

TH 501 — THEOLOGY SURVEY I

COURSE SYLLABUS FALL 2010

Instructor

Peter D. Anders
GL108, (978) 646-4124
panders@gcts.edu

Office Hours

Mondays 6–7:30pm, Tuesdays 2:00–5:00pm, and Fridays 9–10:30am

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 Wednesdays and Fridays, 10:45–12:15.

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

Millard Erickson. *Introducing Christian Doctrine*. 2nd edition. Baker Academic, 2001.

John Stott. *Evangelical Truth. A Personal Plea for Unity, Integrity & Faithfulness*. Christian Doctrine in Global Perspective Series. InterVarsity, 2003.

Donald Fairbairn. *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers*. IVP Academic, 2009.

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen. *The Doctrine of God: A Global Introduction*. Baker Academic, 2004.

Daniel J. Price. *Karl Barth's Anthropology in Light of Modern Thought*. Eerdmans's, 2002.

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.)

Berkhof, Louis. *Systematic Theology*. New edition containing the full text of *Systematic Theology* and the original *Introductory Volume to Systematic Theology*. Eerdmans, 1996. (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.)

Contours of Christian Theology — The following volumes from this series by InterVarsity Press provide thoughtful, thorough and readable supplemental studies to doctrines covered in this course:

Bray, Gerald. *The Doctrine of God*. IVP, 1993.

Jenson, Peter. *The Revelation of God*. IVP, 2002.

Helm, Paul. *The Providence of God*. IVP, 1994.

Dictionary of Theological Terms (Pocket Dictionary). Grenz, Guretzki, Fee, Nording. IVP, 1999.

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 Essays

Two essays (**1500-word max each**) responding to Donald Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers*, and Daniel J. Price, *Karl Barth's Anthropology in Light of Modern Thought*. The Reading Response Essays 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.

Reading Response #1 on Fairbairn is **due October 27**.

Reading Response #2 on Price is **due at the last class meeting (December 3)**.

NOTE: The Reading Response Essay must be a *response* to the texts, rather than merely a summary or explication of the texts. Students should seek to analyze the texts together, 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)

Final Exam

A Final Exam will be taken online through CAMS anytime during the scheduled final exam week. The exam will consist of both objective and essay questions covering the course lectures and required course textbooks (a study list of 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. You will be given three hours to complete the exam. 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 21**.

Additional 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 at the beginning of class, in my campus mailbox (#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.
- Late assignments will be subject to a grade reduction penalty at the discretion of the instructor. It is the GCTS Registrar's policy that no written work may be accepted by the professor after 4:00 pm on December 21 without an extension granted by the Registrar's office.

Grading

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

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| • Final Exam | 40% |
| • Reading Response Essay #1 | 25% |
| • Reading Response Essay #2 | 25% |
| • Completed Reading Form | 10% |

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. In order to save paper, we have provided you with the 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.

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

Course Topics and Schedule

WEEK ONE — Introduction and Orientation

Erickson: chs. 1–3

WEEK TWO — Revelation

Erickson: chs. 4–5

WEEK THREE — Holy Scripture

Erickson: chs. 6–7; Stott

WEEK FOUR — Tradition and Canon

Erickson: ch. 8

WEEK FIVE — Trinity

Erickson: ch. 12; Fairbairn

WEEK SIX — Knowledge of God; Discussion of Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers*, October 27.

Erickson: ch. 9

WEEK SEVEN — Attributes of God

Erickson: chs. 10–11; Kärkkäinen

WEEK EIGHT — Creation and Providence

Erickson: chs. 13–17

WEEK NINE — Humanity

Erickson: chs. 18–20; Price

WEEK TEN — Sin; Discussion of Price, *Karl Barth's Anthropology in Light of Modern Thought*, December 3.

Erickson: chs. 21–23

IMPORTANT DATES:

10/13, 15 — READING WEEK

11/10, 12 — READING WEEK

11/26 — NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

12/15–17 — FINAL EXAM

12/21 — LAST DAY TO SUBMIT WRITTEN WORK

The Completed Reading Form is due by 4:00PM ON DECEMBER 21.