



## THE THEOLOGY OF HEAVEN AND HELL

**COURSE #TTTH 771/765/806**

Spring 2017

### PROFESSOR/CLASS INFORMATION

Alan W. Gomes, Ph.D.

(Course) Title: Theology of Heaven & Hell

Course Code/#: TTTH 771/765/806

Term: Spring 2017

Class Days/Time: M 1:30-4:20pm

Location: Talbot East 109

Class Days/Time (section 01): W 6:30-9:20 pm

Office Phone: 562-944-0351 ext. 5542

Credit Hours/Units: 3 hours

Office Hours: As posted on the office door

Office Location: Myers 207

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School Website: [www.biola.edu](http://www.biola.edu)

Professor's Website: <http://www.alangomes.com>

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine the biblical doctrines of heaven and hell, including many of the contemporary challenges to them.

## COURSE ALIGNMENT WITH PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

This master's-level course is an elective offered to M.A., M.Div., and Th.M. students. Successful completion of this course will prepare students to demonstrate proficiency toward the accomplishment of relevant Program Learning Outcomes listed on page 9 of this course description.

## TEXTBOOKS

- I. Wright, N. T. *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008)
- II. Shedd, W. G. T. *The Doctrine of Endless Punishment*. New York: Scribners, 1886. (Available for download on my web site.)

## LEARNING TASKS (Assignments) & ASSESSMENT (Grading)

### I. General Statement/Overview of the Course Requirements

This course will consist of the following elements:

- A. Instructor's lectures.
- B. Writing a 2500-word (approximately 10-page) research paper on a selected topic. [Note: Students taking this at the Th.M. level will write an approximately 20-page (5000 word) paper.]
- C. Giving an oral presentation of the above research paper and leading an entire class Q&A discussion time on it.
- D. Participating in the Q&A times when other students are giving their papers.
- E. Taking a final exam based on reading in the texts by Shedd and Wright, and on material covered in the instructor's lectures.

### II. Detailed Instructions on Fulfilling the Course Requirements

#### A. Instructor Lectures

1. For some of the first class sessions I shall lecture on certain topics in order to lay the groundwork on the doctrines of heaven and hell. (Refer to the course schedule for the specifics. This schedule is not included here but will be provided once the class starts.)
2. You should take careful notes on this material as the final exam at the last class session will contain questions from it.
3. I shall furnish a list of study questions related to my lectures to help guide you as you study for the final exam.

#### B. Written Research Paper

1. General description of the assignment:

You will pair up with another student to write a 5000-word (i.e., approximately 20-

page) research paper on a topic selected from the list of topics on page 7 of this course description. Each paper will consist of two main parts, which are to be 2500 words each (i.e., approximately 10 pages, exclusive of bibliography). The first part deals with the biblical/exegetical material related to your topic. The second part explores the theological/apologetical/philosophical aspects of the topic. You will be responsible for writing one of these two parts in its entirety, while your partner will be responsible for producing the other part. Then, on the appointed day in class, you and your partner will present the paper and lead the class in a discussion about it. (More details about the in-class presentation appear in point C below.)

**[IMPORTANT NOTE TO TH.M. STUDENTS:** You will not work with another student and will be required to write BOTH parts of the paper, as described below. You will also be responsible for the entire in-class presentation.]

2. Due date:

- a. Your paper will be due to me on the morning of the day before the class session on which you are scheduled to give your presentation. This will give me an opportunity to look it over before the class session in which you will lead the presentation, enabling me to prepare for my role in the discussion time (see below).
- b. You may either e-mail me the paper or turn in a hard copy to the box on my office door (Myers 207), no later than 9 am the day before the class at which you will give your presentation.
- c. If you choose to e-mail your paper, please note the following:
  - (1) Submit your paper to me in Adobe Acrobat (.PDF) format.
  - (2) Make certain that you receive some kind of acknowledgement e-mail from me that I received your paper in good order. If you do not receive a response from me after a reasonable amount of time has passed, you should get in touch with me, either by phone or by attempting another e-mail until we make contact.

3. Topic selection:

Your topic will be drawn from among one of the options listed in the course description (see p. 7).

- a. Each two-person student team will have a unique topic.
- b. Student teams who opt to give their presentations earlier will have priority in selecting their topic over those who choose to present later.
- c. The list of possible topics is given at the end of this course description (see p. 7).
- d. At the first class session we shall figure out who will be partnered and what topic your team will be assigned.

4. Paper contents:

- a. As noted above in the general description, each paper will consist of two main parts: a biblical section and a theological/apologetic/philosophical section. You will write one of those two parts and your team member will write the other part, as described below.

[NOTE TO TH.M. STUDENTS: As stated earlier, Th.M. students will *not* work in teams and will write *both* parts of this paper.]

- b. Biblical Part
  - (1) In the biblical part you are to identify all of the main biblical passages that have a bearing on answering your assigned question.
  - (2) You are to do serious exegesis on these passages, focusing particularly on interpretive features of the text that will be relevant for your topic.
  - (3) This means, practically, that you will spend most of your time in the best biblical scholarship, commentaries, systematic theologies, and monographs on the passages in question.
  - (4) Interaction with your teammate
    - (a) Although you will not be directly responsible for the theological section that your teammate produces, and your paper grade will be based solely on the 2500-word biblical section that you produce, you will nevertheless need to interface with your teammate so that he or she can incorporate the fruits of your exegetical work in the theological/philosophical analysis.
    - (b) Likewise, your teammate (i.e., who is working on the theological section) needs to meet with you early in the process so you can together identify what biblical passages relate to the theological and philosophical concerns that he/she plans to address. That way, you can do work on texts that will aid in the development of the theological part of the presentation.
- c. Theological Part
  - (1) In the theological/philosophical/apologetic part of the paper you are to explain and defend the theological and/or philosophical logic of the biblical doctrine. This will include refuting objections that have been raised to it and also showing the internal logic of the biblical position.
  - (2) Your part of the paper should not consist of mere philosophical and theological speculation untethered to the biblical text. Rather, you are considering the logic of the biblical doctrine that is *first established* by the exegesis of the text. In other words, methodologically speaking, one must *first* establish the *facts* of the doctrine from Scripture. This is your partner's task in the biblical section. Then, *your task* is to explain the biblical, theological, and philosophical logic of these texts, showing how they cohere and defending them against counter arguments.
  - (3) This means, practically, that you will spend most of your time in the best theological and philosophical scholarship, particularly systematic and

historical theologies, philosophical works (where appropriate), and monographs on the topic in question. But again, you need to produce a philosophical and theological defense of the *biblical doctrine*, established from the Bible and not from philosophy or speculative theology.

- (4) Interaction with your teammate
  - (a) Although you will not be directly responsible for the biblical section that your teammate produces, and your paper grade will be based solely on the 2500-word theological section that you produce, it will be important for you to interface with your teammate in order to incorporate the fruits of your partner's exegesis of relevant texts.
  - (b) Likewise, as already stated above, early in the process you and your teammate should work together to identify what biblical passages relate to the theological and philosophical concerns that you plan to address in your section. That way, your partner can provide you with a careful analysis of the biblical data, the logic of which you must identify, defend, etc.

5. Paper specifications:

- a. The written portion of your paper needs to follow the appropriate conventions for an academic research paper and demonstrate graduate-level rigor and quality in the presentation. Of course, it is expected that your paper will be free of any significant grammatical or spelling problems.
- b. As noted earlier, each part of the paper will be 2500 words (i.e., approximately 10 pages), exclusive of bibliography.
  - (1) *Base your paper on word count, not on the number of pages the printout takes, since margins, font size, etc. can greatly affect the number of hard copy pages produced.*
  - (2) At the top of your paper, write the total number of words written.
- c. The paper should be properly footnoted (with notes at the bottom of each page) and conclude with a bibliography at the end.
- d. For a paper of this sort I would expect you to consult, at a minimum, 7 or 8 high quality references, *not to include the assigned texts for this course*. You may certainly wish to consult more than this.
- e. Subdivide your paper into an appropriate number of sections in order to make the discussion clear.
  - (1) Since each topic is different and may have certain unique features, I do not have a standard template that all the papers should follow. However, if you get stuck, you may consult with me about how you might wish to subdivide or otherwise structure your paper.
  - (2) Subdivisions for the biblical part of the paper may consist simply of the biblical verses. However, if the biblical verses fall into certain natural categories, then these categories can serve as major divisions with the biblical verses serving as subdivisions. This is up to you, provided that

the result is a logical flow.

- (3) Subdivisions for the theological part may show an even greater variety, depending upon the topic. It will be up to your discretion to identify the “shape” of the issue and organize your paper’s subdivisions accordingly.

C. The oral presentation of your paper

1. It is critical that you turn in your paper to me on or before the due date, which is the Tuesday morning immediately before your presentation the next evening.
2. On the day of your oral presentation you are to bring enough copies to class for all of the class members.
3. Each team member will read his/her paper to the class as we follow along. (This is similar to the way in which one reads a paper at a professional conference.) Your 2500-word section will likely take you around 30 minutes to read.
4. After you have read the paper, you may feel free to add any additional comments you might have.
5. Then, you and your partner are to lead a question and answer time with questions posed by other members of the class. (Note: Student participation during the Q&A time is figured into the grade for their class participation.) During this time, I shall try to stay out of the discussion as much as possible.
6. After the Q&A time with your classmates, I will interact with you and with other members of the class on this topic.
7. IMPORTANT NOTE TO TH.M. STUDENTS: As you will be writing both parts of the paper and will not be working with a team member, you will be responsible for the oral presentation in its entirety.

D. Final Exam

1. There will be a final exam at the last class session.
2. The final exam will be drawn from material taken from the following sources:
  - a. The class lectures.
  - b. N. T. Wright’s *Surprised by Hope*.
  - c. W.G.T. Shedd, *The Doctrine of Endless Punishment*.
3. The exam will be objective (i.e., multiple choice and true/false).
4. I shall furnish you with a study guide to assist in your preparations for this exam.

III. GRADING:

- A. Percentage cut-offs for each grade level are calculated according to the Talbot grading scale. These are shown on my web site.

B. The “weight” for each element mentioned above is as follows:

Item	Weight
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Class participation.</b></p> (Includes your attendance as well as participation during the Q&A of other students’ presentations.)	10%
<b>Your written 10-page paper</b>	40%
<b>Oral presentation of your paper</b>	20%
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Final Exam</b></p> (Covers lectures, Shedd, and Wright)	30%
	100%

## COURSE CALENDAR

I shall provide a course calendar at the second class session, after the groups and paper topics have been assigned. I shall also post this on my web page for download.

## POTENTIAL PAPER TOPICS

1. What about people who claim to have had visions of heaven and hell, or even say that they have gone there and returned?
2. What happens to infants who die? (In this question you will also deal with the fate of the mentally incompetent.)
3. Is it possible for us to communicate with those who have already died? (You could also deal with the question of whether people who have already died have any awareness of what is happening down here on earth.)
4. Is there such a place as purgatory? (Include discussion of Protestant versions of the doctrine, and also deal with the question of whether we should we pray for the souls of those who have already died.)
5. Does God give people who have rejected him in this life a second chance to accept him in the afterlife? (As part of your answer you should also address the question of whether it is possible for someone in hell to repent and be granted access to heaven.)

6. Won't we be sad in the eternal state if our unsaved loved ones are not there? (Address in connection with this what our attitude should be about the doctrine of hell, affectively speaking.)
7. Will it be possible for us to sin in the eternal state?
8. Will there be animals in the eternal state?
9. Is it true that Jesus "descended into hell," like the Apostles' Creed says?

## IMPORTANT CLASS POLICIES/INFORMATION

### I. Attendance

- A. Regular attendance of class lectures is required. I will take roll. Excessive cuts can result in a lowering of the final grade, up to and including a failure to pass the class.
- B. If you miss more than 20% of the class sessions for a course you may receive a reduction in your final course grade, up to and including a failure to receive credit for the course, at the discretion of the instructor. *For a conventional semester course, which meets 15 times (i.e., during the regular semester), you may miss **up to but no more than 3 class sessions** without penalty.*
- C. A tardy counts as half of a class absence. (While this may seem excessively punitive, realize that tardies are often disruptive to the entire class.)
- D. If other commitments prohibit you from meeting the attendance requirement as outlined above then you should drop the course and take it when you are able to attend.

### II. Grading standards for written work

Whereas Biola University desires to maintain the highest standards with respect to the composition of all written work, any student paper exhibiting poor grammar, spelling errors, typographical errors, or other substandard academic expression shall have the overall grade for that paper reduced accordingly. Generally, a paper will be deemed substandard and ineligible to receive an "A" grade when it averages three or more compositional errors per page. Moreover, at the discretion of the professor, the substandard paper may be returned to the student for correction and resubmission with appropriate grade penalties. Students deficient in writing skills may seek assistance at the Biola Writing Center.

### III. Posting of grades on my web page

- A. I shall assign each of you a fake "on-line name" so that you can compare your scores with what is listed in my roll book (Excel spreadsheet). Once scores are posted I encourage you to check these to make certain there are no inadvertent errors.
- B. These will be posted on my web page at [www.alangomes.com](http://www.alangomes.com)
- C. If you note anything that looks like it may be in error please contact me via e-mail ([alan.gomes@biola.edu](mailto:alan.gomes@biola.edu)).

- IV. Laptops and PDAs - Personal laptop computers and PDAs (personal digital assistants) may be used in Talbot class sessions for note purposes only. Other laptop/PDA uses, including personal email, is strongly discouraged during class time. Laptops and PDAs must be off, and put away, during all exams (except with the clear and expressed permission of the instructor). Students with laptops or PDAs on during an exam will receive a failing grade for the exam.
- V. Cell Phones - Cell phones (pagers; PDAs used for communications purposes) must be turned to silent mode when entering the classroom. Take special care to attend to this. It is the expectation of the Talbot faculty that students will not take calls in the classroom, and will not exit the room during class to take calls, except in the case of emergencies. Cell phones must be off, and put away, during all exams (except with the clear and expressed special permission of the instructor). Students with cell phones on during an exam will receive a failing grade for the exam.
- VI. Electronic Dictionaries - Electronic dictionaries are not allowed during exams. Students who anticipate the need of a dictionary during an examination should bring a print dictionary to the exam, and check it in through the professor or exam proctor.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- I. Course Objectives Stated in General Terms
  - A. To acquaint you with some of the latest teaching on heaven and hell, both orthodox and unorthodox.
  - B. To ground you in the biblical teaching on heaven, hell, and the intermediate and eternal states, presented through a careful reading of the biblical text.
  - C. To address some of the common challenges to the doctrines of heaven and hell, posed both by non-Christians and by some who profess to be Christians.
  - D. To give you a chance to do research on questions of interest and to share your insights with other class members through an oral presentation and subsequent in-class dialog.
- II. Course Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes as Aligned with the IDEA Evaluations

By completion of this course, including class participation, exams, readings with student response, and practical application of doctrines learned, students will accomplish the following objectives and learning outcomes will be assessed and demonstrated:

- A. IDEA Objective #1: Gaining factual knowledge (facts, terminology, and topics) about the doctrines of heaven and hell (Essential emphasis).

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (The learner will demonstrate that he or she has satisfactorily fulfilled IDEA Objective #1 by being able to):

1. Identify and define essential terminology on the doctrines of heaven and hell, including the various biblical words for "heaven" and "hell" and their meaning. (Fulfilled especially through the collateral reading, lectures, and final exam.)
2. Identify the main theological issues surrounding a biblical view of the afterlife, as

well as the objections to it, both from within and without the church. (Fulfilled by collateral reading, lectures, final exam, and term paper.)

3. Identify the different schools of thought that have developed around various questions related to the afterlife (e.g., universalism, annihilationism, amillennialism, conditionalism, etc.). (Fulfilled by collateral reading, lectures, the final exam, and term paper.)

- B. IDEA Objective #2: Learning fundamental principles, generalizations, and theories about the doctrines of heaven and hell. (Important emphasis).

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (The learner will demonstrate that he or she has satisfactorily fulfilled IDEA Objective #2 by being able to):

1. Identify clearly the underlying methodological processes that conduce toward faulty as well as toward sound theological conclusions on the afterlife. (Fulfilled by collateral reading, lectures, final exam, and term paper.)
2. Clearly put into practice a correct methodology for addressing selected questions related to the afterlife. (Fulfilled primarily through the term paper and the oral presentation.)

- C. IDEA Objective #8: Developing skill in expressing oneself orally or in writing. (Important emphasis).

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (The learner will demonstrate that he or she has satisfactorily fulfilled IDEA Objective #8 by being able to):

1. Produce a graduate-level written paper that is well-composed and interacts critically with relevant scholarship. (Fulfilled through the term paper.)
2. Effectively deliver a “professional conference style” oral presentation based on the aforementioned paper. (Fulfilled through the oral presentation of the term paper.)
3. Interact cogently and critically with student colleagues and with the professor during a Q&A session following an oral presentation (see previous point). (Fulfilled through the oral presentation of the term paper.)

- D. IDEA Objective #11: Learn to *analyze* and *critically evaluate* ideas, arguments, and points of view (Important emphasis).

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (The learner will demonstrate that he or she has satisfactorily fulfilled IDEA Objective #11 by being able to):

1. Articulate clearly how certain fundamental or underlying errors give rise to faulty theological positions on the afterlife. (Fulfilled through lectures, in-class discussions, the final exam, and the term paper.)
2. Refute solidly the false ideas (see previous point) by employing a proper biblical and theological methodology. (Fulfilled primarily through the term paper and oral report.)
3. Not only state the biblical position on a selected topic but be able to identify and explain the underlying logic of the position. (Fulfilled primarily through the term paper and oral presentation.)

## **BIOLA UNIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of Biola University is biblically-centered education, scholarship, and service; equipping men and women in mind and character to impact the world for the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **TALBOT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of Talbot School of Theology is the development of disciples of Jesus Christ whose thought processes, character and lifestyles reflect those of our Lord, and who are dedicated to disciple making throughout the world.

## **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

Biola University is committed to ethical practice in teaching, scholarship, and service. As such, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please see the undergraduate/graduate student handbook and/or the departmental/program/school policy on academic honesty. It is imperative that you present all written, oral, and/or performed work with a clear indication of the source of that work. If it is completely your own, you are encouraged to present it as such, taking pleasure in ownership of your own created work. However, it is also imperative that you give full credit to any and all others whose work you have included in your presentation via paraphrase, direct quotation, and/or performance, citing the name(s) or the author(s)/creator(s) and the source of the work with appropriate bibliographic information. To do otherwise is to put oneself in jeopardy of being sanctioned for an act or acts of plagiarism that can carry serious consequences up to and including expulsion from the university.

## **DISABILITY SERVICES**

Disability Services exist to assist any student who thinks he or she may need such assistance. Students desiring accommodations for this class on the basis of physical learning, psychological and/or emotional disabilities are to contact The Learning Center which houses both learning assistance and disability services. The Learning Center is located in the Biola Library, Upper Level, Room U-137, and this department can be reached by calling 562.906.4542 or by dialing extension #4542 if calling from “on campus.”