TH501: Theology Survey I
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary—Charlotte
Dr. Don Fairbairn—Spring 2015

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Schedule: The assignments for this course will extend throughout the spring semester, from Jan 20 through May 9. The class meetings will be on Monday evenings, 6:30 – 9:30 PM, January 26 – April 6 (no class on Presidents Day, February 16).

Office Hours: I will be in the office and available for drop-in meetings on Monday and Tuesday afternoons. I will be in the office all day on Wednesdays, but most Wednesdays will be filled with meetings. I can also be available by appointment at other times convenient to students.

Catalog Course Description: A study of theological method, revelation, inspiration, and canon of Scripture, existence and attributes of God, Trinity, creation and providence, human nature, original and actual sin.

Relation to Curriculum: This is a required course for students in all master’s-level programs.

Course Purpose: This course, like its successor TH502, is designed to give students a basic and growing competence in the area of theology through careful consideration of the Bible’s teaching on core Christian doctrines, the church’s formulation of those doctrines in history, and the expression of those doctrines in the varied contexts of contemporary society.

Course Objectives: In keeping with Gordon-Conwell’s mission statement, the professor intends that upon completing this course, students will:

1. Gain a mastery of biblical teaching on the doctrines covered in the course (article 1 of the mission statement).

2. Learn to think critically in analyzing various theological positions (article 2).

3. Develop their own positions on the doctrines studied and be capable of articulating and defending those positions and applying them to their own ministries (article 3).

4. Reflect on the implications of Christian doctrine for their own spiritual maturity, intimacy with Christ, character, and relationships inside and outside the church (article 4).

5. Consider the centrality of Christian doctrine for the development of a Christian and evangelical view of society (article 5).
6. Apply Christian doctrine to the church’s tasks of missions, evangelism, discipleship, compassion, and justice (article 6).

**Course Requirements:** Achievement of the course objectives will be measured through a variety of assignments. The successful completion of these assignments will require each student to spend at least 135 hours devoted to coursework, both in class and outside of class. The following chart indicates how these hours are distributed across the various course assignments. More specific descriptions of the assignments are given later in this syllabus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Assignment</th>
<th>Expected Time Commitment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading the textbooks and other theological works of your choice</td>
<td>60 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures and class discussions</td>
<td>30 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key idea statement and three integrative doctrinal papers</td>
<td>45 hours</td>
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**Required Textbooks and Materials:**


Tennent, Timothy C. *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing the Way We Think about and Discuss Theology*. Zondervan, 2007. (ISBN 978-0310275114; ASIN of e-book: B000SIYT06)

“Chicago Statement on Inerrancy” and “Fairbairn’s Statement on Scripture,” both available on Sakai.

**Course Assignments:**

1. **Reading (10 points):** You must complete 2000 pages of reading. This reading must include the following:
   - McGrath, *Christian Theology*, chaps. 1-10 (pp. 1-264). This reading will give you broad exposure to the issues and ideas of Christian theology. Because this book is double-columned, you may count each page as two pages. **Thus the reading from this book counts as 528 pages.**
McGrath, *Christian Theology Reader*, chaps. 1-3 (pp. 1-217). This reading will give you exposure to the range of the Church’s thought throughout Christian history. Because this book is double-columned, you may count each page as two pages. Thus the reading from this book counts as 434 pages.

Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity*, chaps. 1-5 (pp. 1-107). This reading will assist you in understanding the professor’s lectures and will attune you to the ways a patristic perspective on theology can be helpful.

Köstenberger and Krueger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy*, entire (pp. 15-235). This book will give you a good grasp of issues related to the canon and text of Scripture.

Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* chaps. 1-4 (pp. 1-103). This book will help you to understand the way issues from the Majority-World Church are re-shaping the discussions of Christian theology.

The relevant portions of a modern or contemporary theology textbook of your choice, preferably from your own doctrinal tradition. See the list at the end of this syllabus for suggestions. This reading will give you a unified contemporary perspective on theology.

At least one evangelical Protestant confessional statement, preferably from your own doctrinal tradition. Examples include the Augsburg Confession, the Second Helvetic Confession, the Belgic Confession, the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Scots Confession, the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Methodist Articles of Religion, and the Philadelphia Baptist Confession. Some of these may be found in Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (vol. 3) or in Leith, *Creeds of the Churches*. They are also available on-line or in denominational publications. This reading will help you interact with the history of your tradition.

Overall, the reading for this course will give you the data you need to reflect, in light of Scripture, on the doctrines covered. The reading will thus constitute your preparation to write the doctrinal papers.

By Monday, Feb. 2, you must indicate on Sakai which contemporary theology textbook(s) you will read and which evangelical Protestant confession(s) you will consult as you prepare for the doctrinal papers. This assignment will not be graded, but I will offer feedback if I think your choices may be problematic.

As you read, you must keep track of the books and pages you have read. By Monday, May 4, you must upload a reading report to the Sakai site indicating which books and pages you have read and the total number of pages.

You may read any of the readings in electronic form, but you should still report your reading with the approximate number of pages as if you were reading the printed version. Required readings are listed above by chapter and page numbers, so you can easily find what to read in the electronic versions and can easily report your reading with page numbers. If you do other reading electronically, approximate the number of pages as well as you can (perhaps by comparing to a library print copy) without wasting undue time trying to be exact.

2. Preliminary Key Idea Statement (ungraded): By Monday, March 9, you must submit on Sakai a statement of your preliminary key idea for theology. This statement should be
1-2 pages in length and should explain the biblical basis for your key idea and why you think it serves well to integrate all of Christian teaching. This assignment will not be graded, but I will give feedback on your key idea, and you should refine the key idea further in your second doctrinal paper and refer back to it in the second and third doctrinal papers.

3. Integrative Doctrinal Papers (30 points each [90 points total]): You must reflect on the Bible’s teaching and the reading pertaining to each of the doctrines covered in the course and must compose three doctrinal papers. Each paper should be 10-12 pages in length.

In order to save space, you should use parenthetical references rather than footnotes whenever possible. Scripture passages, passages from the required readings, and Protestant confessions can all easily be identified parenthetically. Some examples follow:

(Jn 15:9)
(McGrath, p. 245)
(Kant in Reader, p. 28)
(Fairbairn, p. 25)
(WCF 2.4) [= Westminster Confession of Faith, art. 2, sec. 4]

You should include a bibliography with full information for the sources you cite parenthetically in the paper.

Because these will be your personal doctrinal statements, you can and should write in the first person.

Paper 1 will cover the inspiration, canon, and truthfulness/authority of Scripture, and it is due on Monday, Feb. 23.

Paper 2 will cover your refined, expanded key idea for theology, as well as the doctrine of God/Trinity in relation to your key idea, and is due on Monday, March 30.

Paper 3 will cover the creation and fall in relation to your key idea, and is due on Monday, April 27.

For each of the integrative doctrinal papers, you must do the following:
- Decide an appropriate way to divide and organize the doctrines/issues covered under the broad topic.
- For each doctrine, succinctly summarize the relevant biblical teaching. This will constitute evidence that you have met course objective no. 1 above.
- For each doctrine, interact with important statements from the history of the Church (early creeds, Reformation confessions, denominational doctrinal statements, or other historical materials presented by McGrath or the professor). This will constitute evidence that you have met course objective no. 2 above.
- For each doctrine, interact with contemporary issues from McGrath or your reading of a modern systematic theology textbook. This will constitute evidence that you have met course objective no. 2 above.
• For each doctrine, state your own belief clearly. This will constitute evidence that you have met course objective no. 3 above.

• In the second, paper, explain and defend your key idea for theology. In the third paper, relate the doctrines covered back to your key idea for theology. (The first doctrinal paper, on Scripture, will be written prior to our discussion of key ideas, and thus it need not deal with this point.)

• Reflect on the significance of your belief about the doctrines covered for your own devotion to Christ and for your ministry. This is a crucial portion of the assignment and will constitute evidence that you have met course objectives nos. 4-6 above.

  **Grading the papers:** Your integrative doctrinal papers will be evaluated on the basis of five primary criteria:

  1) Coverage of the important questions related to the doctrinal subjects of the paper (5 points)

  2) Depth and comprehensiveness in addressing the important questions (10 points)

  3) Relating the doctrinal subjects to your key idea for theology (papers 2 and 3 only) and addressing the implications of these doctrinal subjects for your own ministry (5 points)

  4) The organization and clarity of your writing (5 points)

  5) The mechanical correctness and elegance of your writing (5 points)

**Grading:** The point values listed above mean that the total number of points available for the course is 100. Final letter grades will be applied with cutoffs as follows: A 95, A- 90, B+ 87, B 83, B- 80, C+ 77, C 73, C- 70, D+ 67, D 63, D- 60, F below 60. A grade of A+ will be given very rarely, when the student’s work is truly exceptional. (At Gordon-Conwell, a grade of A+ and a grade of A are both counted the same way in calculating the student’s GPA. Thus, a GPA above 4.0 is not possible.)

**Late work:** All late work will be penalized the equivalent of one letter grade per week beyond the due date, unless arrangements are made ahead of time. Extenuating circumstances will be considered as appropriate. Work turned in later than Saturday, May 9 (the end of the spring semester) will normally require that an extension be approved by the Registrar’s Office. If you anticipate a problem, contact me as soon as possible.

**Attendance Policy:** Class attendance and participation are a central part of this course. Students who must miss a class period should notify me (in advance, if possible) to justify their absence. If a student has more than one unexcused absence from class, he/she will receive a penalty of three points per additional unexcused absence on his/her final grade.

**Document Formatting Requirements:** All written assignments should be submitted in either MS-Word or PDF format. (If you use a different word processor than MS-Word, please convert the file to PDF before submitting it.) Assignments should be double spaced with 1” margins on all sides of each page, and should be printed in Times New Roman 12 point type or another font of similar size and appearance. Assignments must be submitted electronically by posting on the Sakai site. Hard-copies will not be accepted.
Syllabus Addendum: For other Seminary policies, refer to the attached Syllabus Addendum.

Course Schedule:

All dates on this schedule are Mondays unless otherwise noted.

Jan. 26 – Introduction
(Read McGrath, chap. 5; Reader, chap. 1.)

Statement of which theology textbook and which confessions you will read is due Feb. 2.

Feb. 2, 9 – Scripture
(Read McGrath, chaps 6-8; Köstenberger, all; Tennent, chap. 3; Chicago Statement on Inerrancy, Fairbairn Statement on Scripture.)
   General and Special Revelation
   The Inspiration of Scripture
   The Canon of Scripture
   The Inerrancy and Authority of Scripture

Feb. 16 – No Class; Presidents’ Day

Doctrinal Paper 1 (on Scripture) is due Feb 23.

Feb. 23, Mar. 2 – Approaches to Theology/Theological Method
(Read McGrath, chaps. 1-4; Reader, chap. 2; Fairbairn, chap. 1; Tennent, chap. 1.)

Key Idea Statement is due March 9.

March 9, 16 – The Triune God as He is in Himself
(Read McGrath, chaps. 9-10; Reader, chap. 3; Fairbairn, chaps. 2-3; Tennent, chap. 2.)
   What do we mean by “God”? (God’s Attributes and Character in the Old Testament)
   The Uniqueness and Unity of God
   God in the Old Testament: The Father
   The Son and the Spirit in the Old Testament
   The Son in the New Testament
   The Spirit in the New Testament
   The Unity of the Three Persons as One God

March 23 – Creation in Light of the Trinity
(Read Fairbairn, chap. 4; Tennent, chap. 4.)
   The Mechanics of Creation
   The Purpose for Creating the Physical Universe
   The Purpose for Creating Angels
Doctrinal Paper 2 (on God/the Trinity in relation to your key idea) is due March 30.

March 30 – Humanity as Created, in Light of the Trinity
The Purpose for Creating People
The Image of God
The Tasks of Humanity

April 6 – The Fall in Light of the Trinity
(Read Fairbairn, chap. 5.)
The Entrance of Sin into the Universe
The Nature and Universality of Sin
The Effects of the Fall on the Physical Universe
The Effects of the Fall on Humanity
The Effects of Angels’ Sin

Doctrinal Paper 3 (on creation and fall in relation to your key idea) is due April 27.

Reading report is due May 4.

All late work is due Saturday, May 9.

Suggested Systematic Theology Texts:

Lutheran

Reformed (with extensive interaction with modern theology of all stripes)

Presbyterian

Methodist (with extensive interaction with patristic theology)
Thomas C. Oden, Classic Christianity: A Systematic Theology (HarperOne, 2009). [Or you may read the longer, 3 vol. version, called Systematic Theology (Hendrickson, 2006).]

Wesleyan/Holiness/Nazarene

Baptist
Millard Erickson, Christian Theology, 3rd edition (Baker, 2013).
Pentecostal/Charismatic

Dispensational

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. 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 cancelation 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 end date for the semester as noted on the seminary’s *Academic Calendar*, are made between the student and professor. Formal petition to the Registration Office is not required in this case. This includes arrangements for the rescheduling of final exams.
However, course work (reading and written) to be submitted after the publicized end date for the semester must be approved by the Registration Office. An extension form, available online, must be submitted to the Registration Office prior to the stated date. 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**
Faculty have six weeks from the course work due date to submit a final grade. 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 (unless instructed otherwise). Those individuals who need an official grade report issued to a third party should put their request in writing to the Registration Office.