

Cult Theology THEO6306 (Workshop)
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Seminary Mission Statement

The mission of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries.

Core Values Focus

The course will address the core value of *Doctrinal Integrity* and *Mission Focus* directly and *Spiritual Vitality* indirectly. Reflection on such theological issues is intimately related to reflection on the nature of God, Scripture, Christian faith, evangelism, and the doctrine of the Church. For the Christian, doctrinal orthodoxy is part of loving God with the mind (Matthew 22:37-40). The core value for the 2015-2016 academic year is Mission Focus.

Competencies Addressed

The competencies of Christian Theological Heritage, Disciple Making, and Spiritual and Character Formation will be addressed.

Course Description

This course involves a theological analysis of groups that are classified as cults, or cultic in nature, from the perspective of evangelical Christianity. Groups covered include The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, New Age Movements, the Watchtower Society, the Unity School of Christianity, the Word-Faith Movement, Armstrongism, the Unification Church, and Scientology.

Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should:

1. Be able to apply their knowledge and comprehension of how to defend and support Christian belief to members of cults or other counterfeit Christian groups.
2. Value the following:
 - Intellectual accountability in relation to issues of ultimate concern to Christian faith.
 - Convincing presentations of Christian faith.
3. Be able to present the Christian faith in a reasonable and attractive form to members of cults and other counterfeit Christian groups.

Class Policies

1. Required Texts.

Watchman Fellowship Profile Notebook. Because the Watchman Fellowship Profile Notebook is **constantly growing** as new profiles are written, students are encouraged to purchase the Watchman Fellowship Profile Notebook from Watchman Fellowship or from the New Orleans Campus Lifeway Bookstore in order to be sure that they have the correct edition. The Profile Notebook used in class will include extra features that are not part of the normal Profile Notebook that one can order online or from a local Watchman Fellowship Office. It is suggested that students read all the Watchman Profiles prior to the workshop. **To order a Watchman Profile Notebook from Watchman Fellowship, go to <http://www.watchman.org/store/resources-catalog/books12626/watchman-fellowships-profile-notebook/>.**

2. Suggested Texts.

Francis Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen. *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

Wouter J. Hanegraaf, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. Albany: SUNY, 1998.

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

Bill McKeever and Eric Johnson, *Mormonism 101: Examining the Religion of the Latter-day Saints*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000.

John P. Newport. *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview: Conflict and Dialogue*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

David Reed, *Answering Jehovah's Witnesses Subject by Subject*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.

3. *Book Reviews*. Each student is required to review 2 books (other than House) related to the study of cults. They need to be books listed by the instructor as suggested texts. The reviews should include: (1) some biographical data concerning the author; (2) an identification of the major elements of content; (3) an assessment of the author's aim or purpose and of the degree of its fulfillment; and (4) a critical evaluation of the book. The reviews should follow Turabian form. **Both book reviews are due 3 weeks after the final day of class. Late reviews will be penalized 10 points per office day! No papers more than one week past the due date will be accepted!**

4. *Field Projects*. Each student is required to (1) attend a public worship service of a cult, presumably but not necessarily in the New Orleans area; or (2) interview either the local leader/minister of one of the cults to be studied or with an active, loyal, participating member of the cult; or (3) to have a witnessing encounter with a cult member. (A witnessing encounter is defined as a dialogue which leads to the student sharing the Gospel with the cultist, not simply a

dialogue on theological differences or a debate as to which position is correct.) **The student is required to prepare and submit a written report and analysis of the visit/ interview or witnessing encounter.** The report-analysis should be both a narrative of what occurred during the service/interview and an analysis of the beliefs and practices in comparison with one's readings and the class lectures on that cult. The report portion of the interview need not be a verbatim record but should identify and interpret all the substantive questions and answers set forth during the interview in comparison with one's readings and the class lectures on that cult. The analysis portion should address what sort of language problems, group behavioral characteristics, or theological differences are observable during the visit/interview. **The field projects are due (or postmarked) 6 weeks after the final day of class. Late project reports will be penalized 10 points per office day! No papers more than one week past the due date will be accepted!**

5. Doctrinal Overview/Response. Students will prepare a doctrinal overview comparing the beliefs of a particular cult to orthodox Christianity. Students will then critique those beliefs biblically, with a mind to rebutting the cult position, and formulate an approach to witnessing to adherents of the chosen cult. The doctrinal overview should not be less than 15 pages nor more than 22 pages. **Doctrinal overviews are due (or postmarked) 8 weeks after the final day of class. Late papers will be penalized 10 points per office day! No papers more than one week past the due date will be accepted!**

6. *Reading Inventory*. Each member is expected to keep an accurate record of all reading, both required and optional, done for this course. Failure to read all of the assigned readings will impact your final grade negatively. Additional reading may impact your final grade positively. Reading inventories must be written, but there is no required form—just make sure all pertinent information is included. **Reading inventories should be submitted with the final assignment.**

6. *Grades* will be assigned on the basis of the NOBTS grading scale—an A for 96-100, B for 90-95, C for 83-89, D for 75-82, and F for 74 or below.

Final Average

The final grade will be determined accordingly:

Book Review #1	15%
Book Review #2	15%
Cult Field Project	30%
Cult Overview/Response	25%
Quizzes over Required Reading	15%
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Final Grade	100%