TH 501 — THEOLOGY SURVEY I

COURSE SYLLABUS

FALL 2011

Instructor

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 9:30–10:30am, 5:30–6:30pm; Thursdays 5:30–8:30pm

Course Description: A study of theological method, revelation, inspiration, and canon of Scripture; existence and attributes of God; Trinity; creation and providence; human nature; and sin. For M.A. students only. The class will meet on Thursdays, 2:00–5:00.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course you will have:

• Reflected on what it means to think theologically in an evangelical Christian context; and deepened your understanding of the nature, relevance and role of systematic theology in your Christian life and ministry.

• Sharpened your understanding of the doctrine of Holy Scripture, and affirmed both its central place in Christian life and thought, and its critical role in the practice of theology.

• Expanded your knowledge of the Christian doctrine of God; reflecting on the existence and knowledge of God, the glory and majesty of God’s being, and especially on the meaning and relevance of the doctrine of the Trinity for Christian life, thought, and worship.

• Developed a basic understanding of the essential theological content, and the key issues and viewpoints in the doctrines of creation, providence, humanity, and sin; and defined, biblically supported, and confidently articulated your own theological positions.

• Gained a deeper appreciation of your own theological heritage and your place in the community of faith that transcends the boundaries of time and location; and a clearer vision and intellectual context for a lifetime of theological study that is expressed in continuing personal growth, and well-informed and articulate ministry.

Required Texts


Student’s choice of at least FIVE additional supplemental readings posted on CAMS.

**Optional Helpful Texts**

Adler, Mortimer J. and Charles Van Doren. *How to Read a Book*. Rev. ed. Touchstone, 1972. (Described as a classic guide to intelligent reading, this book is very helpful for developing better reading skills.)

Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*. Zondervan, 2011. (A thorough and helpful systematic treatment of the standard doctrinal topics of the Reformed faith; this text is scholarly yet accessible, and fully engages both Scripture and the history of doctrine.)


Erickson, Millard. *Christian Theology*. Second edition. Baker Books, 1998. (This is the standard graduate level introductory theology text. Written from a conservative evangelical perspective, it offers a thorough treatment of the whole of systematic theology as it engages a wide spectrum of viewpoints and issues.)

Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity*. Revised edition. HarperCollins, 2001. (The popular modern apologetic text is written in Lewis’s distinctive insightful and informal style. This course will provide a good context in which to read or re-read this classic text.)

Muller, Richard. *Dictionary of Latin & Greek Theological Terms*. Baker Books, 1985. (A helpful reference that makes accessible the Greek and Latin terms and concepts found in works of dogmatics drawing from our rich heritage in Protestant Scholastic theology.)

Packer, J. I. *Knowing God*. IVP, (1973), 1993. (A modern classic that has ministered to well over a million Christians the great truth of what it means to know God. Theologically sound, accessible, and practical, this text would make edifying devotional reading to go along with this course.)

**Course Requirements**

**Reading Response Essay**

**1,500-word max** essay responding to the course required reading (texts and CAMS). The Reading Response Essay will be evaluated on: 1) thoroughness, conciseness, and clarity of thought; 2) demonstrated significant, thoughtful, critical engagement with the reading; and 3) the quality of writing and presentation. The Reading Response Essay is **due December 20 by 4:00pm**.

**NOTE:** The Reading Response Essay must be a response to the course required reading, rather than merely a summary or explication of the reading. Students should seek to analyze the reading as a whole, reflecting especially on key themes, arguments, issues, criticisms, and/or points that are of particular personal interest. The following examples of general critical questions may help guide your engagement with the text and the formulation of your response:

- What stands out to me? (Reflecting on interest)
- What surprises me? (Reflecting on distance)
- What puzzles me? (Reflecting on learning opportunities)
- What connections do I make? (Reflecting on integration)
- What implications are there? (Reflecting on application)
Essay Exam (Take-Home)

3,000-word max. This take-home essay exam will consist of integrative essay questions requiring students to draw on both the lectures and the course reading. You may use class notes and texts as you answer the questions (though each student’s exam must clearly reflect their own thoughts).

You may simply number your answers to correspond to the questions on the exam handout (available on CAMS). Answers to the exam questions will be evaluated on: 1) thoroughness, conciseness, and clarity of thought; 2) demonstrated significant, thoughtful understanding of the key terms, concepts, and issues addressed in this class, and the biblical passages relevant to them; and 3) the quality of writing, and presentation. The Essay Exam is due on December 20 by 4:00pm.

Final Exam (In-Class)

A final in-class exam is scheduled for Thursday, December 15 at the regular class meeting time. The exam will consist of objective questions covering the course lectures and required course textbooks (a list of study terms and concepts is available on CAMS). You are encouraged to discuss the study list with other students in the class before the exam date. This is a closed book exam.

Participation

You are expected to be faithful to your calling as a student through preparation, attendance, and involvement in the course. Significant learning will take place in the context of the classroom community. Assigned reading outside of class is meant to supplement the lectures and discussions and will provide a necessary aid for learning the material. You will have an opportunity to account for your attendance and completed reading (including the 5 required CAMS supplemental readings) on the Completed Reading Form available on CAMS. The Completed Reading Form is due by 4:00pm on December 20.

Important Information Concerning Written Assignments

• Written assignments should be typed in 12 point, Times New Roman-type font, double spaced, 1 inch margins, and with a cover page that clearly states your campus mailbox number. Students should make consistent use of a style manual of their choice.

• The preferred means of submitting assignments is in hard copy through campus mail (Box #223), or slipped under/deposited in the box in front of my office door (GL108). Please submit assignments as an email attachment only when absolutely necessary, and do not assume the instructor has received an emailed assignment until a verification is sent in response.

Final written work submitted on December 20 should include an Essay Exam, Reading Response Essay, and Completed Reading Form.

• It is the GCTS Registrar’s policy that no written work may be accepted by the professor after 4:00 pm on December 20 without an extension granted by the Registrar’s office.

Grading

The relative weight of the course requirements will be distributed as follows:

• Essay Exam 35%
• Final Exam 30%
• Reading Response Essay 20%
• Completed Reading Form 15%
Plagiarism

Helpful guidelines on plagiarism can be found on the Indiana University website listed below. This document has the official recognition of the Gordon-Conwell faculty and provides very helpful tools to guide you as you prepare your papers/exams. Website address: http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/plagiarism.html.

Personal Recorders and Computers

Recording of lectures is normally not permitted. Exceptions are made on an individual basis and is generally granted to students for whom English is a second language. It is always agreed that tape recordings are for personal use only, will not be distributed without prior permission from the instructor, and will be erased at the end of the course.

Students are permitted to use laptop computers during class for note-taking and course related purposes only. Students who cause a distraction to the instructor and to fellow students by abusing this privilege will be asked to withdraw from the course.

Recommended Links (additional links may also be found at these sites)

- Catholic Encyclopedia: http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/
- Christian Classics Ethereal Library: http://www.ccel.org
- MIT’s Internet Classics Archive: http://classics.mit.edu/
- Modern Reformation: www.modernreformation.org
- The Perseus Digital Library: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/
  http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/
  http://www.religion-online.org

Course Topics and Schedule

WEEK ONE — Introduction and Orientation

Erickson: chs. 1–3
- Boyd/Eddy, Across the Spectrum: Appendix, Issue 1

WEEK TWO — Revelation

Erickson: chs. 4–5; Stott, Evangelical Truth

WEEK THREE — Holy Scripture

Erickson: chs. 6–7; Sproul, Can I trust the Bible?
- Boyd/Eddy, Across the Spectrum: ch. 1

WEEK FOUR — Tradition and Canon

Erickson: ch. 8

WEEK FIVE — Trinity

Erickson: ch. 12; Fairbairn, Life in the Trinity
- Boyd/Eddy, Across the Spectrum: Appendix, Issue 2
WEEK SIX — Attributes of God

Erickson: chs. 9–11; Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God*
Boyd/Eddy, *Across the Spectrum*: ch. 3

WEEK SEVEN — Creation

Erickson: chs. 13–14
Boyd/Eddy, *Across the Spectrum*: ch. 4

WEEK EIGHT — Providence and Theodicy

Erickson: chs. 15–17
Boyd/Eddy, *Across the Spectrum*: ch. 2

WEEK NINE — Humanity as Created

Erickson: chs. 18–20
Boyd/Eddy, *Across the Spectrum*: ch. 5; Appendix, Issue 4

WEEK TEN — Humanity as Fallen

Erickson: chs. 21–23; Plantinga, *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be*

WEEK ELEVEN — Final Exam

IMPORTANT DATES:

10/13 — READING WEEK

11/10 — READING WEEK

11/24 — NO CLASS, *HAPPY THANKSGIVING!*

12/15 — FINAL EXAM (IN-CLASS)

12/20 — ESSAY EXAM, RRE, AND COMPLETED READING FORM DUE BY 4:00 PM

NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to revise the contents of this course syllabus as necessary.