

Teaching Plan For:
“The Basics of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom”
by John M. DePoe

Class 1 – Introduction

Introduce myself and what interests me concerning this topic. Basic overview of the course, including what the course will cover and what is expected from a student who wants to get the most out of this course. Some explanation of why this topic is important.

Class 2 – Crash Course on Free Will and Theological Terms

Mastering the terminology and concepts that must be used to address this topic is essential to having a mature understanding of this difficult topic. Some of the free will terms include: libertarianism, determinism, compatibilism, principle of alternate possibilities (PAP). Some of the theological terms include: theism, omniscience, omnipotence, omnibenevolence, providence. The depth of explanation for these concepts will fit only what is necessary for this course (consult apollo.ws for other resources that deal with these topics in further depth).

Class 3 – Laying Out the Problem

This class will focus entirely on the problem of foreknowledge and free will. This will include some discussion of the framing of the problem in historical form (using thinkers like Aristotle and Augustine). Furthermore, the problem for Christians is deeper than showing foreknowledge and free will are logically compatible; they also need to leave room for the possibility of divine providence. By the end of this class, a student should appreciate the gravity of this problem for Christian theism.

Class 4 – Solution #1: Atheism

The first solution that will be considered is atheism. First, it will be shown what kinds of solutions atheism promises, drawing especially on the works of atheists who address this problem, like Jean-Paul Sartre and Antony Flew. Second, the solutions given by atheism will be critically examined. Finally, the problems with the solutions for atheism will stand as good reason not to endorse the atheistic solution.

Class 5 – Solution #2: Divine Timelessness

One of the most popular solutions to the problem of foreknowledge and freedom is divine timelessness. Divine timelessness has been explicitly endorsed as a solution to the problem by thinkers like Boethius, Thomas Aquinas, John Wesley, and C. S. Lewis. After explaining the solution put forward by divine timelessness, I will explain some criticisms of the view. In the final evaluation, I will give an overview of the view's strengths and weaknesses.

Class 6 – Solution #3: Augustinianism/Calvinism

This class aims to show how the Augustinian/Calvinist tradition resolves the problem of foreknowledge and freedom. Drawing on classic and contemporary sources, this class will lay out how theism with compatibilist free will seems to paint a harmonious solution. Then, I will explain some of the criticisms of this view. Finally, I will lay out an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the Augustinian/Calvinist solution.

Class 7 – Solution #4: Open Theism (Part 1)

The view that God lacks definite foreknowledge of future contingent events is Open Theism. The basics of Open Theism will be explained including its apparent biblical support, its philosophical commitments, and how it understands God's foreknowledge and sovereignty. There are at least two distinguishable philosophical forms of open theism, and these differences will be explained as well.

Class 8 – Solution #4: Open Theism (Part 2)

Having completed a basic overview of open theism, this section part will focus on criticisms of the view. The criticisms can be put into two categories: theological objections and philosophical objections. This will conclude with an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of Open Theism.

Class 9 – Solution #5: Molinism (Part 1)

In the first installment on Molinism, many new terms will need to be explained (like “natural knowledge,” “free knowledge,” and “middle knowledge”). After these concepts are explained, other Molinist commitments will be explained (such as libertarian free will and prevenient grace). Once all of these concepts are explained, the Molinist solution to the problem of foreknowledge will be laid out as well as the Molinist understanding of providence. Some time will also be spent explaining the theological applications of Molinism (possibly including the inspiration of Scripture, providence in prayer, the doctrine of election, and the salvation of the unevangelized).

Class 10 – Solution #5: Molinism (Part 2)

The second class on Molinism will assume that the first class has been completed and understood by the student. This class will begin with objections and replies to the main criticisms of Molinism. The final evaluation will highlight the strengths and weaknesses of Molinism.

Class 11 – Summary and Conclusion

The final class will give a general overview of what has been covered in this course. Other resources will be recommended for further study. I will suggest some other things to consider in conjunction with what one has learned in this course such as how one's understanding of God's foreknowledge and human freedom will effect how we pray, what we think about the problem of evil, and impact how we read our Bibles and understand God.