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.

Preparing. I recommend the following strategy as you study:

First, prioritize the reading. Put Jinkins, Wilson, and my class presentations at the top; they are the most straightforwardly theological material. Put my own writings, McLaren, and Rutledge in the second tier. You only need to worry about 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 the 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. (McLaren’s text sometimes works like this in clusters of chapters rather than in single chapters.)
- 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.
- Understanding of basic terms and concepts and their significance. Identify the key terms (e.g., docetism, Pelagius, creatio ex nihilo, Apollinarianism, imago dei) involved in the major points in each chapter. Be able to define each term and briefly state its significance, and you will likely do well on the questions that involve them.
- An appreciation of what matters – what is at stake – in the major points that the author is making. I craft test questions according to the importance I attach to major points. For a guide to what I consider important, look at where I have focused assignments and class sections. While many of the details in our course might qualify as “trivia,” many do not. Part of preparing is gaining skill at sorting the wheat from the chaff.
- 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 particular sermon from Rutledge next to a particular chapter from Jinkins and a particular Bible passage? 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 now, and in your life as a Westmont graduate.
3. Evidence that you appreciate how the details fit into “the big picture.”

Since it is early in the semester and this is the first test, consider item (1) your the most important task, then (2), then (3). As the semester progresses, 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 sturdy superstructure with which and around which they are built will remain.

Example: In his article, whom does Work blame for missing the significance of Israel and Old Testament?

A. Arius  
B. Marcion  
C. Origen  
D. Pelagius