

Institute for Christian Studies

Course: The Universe Next Door

Instructor: The Rev. David G. Newhart
St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church

Course overview: Today we live in a world with many worldviews. Each worldview has its own set of standards, doctrines, and foundational beliefs. Each day we are confronted in various ways by these different worldviews and at times people try to integrate them into Christianity. In this course will discover the foundations and if applicable, the commonalities each of worldviews has with Christianity. It will enable you to understand the basic concepts of differing worldviews in a way that will aid you in defending the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This course will examine:

- 1) Eight (8) different worldviews e.g. Christianity, Deism, Naturalism, Nihilism, Existentialism, Eastern Pantheistic Monism, New Age Spirituality, Postmodernism and Islamic Theism.
- 2) Identify differences between Jehovah Witnesses, Mormonism, and the tenants of the apostolic faith handed down from the Apostle's teaching.
- 3) Supplemental material will provide threads that affect the common beliefs that influence our world.

Course format:

The course will be set in a seminar style format. It will be a combination of lecture and discussion. Each student is encouraged to participate in the discussions as they arise.

Required pre-class assignment:

Prior to the class read the following text.

Sire, James W., The Universe Next Door: a Basic Worldview Catalog, IVP Academic, 2009, 5th edition, **ISBN-13:** 9780830838509

Additional resources:

The Holy Bible in a contemporary English language e.g. NIV, RSV, NRSV, ESV

Optional recourses: (This book is optional and not required for the course.)

Barna, George, The Seven Faith Tribes: Who They Are, What They Believe, and Why They Matter; Tyndale House, 2011, **ISBN-13:** 9781414338811

This book reviews seven faith tribes i.e. Casual and Captive Christians, Judaism, Muslims, Spiritual Skeptics. Each has a common thread in their worldview and how it influences what happens in the world today.

Required post-class assignment:

“Themes of differing worldviews” paper: Each participant will be expected to write a 5 page paper (double spaced, 1” margins, New Times Roman) discussing at least two different worldviews and how they relate and differ from the Christian faith. The paper should reflect on the differences and, if they exist, commonalities. Papers should be written using an inductive model approach, i.e. observation, interpretation of the scripture, and application to our daily life. Paper should be written as if you were trying to explain major differences between Christianity and other worldviews from a theological perspective to a parishioner or an un-churched person who is seeking to understand. The inductive format is not to be written in Bible Study format. All references should be properly noted.

Personal Reflection: Write a meditation (150-200 words) using scripture that reflects the impact of Christianity in your life or the lives around you. It can focus on a comparison of one or two worldviews, expressing the Apostle’s teaching that has been handed down through the centuries (hint: this reflection should resemble a daily devotion that you might read e.g. Forward in Faith, Our Daily Bread, My Utmost for His Highest (Oswald Chambers), Knowing God’s Purpose For Your Life (J.I. Packer), Tozer on the Holy Spirit (A.W. Tozer), The Imitation of Christ (Thomas A Kempis.)

All post-class assignments should be received either by e-mail (word format) or by mail no later than 30 days following the last day of class. **All assignments are sent to the Archdeacon. kalday@cfdiocese.org or to the Diocesan office, 1017 East Robinson Street, Orlando, FL 32801**