TH603  CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY AND THEOLOGIANS

Fall, 2014: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
Boston Campus/Center for Urban Ministerial Education.
William David Spencer and Athanasian Scholars
Overview of Class Sessions

Class 1: Tues., Nov. 4, 6-10 p.m.
Topic: The Roots of Contemporary Theology.
Doing Theology: Opening Discussion Session: “Is Faith-based Scholarship Possible?”
Introductory Lecture: A History of Contemporary Theology
Reading Assignment: Ford, Bultmann (Erickson), see details under class descriptions.
Writing Assignment: Begin work on position paper (to be handed in class #3) or begin work on personal theology (those wishing to waive Theology 3 requirement [please note - permission needed before taking class]).

Class 2: Tues., Nov 11: 6-10 p.m.
Topic: Is Jesus the One and Only Way to Salvation?
Discussion Question: Should the Christian Church be “Christomonistic”?
Reading Assignment: Ford (Erickson)
Writing Assignment: Begin handing in position paper (or personal theology). Write reading assessment #1.
Class 3: Tues., Nov 18: 6-10 p.m.

Discussion Question: Scripture and Authority: Should the Bible be rewritten?

Lecture: Modern into Post-modern Theology

Reading Assignment: Spencer, *Goddess*, Ford (Erickson)

Writing Assignment: Finish position paper (or personal theology). Write reading assessment #2.

Class 4: Tues., Nov. 25: 6-10 p.m.
Topic: The Fall-out of Liberal Theology.

Discussion and Lecture: Biblical Ignorance/ Contemporary Doubt, the Occult and the Search for Salvation. The Goddess Revival versus the God of the Bible.

Reading Assignment: Spencer, *Dread*, Ford (Erickson).

Writing Assignment: Hand in both reading assessments.

Class 6: Tuesday, December 2
Discussion Question: The problem with the “Dread Jesus”: Can true Christians exist in other faiths?

Lecture: Is Jesus the Global Messiah? The Place of Jesus Christ in world religions.

Reading Assignment: O’Meara (Erickson)

Writing Assignment: Revise work

Class 5: Monday, December 1:
Student Interviews. See class sign-up sheet for times.

Class 7: Tues., Dec. 9: 6-10 p.m.
Topic: Cyberfaiths: the religions of the Metaverse, Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, the *imago Dei*, the Doctrine of Humanity; *Vast Universe* and the Cosmic Future of Theology.

Writing Assignment: All redoings due (accompanied by original draft and cover sheet).
Course Description: According to the catalog, “This course examines contemporary theology through the work of several contemporary practitioners of theology. Of particular interest is the discipline of theology in the last 30 years.”

Course Objective: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary is the flagship seminary of the historically orthodox Evangelical movement. The objective of this course is to assist students in examining and evaluating current theological trends and, through class assignments, lectures, guided discussions, to become themselves theologians who will guide others by the application of historic orthodoxy to contemporary issues. This course fulfills the objective of goal #1 in each of the degree programs, helping students understand “the historical and theological dimensions of the Christian faith,” by carefully explaining the progress of Christian theological thinking from the beginning of the modern era, in the time of William of Ockham in the 1280s, on through 2012 and the speculations of Thomas O’Meara, OP, and the challenges to refine theological thinking in light of “recent advances in cosmology and astronomy.” Goal # 2 (MDiv, MAYM, goal # 3 in MAEM, goal # 5 in MACO), fostering “love for God and his word” is addressed specifically in classes 2, 6, 7, as we examine the uniqueness of Jesus and the reliability of the Bible in the context of contemporary doubt, the challenge of other religions, and the speculations of secular science. Goal # 5 (MDiv, MAYM, MAEM, goals # 6-7 in MACO) are addressed in classes 4 and 6 and in the course assignments by introducing a methodology by which to analyze worldviews, and which students will practice in their assignments. This methodology refines the introductory interpretive principle taught in Systematic Theology 1, and developed in Systematic Theology 2 (addressing questions from the attributes of God).

Fulfillment of the Mission Statement: Article 1 concerns students obtaining knowledge of “God’s inerrant Word” and competence in “its interpretation, proclamation, and application in the contemporary world.” Since the nature of the authority of Scripture is a key point of contention between more conservative and more liberal Christians, we will include lecture material on the topic in classes 1, 2, and 3, as well as a class discussion on the issues involved in “rewriting the Bible” in class 3. Article 2 on maintaining academic excellence is ensured by the painstaking manner in which I have revised this course, the high quality of assigned readings, the cutting edge materials utilized, and the carefully coordinated assignments designed to move students to become scholars equipped to wrestle with both primary and secondary source data. Articles 3 and 4 are addressed in the assignments, which are geared to help students strengthen the personal application of their faith by having it tested within guided class sessions. Lectures and class exercises encourage them to apply what they have learned in class to educating their parishioners after class is finished. Classes 4, 6, 7 are designed to educate students on the variety of Christian positions in contemporary theology and thereby help them distinguish their Evangelical worldview. The writing assignments and guided
discussions are included within the educational process to confirm the result. Article 6 on the global implications of theology is the subject of class 6.

**Required Texts: in order of use.**


For those wishing to apply to substitute Contemporary Theology for the Systematic 3 requirement:

Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (reading assignments are coordinated with the 2nd edition), ISBN 0-8010-2182-0.

**Course Requirements:**

1. Reading all assignments is essential to success in this class as your written assignments will key off the required readings and seminar sessions will be based on them.

2. Writing assignments will be one position paper of 8-10 pages, informed by your class reading and the lectures and discussions, and 2 brief analysis worksheets (3-5 pages) analyzing 2 of the required reading books. Please stay up to date on completing these writing assignments, as they will help you participate in the discussion sessions. (Those who are approved to substitute this course for Systematic Theology 3 will do a personal theology paper in place of the position paper.)

3. Attendance will also be very important and will be taken into account in grading.

4. Grading: The position paper will comprise 60% of your grade, each analyses sheet 20%, attendance and reading will be figured in as swing factors.

Students applying to substitute Contemporary Theology for the Systematic Theology 3 requirement must do the following:
1. Read the additional pages in Erickson covering the topics of Theology 3. (Please note: these have been coordinated with the appropriate class sessions so that they enhance your understanding rather than distract you with additional irrelevant data, e.g. class session 7, which deals with the future of doctrine, is coordinated with the Theology 3 required reading on eschatology, the study of the end times.)

2. Students must elect the Personal Theology assignment for their larger position paper.

Class Sessions:

CLASS 1. Hours: 6:00-10:00 p.m. Tuesday evening, NOVEMBER 6

Introductory lecture: The goal of this course is to give students a working introduction to the current state of theology outside of classic evangelical orthodoxy, thereby preparing students to explain and defend the biblical faith in the wider post-modern theological arena. Therefore, beginning in 1280 A.D. with William of Ockham, this and class # 3 will trace the development of modern theology from its roots to the present day. Class #1 will examine William’s theory of voluntarism and distrust of reason, assess its impact on the reformers, examine the enlightenment and its questioning of reason, Kant’s critiques of reason and attempt to distinguish science from faith, Schleiermacher’s application of Kant’s theories to Christianity, Ritschl versus Troeltsh’s 3 laws of inquiry, the rise and death of old school liberalism, as a victim of the 2 world wars, with special attention to liberalism’s inability to resist co-opting. We will then analyze the rise of neo-orthodoxy in Barth, and the movement called Heilsgeschichte (Salvation History), Bultmann’s existential theology, Tillich, and the neo or new school liberalism. The class will pause for a review of the syllabus and assignments and will include an explanation of what the professor hopes students will gain from the course: to learn by content and guided practice to do theology from an historically orthodox, evangelical position and thereby become theologians.


(Recommended Reading: Students wishing greater depth of understanding are encouraged to read the individual chapters 1-3 on Barth, Bonhoeffer, Tillich in Ford’s book and to sample books by these influential theologians in the CUME library.)

Use the following interpretive methodology as a tool to analyze each reading’s theology:
1. Report (do not evaluate yet): what is the content, approach, methodology? What are the motivating concerns?

2. What is the Best: what can be lifted out for Evangelicals?

3. What is the Rest: What is in error that we should discard?

Try to discover the following facets:

* What is the view of God? Is it fully Trinitarian? Is the view of God similar to some view already present in Christian history? Is it orthodox or heretical?

* What is the view of Scripture? How authoritative is the Bible regarded to be? How does the Author’s view compare with the Bible’s view? Give some specific examples.

* What is the view of Jesus? Is the view historically orthodox or heterodox?

* What is the view of the atonement? Is the atonement sufficiently done by Christ or is something more needed?

Ask the following questions:

1. What are the author’s concerns? What does the author care about? What is important to the author?

2. What is the personal historical context of the author as (s)he writes the book? Why was it written? What was the point?

3. How does its view of God interpret its issue or concern?

4. What does the writer want the reader to do in response?

5. Do I agree with the author's view of God, theology, reading of the situation?

6. What are the author’s primary sources? Were they correctly interpreted? Should they be primary sources?

7. Does the author use an image or illustration which is key to interpreting the author’s thought?

Students wishing to apply for Systematic Theology 3 credit will read the following additional assignment in Erickson: chaps. 38-40, pp, 798-858.

Writing Assignment: Begin working on your position paper (the 1st draft for those choosing the option to redo is due class #3) and taking notes for your 2 Reading Analysis Worksheet assignments (drafts being due for those wishing to redo at class #4).
Students wishing to apply for Systematic Theology #3 credit will begin work on their personal theology statement (please see the assignment and cover sheets at the end of this syllabus).

CLASS 2, Hours: 6:00-10:00 p.m., Tuesday evening, November 13

Is Jesus the only way to salvation? Classic exclusivist statements by Martin Luther, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, Thomas Manton, Bruce Demarest will be reviewed. Challenges to the six historic evangelical positions regarding the lost by John Hick, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Paul Knitter, Karl Rahner, Clark Pinnock will then be examined.

Required Reading Assignment: Read A. Spencer, et. al., THE GODDESS REVIVAL in contrast to Chapter 25 (“Feminism, Gender, and Theology”) in Ford, MODERN THEOLOGIANS.

Writing Assignment: Draft of Position Paper is due tonight for those wishing the option to redo. Those not wishing this option may hand in this paper at the 6th class (grace period = 7th class). Do the 2 reading assessment worksheets to be handed in next class: class #4.

CLASS 3. Hours: 6:00-10:00 Tuesday evening, November 20

Class will begin with a brief class exercise in doing theology. The lecture will examine the nature and impact of contemporary theology, picking up with the challenge of Nietzsche and his humanistic atheism as it plays out in the Christian existentialism of the God is Dead movement in its several stages. The reaction of Structuralism is surveyed, with special attention to Levi-Strauss’s adaptation of Saussure’s semiotic theories into structural anthropology, and the reaction of Derrida’s post-structuralist deconstruction that develops post-modern theology. The reaction of today’s narrative theology to such theories as Crossen’s “theology of limit,” based on death abundantly (not life, as orthodoxy affirms) will also be assessed. The class will conclude with an examination of the state of post-modern theology today and one example of the impact of this thought on Evangelicals, as evidenced in the current debate on the implications for salvation in the New Perspectives on Paul.


Writing Assignment: work on the 1st draft of your major paper (due next class).


CLASS #4: Hours 6:00-10:00 Tuesday evening, November 27

Our topic tonight will examine the effects of biblical ignorance, contemporary doubt, and the fall-out of liberal modern into post-modern theology. When the crucial tenets of salvation through Jesus Christ alone are obscured, the human spirit must seek another way for salvation and/or redemption. In a similar way to the ancient mystery cults, the current revival of Goddess spirituality is a sincere, post-modern attempt to dredge the past for an intimate connection to the divine. This class will analyze Wiccan and Goddess spirituality against our norm: the full biblical revelation of God.


Writing Assignment: Hand in both Reading Assessment Worksheets if you wish to redo (if you do not wish to redo, you may hand them in at class number #6 – grace period is class #7).

CLASS #5, MONDAY, DECEMBER 3: please sign your name to reserve a time on the interview sign-up sheet. Dr. Spencer will hold morning meetings on the Hamilton campus in Dr. Aida Spencer’s office in the basement of the library and evening meetings at the CUME building. Athanasian Scholars will meet with students at the CUME building. Please see the sign-up sheet for exact times available.

This class is broken into individual meeting sessions with the instructors for the purpose of discussing your papers and other assignments, as well as any theological issues the class has raised for you. While the interviews are optional, students earning less than a B+ or struggling with beginning or completing their papers are urged to sign up. Please choose a meeting time with the particular instructor who is working with you on your paper. Students who wish to meet with more than one of us may sign up for an additional slot as space permits. If you have a course conflict or are traveling a distance and wish to talk either by telephone or face to face before a class session, please contact the appropriate instructor.

Reading Assignment: O’Meara, VAST UNIVERSE, or Geraci, APOCALYPTIC AI, Ford, MODERN THEOLOGIANS, chaps 20-21, “Theology and the Physical Sciences” and “Theology and the Biological Sciences,” 342-369.

(Recommended Reading: David Levy, LOVE AND SEX WITH ROBOTS; John Jefferson Davis, THE FRONTIERS OF SCIENCE AND FAITH, chap 6, “Artificial Intelligence and the Christian Understanding of Personhood,” 103-112.)

Writing Assignment: For those wishing to redo, revise the papers you have received back to hand in (with the corrected draft and completed cover sheet) at the final class: class #7.


Class #6: Hours: 6:00-10:00 p.m., Tuesday evening, December 4

Taking our exploration into contemporary global theology, and keying off the book Dread Jesus, we will examine the places given Jesus Christ in a variety of world religions. The point of our
examination of contemporary heterodox views of Jesus in faiths other than Christianity or within the results of syncretism is both to gain understanding of others’ beliefs, as well as to find touchstones to communicate the gospel with those of other viewpoints by assessing the strength of their bridging view of Jesus.

Reading Assignment: Finish O’Meara VAST UNIVERSE or Geraci, APOCALYPTIC AI, and read Ford, MODERN THEOLOGIANS, chaps 34-35, “Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology,” “Evangelical Theology,” finish all assigned readings.

Writing Assignment: finish all writing assignments.

Class #7: Hours 6:00-10:00 p.m. Tuesday, December 11

This class examines the future of theology by assessing the challenges of scientific advancements to the doctrines of humanity and Christology. Human identity and the imago Dei will be examined in the light of the new religions on the internet (particularly on Second Life), the impact of the metaverse on belief and then on practice, the challenge of virtual adultery, and the future implications of the domestication of sexbots. As we examine the way advances in science impact contemporary understandings of theology and morality, we will assess notions of the uniqueness and sanctity of human life, creation in God’s image, the value and safety of women and children, the future of human relationships, understandings of sin and redemption. We will also discuss how issues are debated in the popular media long before actual capability is achieved. As we analyze, we will reflect on the implications for future evangelical theology and the responsibility of the church to remain, perhaps, the final humanizing agent in technological society. Expanding to larger speculative questions, we will ask if discovering other intelligent beings in the universe would “banish or modify our understanding of God” or “reduce the importance of Jesus” or reveal parallel incarnations.


Writing Assignments: All assignments are due tonight. Dr. Spencer will grade all final work, so please hand it in to him and not to any of the other instructors. Please note: ABSOLUTELY NO RE-DOINGS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER TONIGHT. First drafts may be handed in after tonight, if approved by the registrar, but students are urged to complete their work since this concludes Dr. Spencer’s formal teaching for the year and, as he is traveling extensively, papers arriving after this date may easily be lost (or graded with a tired and jaundiced eye….).

May God bless you and help you lead the church and society with godly wisdom.
Sixty percent of your grade will be determined from one (1) brief (8-10 page) position paper, which you will write in place of a term paper. The point of this assignment is for you to hone the theological skills you developed in Systematics 1,2,3, employing the analytical questions from God's nature you learned as interpretive or hermeneutical tools with which to arrive at a coherent, theologically responsible position on one of the timely issues in the following list to share with those to whom you minister.

* Warning: we are not looking for a polemic defending either side on these issues. We are looking for a calmly reasoned and fairly presented assessment of the various sides of the argument and one soundly derived conclusion based on your theology. Therefore, please review your personal theology statement from Theology #3 along with the Bible, the creeds, the textbooks and all the other resources to which you were introduced. Here is how to approach this assignment:

**PAGE 1**

Center your title on the page and follow it with your name.

Write a brief introduction, culminating in a topical thesis along the lines of Darin Pouillard's model in your hand-out packet.

**PAGES 2-4**

Identify the theological issues involved in the question you have selected and present (FROM QUOTATIONS OF ORIGINAL SOURCES - NOT YOUR OWN UNSUPPORTED IMPRESSIONS) each theological position you can find on it. Use the interpretive questions listed under the "Analysis/Assessment Sheets Assignment" to analyze:

Who is God in this theological approach?
What is the primary attribute of God being emphasized?

Is any attribute of God missing?

Can this view be demonstrated to be biblically sound?

If we adopt this theology and follow its recommendations, how would it affect our historic orthodoxy? What is harmful, what is helpful in it?

When researching these topics, feel free to gather data from theological books and other resources in the library, the internet, news magazines and current event discussions on television and radio, live interviews you may do, etc. Remember to identify the theological issues involved in the question and touch on each of the other points listed. You may want to highlight two specific stances as your test case since your pages are limited to 8-10, but, if you encounter others, at least acknowledge them in your essay. Again, never give us your unsupported opinion, but provide proof for all your statements.

PAGES 5-10

Now, present the view you have selected and tell us why it is preferable over the other views you explored. Make sure you include concrete applications that you can put into effect in your ministry. Remember to write succinctly. Make every sentence count. End with a conclusion that restates your thesis, a bibliography and notes.

PLEASE CHOOSE ONE (1) TOPIC ONLY FROM

ANYTHING DISCUSSED IN THIS CLASS

#1: The first alternative choice continues the discussion in the opening class: Is faith-based scholarship possible? Must one attempt to be objective or can one be academically responsible while still holding a position? This choice must deal with the conundrum: is anyone capable of being purely objective or does any approach or technique ensure objectivity?
#2: The second alternative continues the discussion in class #3: In a pluralistic world, are we arrogant to maintain the Bible is uniquely authoritative? Should we study the Bible as a parallel text with other holy texts as equally reliable and/or salvific? (A helpful book to consult is R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed. VOICES FROM THE MARGIN [Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995].)

#3: Following the presentation in class #2: Should the Christian church continue to be exclusive in its insistence on Jesus as "the only way," or does a new era of tolerance and respect for others' belief systems mandate a rethinking of Jesus as one important way God reconciles humanity? Particularly, should we consider expanding our view to match that of certain Christian professors who are positing the Torah is salvific for Jews, following the Qur'an for Moslems, Haile Selassie for Rastafarians, Zhao Weishan of The Church of Almighty God (Eastern Lightening) for the Chinese house churches, etc. (For this assignment you might consult a book like Dennis Okholm, Timothy R. Phillips, eds., FOUR VIEWS ON SALVATION IN A PLURALISTIC WORLD [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996].)

#4: Following the guidelines, write an enlightening position paper on the question: DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT OPERATE IN OTHER RELIGIONS? Handle both claims and proffered examples according to your theological position.

#5: Evaluate the movement taking place today to see the "lost" gospels as on a par with, and supplementary to, the four received gospels in the Bible. Do we need to expand our view of Jesus in light of the new information unearthed by archaeologists?

#6: What kind of ethical guidance should we bring to the work being done on artificial intelligence?

OR Alt #6: Is life possible on other planets and what is the most appropriate theological approach to this question?

ALSO STUDENTS MAY SELECT ONE OF THE OPTIONS SUGGESTED IN MY PREVIOUS VERSIONS OF CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY (CONSULT THE LIBRARY FOR PREVIOUS SYLLABI). EXAMPLES WOULD BE:
#7: Should we continue to struggle to decide whether to allow states or churches to perform marriages between homosexuals and ordination of GLBT candidates? Using the interpretive questions, come up with an informed position to share with your church.

#8: How much freedom should Christians support in the arts? For example, as with the DA VINCI CODE, Mel Gibson's "THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST" was based on an extra-biblical source (Anne Catherine Emmerich’s visions). People know the difference between fact and fiction - or do they? Is all fiction bad for us (including THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA that image Christ as an animal)? Or, is there an approach we can use toward fiction and the arts that is helpful to faith, despite the fact that its data is constructed and clearly not an attempt to report real events?

#9: Compare the Christianity presented in Prof. Lints’ THE FABRIC OF THEOLOGY with that in Brian McLaren’s A NEW KIND OF CHRISTIAN, centering on the question: what do we gain and what do we lose if we become a “new kind of Christian” in order to communicate to the present (first world) postmodern age? As in the previous assignments, use the interpretive tools to hunt down the guiding attribute of God and the theological issues involved, and determine what may be gained or lost in each presentation of what a Christian ought to look like today.

#10: Using the interpretive questions, gather data from our 2004 textbook, FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION, to explore the question: How can we extend Christian care into a pluralistic society without compromising the gospel? Tell us with which approaches you agree and disagree and give us your supported reasons why. Remember to include the theological issues, dimensions, ramifications involved and please do not forget to hammer out your own recommended approach for all of us to use in our ministries.

While students are not limited to choosing one of these topics, and may envision their own topic drawn from the course, you should remember that your choice is limited, of course, by the requirement to relate your paper to a book I am requiring in the present course, or have required in Systematics 1,2,3 or the previous versions of "Contemporary Theology." Please check all alternative topic ideas with the professor before proceeding.
The following items are rated according to the following symbols: y = yes, s = sometimes/somewhat, n = no, I = inadequate, A = adequate, G = good, S = superior. PLEASE NOTE: WRITTEN COMMENTS ARE ON BACK.

**CONTENT:**

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<td>Are facts, quotations, ideas of others cited in consistent notes with bibliography cited?</td>
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ANALYSIS/ASSESSMENT SHEETS ASSIGNMENT

Forty Percent of your grade will be determined from two 2 brief (3-5 page) worksheets that analyze the theology of 2 of our textbooks. You may select from any books in the present required or recommended booklist or any books required in my Theology 1,2, or 3 booklists, or from the required list from my previous Contemporary Theology booklists, which should be on record at the library. Remember to use full sentences.

The assignment is to use the interpretive list learned in Theology 3 (listed below) as your tool to analyze all readings or arguments encountered. Remember, when analyzing any new theology, the best approach is to begin by hearing the author (this is what I am asking you to do when I write, "Report [do not evaluate yet]: what is the content, approach, methodology. Try to identify from what is presented what are the motivating concerns"). Next, always ask: what is the value in this book? What can be lifted out for Evangelicals? And what is in error that we should avoid?

ON THE WORKSHEET, ANSWER BRIEFLY (A FEW SENTENCES OR A PARAGRAPH MAY SUFFICE): Give some specific examples.

1) What is the view of God? Is it fully Trinitarian? Is the view of God similar to any already present in church history? Is it orthodox or heretical?

2) What is the view of Scripture? How authoritative is the Bible considered to be? How does this theologian's view compare with the Bible's view?

3) What is the view of Jesus? Is the view historically orthodox or heterodox?

4) What is the view of the atonement? Is the atonement sufficiently done by Christ or is something more needed?

5) Ask the following questions: *What are the author's concerns? What does the author care about? What is important to the author?

   *What is the personal historical context of the author as (s)he writes the book? Why was it written? What was the point?

   *How does its view of God interpret its issue or concern?

   *What does the writer want the reader to do in response?

   *Do I agree with the author's view of God, theology, reading of the situation?

   *What are the author's primary sources? Were they correctly interpreted? Should they be primary sources?

   *Does the author use an image or illustration which is key to interpreting the author's thought? If so, what is it?
READING ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET #1

1. Report (do not evaluate yet): what is the content, approach, methodology? What are the motivating concerns?

2. What is the Best: what can be lifted out for Evangelicals?

3. What is the Rest: What is in error that we should discard?

Try to discover the following facets:

* What is the view of God? Is it fully Trinitarian? Is the view of God like some view already present in Christian history? Is it orthodox or heretical?

* What is the view of Scripture? How authoritative is the Bible regarded to be? How does the Author's view compare with (or stack up against) the Bible's view? Give some specific examples (use back of sheet, if necessary).

* What is the view of Jesus? Is the view historically orthodox or heterodox?

* What is the view of the atonement? Is the atonement sufficiently done by Christ or is something more needed?
Ask the following questions:

1. What are the author's concerns? What does the author care about? What is important to the author?

2. What is the personal historical context of the author as (s)he writes the book? Why was it written? What was the point?

3. How does its view of God interpret its issue or concern?

4. What does the writer want the reader to do in response?

5. Do I agree with the author's view of God, theology, reading of the situation?

6. What are the author's primary sources? Were they correctly interpreted? Should they be primary sources?

7. Does the author use an image or illustration which is key to interpreting the author's thought? If so, what is it?

Any other comments?
The following items are rated according to the following symbols:

y = yes  s = sometimes/somewhat  n = no  I = inadequate  A = adequate  
G = good  S = superior. PLEASE NOTE: WRITTEN COMMENTS ARE ON BACK.

**CONTENT:**
- Did you pick one (1) of our textbooks?  
  y  s  n
- Did you identify the view of God in this theology?  
  y  s  n
- Did you discover if the view is fully Trinitarian?  
  y  s  n
- Did you discover if it is historically orthodox?  
  y  s  n
- Could you identify it by historical category?  
  y  s  n
- Did you tell us if Scripture is regarded as authoritative or not?  
  y  s  n
- Did you judge whether this view is biblically-based?  
  y  s  n
- Did you show if the view of Jesus is orthodox or heterodox?  
  y  s  n
- Did you show if Jesus' death is sufficient for our atonement?  
  y  s  n
- Did you identify the theologian's(') concerns? I  A  G  S
- Did you analyze the theologian's context? I  A  G  S
- Did you figure out why he/she wrote this specific book?  
  y  s  n
- Did you identify the main point(s)?  
  y  s  n
- Did you identify the author's primary sources and influences?  
  y  s  n
- Did you evaluate their quality and if they were used correctly?  
  y  s  n
- Did you find a central image or key illustration?  
  y  s  n
- Did you evaluate how accurately the theologian uses his/her view of God to interpret the issue of concern?  
  y  s  n
- Did you identify how the author wants readers to respond?  
  y  s  n
- Did you evaluate whether you agree with this response?  
  y  s  n
- Did you use concrete examples to prove all your points? I  A  G  S

**PRESENTATION:**
- Were you accurate?  
  Y  s  n
- Were you insightful?  
  Y  s  n
- Did you work from your own consistent theological position?  
  y  s  n

**Comments:**
READING ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET #2

1. Report (do not evaluate yet): what is the content, approach, methodology? What are the motivating concerns?

2. What is the Best: what can be lifted out for Evangelicals?

3. What is the Rest: What is in error that we should discard?

Try to discover the following facets:

* What is the view of God? Is it fully Trinitarian? Is the view of God like some view already present in Christian history? Is it orthodox or heretical?

* What is the view of Scripture? How authoritative is the Bible regarded to be? How does the Author’s view compare with (or stack up against) the Bible’s view? Give some specific examples (use back of sheet, if necessary).

* What is the view of Jesus? Is the view historically orthodox or heterodox?

* What is the view of the atonement? Is the atonement sufficiently done by Christ or is something more needed?
Ask the following questions:

1. What are the author's concerns? What does the author care about? What is important to the author?

2. What is the personal historical context of the author as (s)he writes the book? Why was it written? What was the point?

3. How does its view of God interpret its issue or concern?

4. What does the writer want the reader to do in response?

5. Do I agree with the author's view of God, theology, reading of the situation?

6. What are the author's primary sources? Were they correctly interpreted? Should they be primary sources?

7. Does the author use an image or illustration which is key to interpreting the author's thought? If so, what is it?

Any other comments?
The following items are rated according to the following symbols:

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| COMMENTS:                                                              |   |   |   |
Alternative Assignment for Those Approved to Substitute This Course for the Theology 3 Requirement.

Write one 8-12 page paper on your personal theology.

Draw from the following resources:
* Bible
* The Nicaean Creed and Chalcedonian Definition of the Faith
* At least one of the Systematic Theologies by Erickson, Calvin, or Wiley
* Your previous work in Systematics 1 and 2
* Theological writings in your own personal library and in the seminary libraries

Your writing must touch on the following topics:
* The Nature of God.
* Your theology of the Bible.
* The Dual Nature of Christ - fully human, fully God.
* The Personality of the Holy Spirit.
* Your understanding of the Trinity - the One in Three.
* Your view of Creation: How did God create? Through evolution or special creation? Please support your view from the Bible and scientific data.
* Your understanding of the Fall (your Theodicy), including the specific events involved in the Fall of humanity.
* Your definition of sin, grace, salvation, sanctification (including your view of which system is more correct in understanding God's salvific plan as described in Scripture: Calvin's or Arminius')?
* Your understanding of the sacraments and their function (include your take on the views on the Lord’s Supper [the Roman Catholics’, Luther’s, Calvin’s, Zwingli’s] and the views of baptism [baptismal regeneration, infant, believer’s]).
* Your eschatological position (identify your view within the positions [Realized, Pre-mil, A-mil, Post-mil]).
* Your view of the Bible.
* Your definition of the Church.
* Your view of the responsibility of the Christian in the world (your view of both individual and social ethics, evangelism, and apologetics. Please touch on all of these).

We will be checking for a responsible, documented, theologically orthodox position on each of these areas.

**Due by the third class for those wishing the option to redo.**
Those not choosing this option may turn first drafts in in the 7th class. Please remember to include the assignment cover sheet with your initial paper submission.

**All redoings must also be accompanied by the original draft and original cover sheet to be regraded.**
Methodology

Beliefs clearly stated: I A G S
Exhaustive/comprehensive in addressing all points: I A G S
Accurate: I A G S
Biblically & Historically Orthodox: I A G S
Uses Sources Correctly: I A G S

Completeness of Study

Do you use the Bible accurately in forming your theology? N S Y
Do you refer to the Nicaean or Chalcedonian creeds? N S Y
Do you refer to any theology texts? N S Y
Do you discuss your view of the triune nature of God? N S Y
your view of the Bible? N S Y
your view of the Trinity? N S Y
your view of the dual nature of Christ? N S Y
your view of the Holy Spirit's personality? N S Y
your view of how God created (special creation, theistic evolution?) N S Y
your description of the events and significance of the Fall? N S Y
your definition of what is sin? N S Y
your theory of grace and salvation (Calvinist? Arminian?) N S Y
your description of sanctification (one-time event? process? Who brings it about?) N S Y
your view of what comprises the church? N S Y
your view of the sacraments? N S Y
Do you discuss the Christian’s responsibility in personal ethics (how one should live when no one but God is watching)? N S Y
Do you discuss the Christian’s responsibility in societal ethics (how to treat others locally, nationally, internationally)? N S Y
Do you discuss your view of the responsibility of the Christian in regard to evangelism: fulfilling the Great Commission? N S Y
Do you discuss your view of the responsibility of the Christian in regard to apologetics: explaining/defending the gospel? N S Y
Have you included a bibliography and notes? N S Y

Written Presentation

Well-organized paper: N S Y
Introductory paragraph: N S Y
Thesis sentence: N S Y
includes scope of study: N S Y
Body: N S Y
Summary: N S Y
Conclusion: N S Y

Literary Style - clear and succinct? N S Y
Spelling and grammar correct? N S Y
Does Student need remedial writing class? N S Y
Print easy to read? N S Y
Bibliography cited? N S Y
Facts, quotations, ideas of others cited in notes?  N S Y
Notes and bibliography consistent  N S Y

Comments