Course Description

This course is intended to help students develop a Biblically grounded theology for life and ministry and to prepare students for ongoing reading and research in Biblical theology. It focuses on understanding the Bible’s unity and diversity by exploring methodological issues and topics in Biblical theology. Methodologically, the course will especially examine narrative approaches to Biblical theology. Thematically, the course focuses on the following themes in particular: the mission of God, covenant, Christ the Redeemer, the person and work of the Spirit, the Kingdom (of God), the Gospel, and a Biblical understanding of the people of God. The course also explores how these themes relate to the Christian life and ministry.

Course Prerequisites and Relation to the Curriculum

*Pre-requisites: OT500, NT501, NT/OT517. This course has OT Survey, NT Survey, and Interpreting the Bible as prerequisites. It does not require Greek or Hebrew and is therefore appropriate only for those students pursuing degrees in which Biblical languages are not studied. This course is a required part of the Master of Arts in Christian Ministries and as a suitable substitute for Biblical Theology of Leadership in the MAR-Hybrid degree in Christian Ministry. For all other degrees, this will be a general elective.

The course relates to the mission of Gordon-Conwell to train people in a knowledge of the Bible and the correct use of Scripture. Graduates of the seminary are trained to think Biblically, and, since theological study and ministry practice should always proceed from a Biblical theology, this course carries the charge to prepare students accordingly.

Course Outcomes

The student completing this course of study will:

*acquire a greater knowledge of the Bible
*be able to analyze, evaluate, and critique proposals for Biblical theology
*be able to investigate Scripture theologically
*be able to synthesize several theological themes in Scripture
*be able to identify and explain ways in which Biblical theology relates to the Christian life and to ministry
Course Textbooks/Reading

Students will read approximately 1,750 pages for this course from the following textbooks:


**Grams, Rollin.** ‘According to My Gospel’: *The Gospel in Paul’s Writings.* Unpublished, 2014. Pages: 200 [approximately; this is a work in progress]. The work is available on SAKAI.

**Grams, Rollin.** *Divergent Paths: Christianity and Islam.* Unpublished, 2016. Students will read the chapter entitled ‘God the Beneficent and Merciful, and the Cross of Jesus Christ: From Abstract to Concrete Theologising.’ The work is available on SAKAI.


**Grams, Rollin.** *Leadership: Challenging a Paradigm for Christian Ministry.* Unpublished, 2015. Students will read a selection from this work available on SAKAI. Students will read the Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4.


  - Scott J. Hafemann on the covenant relationship
  - Thomas R. Schreiner on the commands of God
  - Frank S. Thielman on the atonement
  - Stephen G. Dempster on the servant of the Lord
  - Paul R. House on the day of the Lord
  - Elmer A. Martens on the people of God
  - Roy E. Ciampa on the history of redemption

**Niehaus, Jeffrey.** ‘Chapter XX: The Missional Promise and Failure of the Mosaic Covenant.’ In *Biblical Theology II.* Forthcoming. [Chapter available on course website.] Pages: 19.


**Course Requirements and Marking Criteria**

The course consists of the following required components which work together to guide the student’s learning.

1. **Lectures**

Lectures function to orient the student to the field of study—Biblical theology. They are intended to guide and demonstrate to students methodological issues as well as to explore certain themes in Biblical theology. Students must listen to all the lectures for this course.

2. **Reading**

Students are to complete all the reading for this course (between 1,500 and 2,000 pages). A final report that the reading was completed is due on 7 May.

3. **Forum Posting**

Forums offer a way for students to record the learning they are experiencing, let others see this, and interact with one another during the course, even though the learning is online. This helps ‘solidify’ learning. Students should keep a copy of their notes on the lectures and the reading in a separate file for their own, future use (do not just place your comments on the forum).

At the end of each of the seven lessons (see the dates in Course Outline), students will make two forum posts:

*Engagement of Lectures and Reading Post* (due Monday)

- post four or five ‘take-away’ points from the lectures. By ‘take-away’ points is meant important ideas showing learning on the course. Present these briefly in bullet-format rather than paragraphs, and reference which lecture you have in view. (Keep your notes on the lectures in a separate place for your future use.)
- post four or five ‘take-away’ points from the reading in bullet form. (Keep your reading notes in a separate place for your future use.)
- expand on one of your points in 300 words or so.

*Responses to Students Post* (due Thursday)

- read three other students’ responses and respond to them in bullet points, using about 90-150 words.
Your expanded take-away point may include questions and additional thoughts, and students have the option to dialogue (further dialogue is not required but is possible) with one another on the forum as the course advances. (This helps students see what others are learning, thus helping them to recall, affirm, and expand what they themselves are learning on the course. It also builds relationships in the course.

Listening to the lectures, posting weekly take-away points, and responding to points posted by three other students are requirements for passing the course. A student is allowed to delay posting on the forum for one of the weeks in the course without permission; any other delayed posting needs approval from the instructor.

The forum will count for 30% of the final grade.

3. Essays

Students are to choose 3 of a possible 6 essays and write 1,000 words for each essay (a slight adjustment of 10% above this is allowable). The essays are to (1) demonstrate an awareness of methodology in Biblical theology; (2) engage Scripture; (3) engage reading on the course; (4) demonstrate an awareness of lectures through the level of engagement or points made; and (5) demonstrate master’s level research and writing.

Style:

• Essays should be double-spaced and in 12 point font.
• They are to be uploaded onto the course site on Sakai (keep a copy on your computer).
• Use footnotes for secondary source references or brief explanations or comments only, and these words should not be counted for the essay.
• Do not include a bibliography.
• Students should use the SBL style for footnotes. This is similar to Turabian: see online at: http://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/SBLHSrevised2_09.pdf.
• References to lectures in the essays may simply be by lecturer name and lecture title in a footnote.
• Use a good translation of the Bible—the ESV and NRSV are recommended (not translations with outdated understandings of textual criticism, such as the KJV or NKJV, not translations that do not lend themselves to research, such as the NIV’s dynamic equivalence, and not amplified or paraphrase Bibles).

No further research than the student’s reading for this course, listening to the lectures, and the student’s own use of Scripture is requested for these essays. In this way, students will be able to give due reflection on the reading and lectures, as well as his or her own understanding of Scripture, in the essays.

A student’s essays will be posted on the appropriate forums on Sakai for this course so that other students may read and respond to them. The difficulty will be to write only 1,000 words, so students have the responsibility to narrow their essay within the general topic. Descriptions of
the essays, below, are suggestive, not absolute requirements, but the overall topics are firm. The essay descriptions demonstrate how to handle the topics for Biblical theology.

*Essay Descriptions and Directions:*

Students will choose and write on 3 essay topics, as follows. Each essay is worth 20% of the final grade and is to be about 1500 words.

**Essay 1: Choose A or B**

**Essay 1A:** What strengths and weaknesses are there in arguing that ‘covenant’ is the best way to explore the unity of Scripture? For this essay, use Niehaus (book and article), Hafemann in Hafemann and House, and Wright (ch. 10: ‘The Span of God’s missional Covenant’) in particular from the course reading, as well as the lectures. In a concluding paragraph or two, consider the helpfulness of this study of the unity of Scripture/covenant theology for (your?) Christian ministry.

**Essay 1B:** Wright argues that certain Biblical books do not merely have a missional theme but that mission is something that runs throughout the books of the Bible—it is a roadmap through any journey through the Bible. Critically examine Wright’s statement that Biblical theology is missional—not a ‘Biblical theology of mission’ but ‘missional Biblical theology’? Engage whether there is a center to Scripture, whether ‘mission’ offers a more helpful synthesis of Scripture than other suggestions (such as covenant, kingdom), and where the weak parts of Wright’s suggestion arise. In a concluding paragraph or two, consider the helpfulness of this study for (your?) Christian ministry. Especially use the texts by Chris Wright and Niehaus (book and article).

**Essay 2: Choose A or B**

**Essay 2A:** On what grounds does Bauckham argue that the earliest Christians held the highest Christology? Pay particular attention to the use of the Old Testament in early Christian Christology, and make clear reasons for your agreement or disagreement with Bauckham. Also use ch. 4 of Wright for this essay and relevant parts of Hafemann and House.

**Essay 2B:** With reference to Thiselton (and possibly Schreiner), what is the relationship between the New Testament and the Old Testament in what the early Church taught about the Holy Spirit?

**Essay 3: Choose A or B**

**Essay 3A:** What is the Gospel according to Paul? What is the Old Testament basis for Paul’s understanding of the Gospel? What is the relationship between Jesus, his message of the Kingdom, and Paul’s Gospel? In a paragraph or two, reflect on how this study of the Gospel helps you think through how to share the Gospel in your context of ministry.
(e.g., cross-culturally, to a certain age group, to people in different life situations, etc.). For this essay, use Grams (*Gospel*) and relevant essays in Hafemann and House.

**Essay 3B:** What is the Church? Focus this essay on the Church as God’s holy people or the Church as God’s missional people. Who are God’s people? What are they to do? What is the relationship between Israel and the Church? In a concluding paragraph or two, consider the helpfulness of this study on the Church for (your?) Christian ministry—how does this study help to form some of your views on the local church? Use the text by Grams (*Church*), relevant material from Hafemann and House, and chs. 6, 7, 8, 11, 14, and 15 in Wright.

4. **Response to Others’ Essays**

Students will also write a response to other students’ essays on a single topic (and one he/she did not write on). The responses should zero in on one (maybe two) significant point/s in the essay, trying to go deep in a few words rather than list a number of points. The response should be 500 – 600 words in length and is worth 10% of the course’s final grade.

**Course Marking:**

Students are expected to complete the course in its entirety, and failure to do so may mean failure of the entire course. So, e.g., dropping a paper, failing to complete the reading or listening to the lectures, and so forth, put the student in jeopardy of failing the course.

**Value of Assignments for Final Grade**

- Completion of all Lectures and Reading on the Course: Pass/Fail (final grade reduction up to failure of the entire course)
- Engagement with Reading and Lecture Forum Posts: 3% each x 7 = 21% of final grade
- Response to Students Posts: 1% each x 7 = 7% of final grade
- Essays: 20% each x 3 essays = 60%
- Response (one only) to Essay Topic (reading all papers on that topic): 12%

**Rubrics**

**Rubric for reading the textbooks and listening to the lectures:**

| Weekly completion of all the required reading, posting of take-away points, and reading of three others’ points on the forum. Completion of all these requirements for the entire course. | Pass/Fail for the Course |
| Weekly completion of listening to all the lectures, posting take-away points, and reading three others’ points on the forum. Completion of all these requirements for the entire course. | Pass/Fail for the Course |

**Rubric/Guidance for Writing and Marking the Essays:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Approximate Percent of Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive Strengths: Essays should not use sources for one line points but capture the gist</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of an argument, showing depth of reading on the course.

Analysis and Critique: Essays should be aware of where arguments arise and on what points they turn. They should entertain divergent understandings and alternative arguments, offering an analysis of these where appropriate, and demonstrate critical skills in the discussion.

Methodology: Essays should show an awareness of methodological issues in both Biblical interpretation and Biblical theology (especially matters of unity and diversity in the Biblical canon). They should demonstrate ability to use tools for Biblical interpretation, particularly commentaries, when key texts are discussed.

Research: All essays must engage Scripture. Other resources may be used (if deemed necessary), but the essay questions are primarily intended to assist students in engaging the reading and lectures.

Writing and Presentation: Essays should be clear (in structure, argument, and prose), correct, concise, cogent, and complete in style, grammar, and content.

Rubric for writing/marking responses to others’ essays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notation of positive points made by the other student</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical analysis of the essay (be polite and show where and why you agree or disagree and where the essay might be strengthened or expanded, addressing methodological issues for Biblical theology, bringing in additional thoughts from the lectures and reading, etc.)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement with Scripture. Consider interpretation of passages, consideration of other passages, the relationship of Biblical passages to one another</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of learning on the course (reading, lectures) and understanding of the topic</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals:</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Meaning of Letter Grades for the Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>88-89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>83-87%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>80-82%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>78-79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>73-77%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>60-62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>0-59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>0-59%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Excellent
Very Good
Fine Work, Just Above Average
Good, Average
Slightly below average
Satisfactory for passing, although below average for graduate level work
Pass, although inadequate work at the graduate level
Fail

Course Outline

The course outline is on Sakai and gives detailed instruction week by week throughout the course.

Bibliography
A bibliography for Biblical Theology is posted on the Course website.

**Some Recommended Texts for Further Reading:**

**Narrative Unity**


**New Testament Theology**


**Old Testament Theology**


**God**


**Jesus Christ**


**Holy Spirit**


**Pauline Theology**


**Missional Reading of Scripture**


Syllabus Addendum

Academic Standards
Cheating and plagiarism are considered serious breaches of personal and academic integrity. Cheating involves, but is not necessarily limited to, the use of unauthorized sources of information during an examination or the submission of the same (or substantially same) work for credit in two or more courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructors. Plagiarism involves the use of another person’s distinctive ideas or words, whether published or unpublished, and representing them as one’s own instead of giving proper credit to the source. Plagiarism can also involve over dependence on other source material for the scope and substance of one’s writing. Such breaches in academic standards often result in a failing grade as well as other corrective measures [they will for this course]. For more information, please consult the Student Handbook.

ADA Policy
The seminary complies with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. A student with a qualifying and authenticated disability who is in need of accommodations, should petition the seminary in accordance with the stated guidelines in the Student Handbook.

Cancellation of Class
In the event the seminary has to cancel a class meeting (impending storm, professor illness, etc.), the Registration Office will send out an email (via the GCTS email account) notification to all students registered in the respective course. If the cancellation occurs the day of the scheduled meeting, the Registration Office will also attempt to contact students via their primary phone contact on record. The professor will contact the students (via GCTS account) regarding make-up. If a weekend class is cancelled, the class will be made up during the scheduled Make-Up weekend (see the academic calendar for the designated dates). For more info, consult your Student Handbook.

Extension Policy
Arrangements for submission of late work at a date on or before the “last day to submit written work”, as noted on the seminary’s Academic Calendar, are made between the student and professor. Formal petition to the Registration Office is not required at this time. This includes arrangements for the rescheduling of final exams.

However, course work (reading and written) to be submitted after the publicized calendar due date, must be approved by the Registration Office. An extension form, available online, must be submitted to the Registration Office prior to the “last day to submit written work.” Requests received after this date will either be denied or incur additional penalty. For a full discussion of this policy, please consult the Student Handbook.

Grades
Grades are posted on-line within twenty-four hours of receipt from the professor. Students are expected to check their CAMS student portal in order to access posted grades. Those individuals who need an official grade report issued to a third party should put their request in writing to the Registration Office. Faculty have six weeks from the course work due date to submit a final grade.

Returned Work
Submitted course work will be returned to the student provided s/he provides a self-addressed and postage paid envelope with his/her final work. Work submitted without the appropriate envelope will be destroyed once the grade has been assessed and issued.

Since the exegesis paper is submitted electronically, only comments and not the paper will be sent to the student once everything is graded.
Virtual Writing Center

Free assistance in writing papers is available to students through the Virtual Writing Center at Gordon Conwell. The Virtual Writing Center is staffed by Gordon Conwell graduates, or writing tutors with specialized knowledge in writing and/or ESL. Generally, this service is available to students who have completed or are currently enrolled in one of the following three classes:

- CT500 (Introduction to Theological Research)
- CO501 (Introduction to Counseling Research)
- IS502 (Theological Research and Writing)

If you enrolled in GCTS before Fall 2008, you were not required to take one of the three prerequisites above, and you may request access to the Virtual Writing Center. Also, ESL writing tutors are available to ESL students even if they are not currently enrolled in a degree program. If you do not meet one of these qualifications, but feel you would benefit from using the Virtual Writing Center, contact us and we will evaluate your status.

Email writingcenter@gordonconwell.edu for more information.