

TH501: Theology Survey I

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary—Charlotte

Spring 2012

Instructor: Dr. Don Fairbairn

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Schedule of Class Meetings: Monday evenings, 6:30 – 9:30 PM, February 6 – April 16
[no class on President’s Day, February 20]

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 on Friday afternoons prior to weekend classes by appointment.

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 Objectives: 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. In keeping with Gordon-Conwell’s mission statement and the stated learning outcomes that grow out of each article, I intend 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.

Course Assignment	Expected Time Commitment	Student's Actual Time
Reading the three textbooks and other theological works of your choice	60 hours	
Lectures and class discussions	30 hours	
Three integrative doctrinal papers	45 hours	

Students must keep a record of the time they spend on each assignment and by May 16 must upload to the Sakai site a chart like the one above, indicating the amount of time they have actually spent on each assignment in the right-hand column.

Required Textbooks and Materials:

Fairbairn, Donald. *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2009. (ISBN: 978-0830838738)

Köstenberger, Andreas, and Michael Krueger. *The Heresy of Orthodoxy*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2010. (ISBN: 978-1433501432)

McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. Fifth Edition. Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. (ISBN: 978-1444335149)

McGrath, Alister E. *The Christian Theology Reader*. Fourth Edition. Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. (ISBN: 978-0470654842)

Course Assignments:

1. Reading (10 points; approximately 60 hours): You must complete 2000 pages of reading. This reading must include the following:

- McGrath, *Christian Theology*, pp. 1-264, 348-74. This reading will give you broad exposure to the issues and ideas of Christian theology.
- McGrath, *Christian Theology Reader*, pp. 1-217, 339-405. This reading will give you exposure to the range of the Church's thought throughout Christian history.

- Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity*, pp. 1-107. This reading will assist you in understanding the professor's lectures and attune you to the ways a patristic perspective on theology can be helpful.
- Köstenberger and Krueger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy*, pp. 15-235. This book will give you a good grasp of issues related to the canon and text of Scripture.
- 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.
- Supplemental reading of your choice in order to assist you in preparation of the integrative doctrinal papers. For example, you may want to contemporary works on specific issues, such as the "Three Views on..." books. This reading will enable you to explore specific issues in more detail.

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.

As you read, you must keep track of the books and pages you have read and how long it has taken you to read each one. By Monday, May 14, you must upload a reading log to the Sakai site indicating which books and pages you have read and the total number of pages. (You should include the total reading time in the chart you will turn in at the end of the course.)

2. Integrative Doctrinal Papers (30 points each [90 points total]; approximately 15 hours each): You must reflect on the Bible's teaching and the reading from requirement one pertaining each of the doctrines covered in the course and must compose three doctrinal papers. Each paper should be 10-12 pages in length.

Paper 1 will cover the inspiration, canon, and inerrancy/authority of Scripture, as well as your own understanding of the unifying theme for theology, and it is due on Monday, March 19.

Paper 2 will cover the doctrine of God/Trinity and is due on Monday, April 9.

Paper 3 will cover the creation and fall and is due on Monday, May 7.

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. (Use parenthetical

references, not footnotes, when citing Scripture.) 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.
- For each doctrine, or in the conclusion of each doctrinal paper as a whole, reflect on the significance of your belief 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.

3. Chart indicating actual time spent on all assignments. You must upload this chart (printed earlier in this syllabus) to the Sakai site by May 16.

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 Wednesday, May 16 (one month after the last class meeting) will normally require that an extension be approved by the Seminary. 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 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 and Citation Style Requirements: All written assignments should be prepared in MS-Word format (no pdf files, .dat documents, or Word Perfect documents). 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. Citations should preferably follow Turabian style, although APA style is also acceptable. 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.

Class Schedule and Assignment Due Dates:

Feb. 6 – Introduction

Feb. 13, 20, 27 – Approaches to Theology/Theological Method (McGrath, pp. 1-119; Reader, pp. 1-63)

March 5, 12 – Scripture (McGrath, pp. 120-194; Reader, pp. 64-148; Köstenberger, pp. 15-235)
General and Special Revelation
The Inspiration of Scripture
The Canon of Scripture
The Inerrancy and Authority of Scripture

Doctrinal paper 1 is due March 19.

March 19, 26 – The Triune God as He is in Himself (McGrath, pp. 197-256; Reader, pp. 149-217; Fairbairn, pp. 1-58)
What do we mean by “God”? (God’s Attributes and Character in the Old Testament)
The Uniqueness and Unity of God
The God of 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

April 2 – God’s Action to Create and Sustain the Universe (McGrath, pp. 348-74; Reader, pp. 339-405)

The Mechanics of Creation
The Purpose for Creating the Physical Universe
The Purpose for Creating Angels
God’s Providence

Doctrinal paper 2 is due April 9.

April 9 – Humanity as Created, in Light of the Trinity (Fairbairn, pp. 59-84)
The Purpose for Creating People
The Image of God
The Tasks of Humanity

April 16 – The Fall and Its Consequences (Fairbairn, pp. 85-107)
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 is due May 7.

Reading log is due May 14.

All late work is due May 16.

Suggested Systematic Theology Texts:

Baptist/Evangelical

Millard Erickson. *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Baker, 1998).

Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest. *Integrative Theology*. (Zondervan, 1996).

James Leo Garrett. *Systematic Theology: Biblical Historical and Evangelical*. 3rd ed., 2 vols. (Bibal Press, 2007).

Daniel L. Akin, ed. *A Theology for the Church*. (Broadman & Holman, 2007).

Dispensational

Charles Swindoll and Rob. Zuck, eds. *Understanding Christian Theology*. (Thomas Nelson, 2003).

Evangelical/Ecumenical/Methodist

Thomas C. Oden. *Systematic Theology*. 3 vols. (Hendrickson, 2006)

Lutheran

John Theodore Mueller. *Christian Dogmatics*. (Concordia Publishing House, 2003).

Pentecostal/Charismatic

J. Rodman Williams. *Renewal Theology*, 3 vols. (Zondervan, 1988).

Stanley M. Horton, ed., *Systematic Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective*. (Logion Press, 1994).

Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave. *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*. (Foursquare Media, 1983).

Presbyterian/Reformed

Robert Reymond. *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*. 2nd ed. (Thomas Nelson, 1998).

Louis Berkhof. *Systematic Theology*. (Eerdmans, 1938, reprint 1996).

James Montgomery Boice. *Foundations of the Christian Faith* (InterVarsity Press, 1986).

Weslyan/Holiness/Nazarene/Methodist

J. Kenneth Grider. *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*. (Beacon Hill Press, 1994).

H. Ray Dunning. *Grace, Faith & Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology* (Beacon Hill Press, 1988).

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 “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. [Note that this Seminary policy does not apply to this class, because I will not accept hard copies of work. My comments on all written work will be available through Sakai.]