

Details. This is a closed-book test that will take no longer than an hour, and probably less. Its questions may include multiple choice, fill-in-the blank, and matching formats. You supply the pen; I will supply the paper. I recommend the following strategy as you study:

First, **prioritize the material.** Put lectures at the top; they are the most straightforwardly theological material. Put Newbigin, Jacobsen/Sawatsky, and Barron next, then Shermer and Camp (or Barth and Balthasar, then Wilken, then Hauerwas and Dennett), and any required readings from my own writings below those. Unless I have said otherwise in class, you only need to worry about the parts of lecture outlines that I have actually used in class. You may perhaps find other lecture outlines helpful in clarifying my comments or other materials, but don't feel obligated to draw on them.

Next, **review lectures, group presentations, and readings** to gain the following:

- *A sense of what each chapter is for:* not just what information it conveys, but the author's purpose and goals for readers. Ask yourself: How is this chapter or this lecture supposed to change you?
- *Familiarity with the main lines of argument of each chapter.* You will typically see these represented in the in-class presentations you all have been delivering. Reviewing the reading with the presentation in hand may give you a better sense of both "the big picture" and how the details serve it. Pay close attention to the important distinctions the author makes between various positions!
- *Understanding of basic terms and concepts and their significance.* Identify the key terms (e.g., docetism, Pelagius, *creatio ex nihilo*, Adoptionism, *imago dei*) involved in the major points in each chapter. If you can define each term and briefly state its significance, you will likely do well on the questions that involve it.
- *An appreciation of what matters – what is at stake.* I try to craft test questions according to the importance I attach to major points in the course. For a guide to what I consider important, look at where I have focused assignments and class sections. For a guide to what *an author* considers important, look at how central and how well developed the point is. While many of the details in our course might qualify as "trivia," many do not. Part of reading perceptively is gaining skill at telling the difference.
- *A sense of the connections among the materials.* Much of education involves the discovery of connections. You can deepen your appreciation of the material by asking why readings are clustered together. Why have I put a set of readings together with a lecture? What's the connection? How is one week's topic connected with the previous week's topic? What connections have I emphasized in class?

I encourage you to **study in groups** (especially your small groups) and distribute these tasks, so long as you pool your *knowledge* rather than your *ignorance*!

What am I looking for?

1. Evidence that you've studied the material closely and understand its important points.
2. Evidence that you are becoming equipped to think theologically and put Christian doctrine to fruitful use – both now, and in your life as a Westmont *graduate*.
3. Evidence that you appreciate how the details fit into "the big picture."

For now consider item (1) the most important task, then (2), then (3). Over our semester together the weight should shift towards the later items as you learn to locate all those details within the overall practice of Christian theology. Then as time passes and the details evaporate, the structure with which and around which they are built will remain.