooks

Blomberg, Craig L. and Stephen E. Robinson. *How Wide the Divide*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1997. ISBN: 9780830819911

Groothuis, Douglas. *Unmasking the New Age*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1986. ISBN: 9780877845683

Sire, James. *Scripture Twisting*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1980. ISBN: 9780877846116

Tucker, Ruth A. *Another Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004. ISBN: 9780310259374

2. Other

Hebert, David K. *The Need for Teaching the Eschatological Gospel of Both Comings of Jesus Christ in the 21st Century, Especially as We See the Day of His Parousia Approaching*. D.Th. Dissertation. University of South Africa, 2009. (Available electronically on Class Pages/D2L.)

B. Optional Materials

1. Textbooks

House, H. Wayne. *Charts of Cults, Sects, and Religious Movements*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000. ISBN: 9780310385516

2. Other

None

V. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A. University Policies and Procedures

1. Students and faculty at Oral Roberts University must adhere to all laws addressing the ethical use of others' materials, whether it is in the form of print, electronic, video, multimedia, or computer software. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating involve both lying and stealing and are violations of ORU's Honor Code: "I will not cheat or plagiarize; I will do my own academic work and will not inappropriately collaborate with other students on assignments." Plagiarism is usually defined as copying someone else's ideas, words, or sentence structure and submitting them as one's own. Other forms of academic dishonesty include (but are not limited to) the following:
 - a. Submitting another's work as one's own or colluding with someone else and submitting that work as though it were his or hers;
 - b. Failing to meet group assignment or project requirements while claiming to have done so;
 - c. Failing to cite sources used in a paper;
 - d. Creating results for experiments, observations, interviews, or projects that were not done;

- e. Receiving or giving unauthorized help on assignments. By submitting an assignment in any form, the student gives permission for the assignment to be checked for plagiarism, either by submitting the work for electronic verification or by other means. Penalties for any of the above infractions may result in disciplinary action including failing the assignment or failing the course or expulsion from the University, as determined by department and University guidelines.
 2. Final exams cannot be given before their scheduled times. Students need to check the final exam schedule before planning return flights or other events at the end of the semester.
 3. Students are to be in compliance with University, school, and departmental policies regarding Whole Person Assessment requirements. Students should consult the WPA handbooks for requirements regarding general education and the students' majors.
 - a. The penalty for not submitting electronically or for incorrectly submitting an ePortfolio artifact is a zero for that assignment.
 - b. By submitting an assignment, the student gives permission for the assignment to be assessed electronically.
- B. Graduate School of Theology and Ministry Policies and Procedures—Modular/Distance Education Program
1. **Modular Intensive Week:** Each Modular Intensive Week, usually held in CityPlex Towers on the 21st floor, has sessions Monday-Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
 - a. This week will be comprised of two 2 ½ day blended courses designated as Blended “A” and Blended “B.”
 - b. Blended “A” courses include 7 weeks of online instruction *prior to* the 2 ½ day modular intensive component.
 - c. Blended “B” courses include 7 weeks of online instruction *following the* 2 ½ day modular intensive component.
 - d. Students are to make travel arrangements that do not interfere with their involvement in all of these sessions, and confirm course location prior to arrival.
 2. Instructions for the online portion of this course and designated assignments are to be found in the course management shell in Desire 2 Learn (D2L) and elsewhere in this syllabus.
 3. Each overdue assignment will be penalized 10% for each week it is late. After the third week, no credit will be given for the assignment.
 4. Attendance
 - a. Students are to attend all sessions associated with the specific blended course designation during the modular intensive week.
 - b. All absences, late arrivals, and early departures receive a grade reduction equal to 2.5% for each classroom hour missed and **must be approved by the Modular Director.**
 5. The Disability Service Center, in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, assures that no qualified individual with a disability will be denied reasonable accommodations based upon the individual's needs. It is the responsibility of the student to contact the Disability Service Center and properly register for these

services. For more information, call 918.495.7018 or go to www.studentresources.oru.edu.

C. Course Policy and Procedures

1. Evaluation Procedures

a. Grading:

Class Participation	20%
Book Critique	20%
Class Presentation	20%
Final Exam	10%
Term Paper	30%

b. Grading scale:

A=90-100%

B=80-89%

C=70-79%

D=60-69%

F=59% and below

2. Whole Person Assessment (ePortfolio) Requirements

a. All students entering the seminary are required to enroll in PRF 059: ePortfolio: Whole Person Assessment, which provides specific training to develop the skills needed to create an ePortfolio.

b. WPA Requirements for this Course

None.

3. Other Policies and Procedures

a. **Online Assignments**

i. Submit a prioritized list of three cults, on which you would like to study, research, and do a class presentation and term paper, from the following list in the first week's D2L drop box: Freemasonry, The Illuminati, Mormonism, Seventh-day Adventism, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baha'i, Unity, New Age, Wicca (Witchcraft), United Pentecostal Church, Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.), Worldwide Church of God (Armstrongism), The Way International, Scientology, The Unification Church, ISKCON (Hare Krishna), Black Muslims, Satanism, The Children of God, Radical Islam

ii. Group Participation (See D2L Intro Lecture for specifics)

iii. Weekly assignments are listed in D2L; typically:

(a) Read Devotion scriptures and readings from text(s) for week

(b) Hold Group Devotion on scriptures and discussion on readings

(c) Submit notes and evaluation forms to D2L drop box

iv. Book Critique on Blomberg and Robinson's *How Wide the Divide*

(a) Prepare a four to six page typed book response paper to be submitted to the D2L drop box. The first part of the paper should summarize the work, with the second part of the paper being a dialogue between yourself and the points that the Mormon author raises concerning Christianity and Mormonism.

b. Modular Intensive Week Assignments

- i. Group Participation
- ii. Class Presentation (30- 45 min. Power Point presentation on cult of choice, see Term Paper section below for guidance) (SEE ABOVE for both
- iii. Final Exam
- iv. Term Paper submission (due 4 November)—The following outline will be helpful in the formulation of both the Class Presentation and Term Paper on the specific cult of choice:
 - (a) A brief history of the movement. This includes the necessary dates and important information about the leaders. It mentions something of the growth and expansion of the movement until the present time.
 - (b) An analysis of the original writings on the major doctrines. The student accurately and objectively presents from personal study of the original doctrines and the major doctrinal statements. Evaluations should not appear here.
 - (c) An analysis of the coherence factor. Before the student goes into biblical analysis, the attempt should be to point out any lapses in coherence or logic from within the structure of the system itself. The student should note any unresolved problems or inconsistencies that weaken the structure of the system.
 - (d) The final aspect is the student's evaluation of the major aberrations of the cult under study. At this point the student asks such questions as the following:
 - (1) Were there ethical problems of note in the founder's life?
 - (2) What were the historical factors that permitted this movement to rise? Why did it have appeal?
 - (3) What similarities does the student see between this cult and others studied?
 - (4) What words or phrases are the identifying criteria for this particular cult? Are there any words or phrases used in common with Christianity but with different meanings?
 - (5) What are the cult's deviations from Orthodox Christianity?
 - (e) The evaluation part of the paper must be at least two pages in length with a strong critical approach.

c. **Instructor:** Dr. David Hebert, dhebert@oru.edu

VI. COURSE CALENDAR – MODULAR INTENSIVE WEEK

Monday, October 5, 2015 BLENDED A

8:30 a.m.	9:00 a.m.	Course Introduction
9:00 a.m.	10: 00 a.m.	Group devotion on Gnosticism scriptures
10:00 a.m.	10:15 a.m.	Break
10:15 a.m.	12:00 noon	Lecture on cults not covered by presentations/ Begin class presentations
12:00 noon	1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 p.m.	3:15 p.m.	Continue class presentations
3:15 p.m.	3:30 p.m.	Break
3:30 p.m.	5:30 p.m.	Continue class presentations

Tuesday, October 6, 2015 BLENDED A

8:30 a.m.	9:00 a.m.	Group devotion on Judaizers scriptures
9:00 a.m.	10: 00 a.m.	Continue class presentations
10:00 a.m.	10:15 a.m.	Break
10:15 a.m.	12:00 noon	Continue class presentations
12:00 noon	1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 p.m.	3:15 p.m.	Continue class presentations/Group devotion on antichrist scriptures
3:15 p.m.	3:30 p.m.	Break
3:30 p.m.	5:30 p.m.	Guest Lecturer/Group Participation Grade

Wednesday, October 7, 2015 BLENDED A

8:30 a.m.	10:30 a.m.	Devotion of Gomes' Five-fold Orthodoxy/Final Exam
10:30 a.m.	10:45 p.m.	Break
10:45 a.m.	12:00 noon	Chapel
12:00 noon	2:30 p.m.	Lunch/Welcome & Program Orientation – Dr. Ekblad

**Inventory for Student Learning Outcomes
Graduate School of Theology and Ministry
M. A. Theological/Historical Studies**

GTHE 638—Contemporary Religious Cults

Dr. David Hebert, Instructor

Fall 2015

This course contributes to student learning outcomes for the M. A. Theological/Historical Studies degree as indicated below:

Significant Contribution – Addresses the outcome directly and includes targeted assessment.

Moderate Contribution – Addresses the outcome directly or indirectly and includes some assessment.

Minimal Contribution – Addresses the outcome indirectly and includes little or no assessment.

No Contribution – Does not address the outcome.

Degree Program Outcomes	Significant Contribution	Moderate Contribution	Minimal Contribution	No Contribution
Theological Perspective				
Articulate the specifics of the Christian belief system within contemporary society.	X			
Reformation Traditions				
Demonstrate knowledge of the history and development of Christian tradition during specific time periods.			X	
Development of Doctrine				
Demonstrate basic knowledge of key theologians and the development of doctrine within the history of Christianity.			X	
Specialized Research				
Research specialized topics in history and theology of the Christian church in a manner that demonstrates historical integration and theological reflection.	X			
French/German Language				
Translate Scripture and historical documents in either French or German on an entry level.				X
Pentecostal/Charismatic Foundations				
Demonstrate awareness of Pentecostal/Charismatic distinctives and historical development.			X	