TH 504 — SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY I
Instructor: Peter D. Anders
GL108; ext. 4124; panders@gcts.edu

Office Hours: T 9:30–10:30, 5:30–6:30; TH 5:30–8:30; Discussion Session: TH 9:30–10:30, AC150

Course Description: A study of theological method, general and special revelation, inspiration, inerrancy, and canonicity of Scripture; existence, attributes and triune nature of God.

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.

• Identified and evaluated the basic task and method of Evangelical systematic theology and thought through the contemporary issues concerning its sources and rationale.

• 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 task and method of systematic theology.

• Defined and carefully considered a biblically grounded 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.

• 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 has proven very helpful for developing better reading skills.)

Allen, Diogenes and Eric O. Springsted. Philosophy for Understanding Theology, 2nd ed. Westminster, 2007. (A very helpful historical treatment of the major philosophical ideas and issues that have helped to shape the development of theology).


Feinberg, John S. No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God. Foundations of Evangelical Theology. Crossway, 2006. (A comprehensive and contemporary work in Evangelical theology proper dealing with a full range of theological and philosophical issues, movements, and perspectives on the subject.)

Lewis, C. S. Mere Christianity. Rev. ed. HarperCollins, 2001. (This course will provide a good context for reading or re-reading this popular modern apologetic text written in Lewis’s distinctive insightful and informal style).

Lints, Richard. The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomena to Evangelical Theology. Eerdmans, 1993. (This text sets out an insightful and coherent vision and framework for the nature, task, and method of Evangelical theology in the contemporary world. Lints discusses what a truly transformative theology should look like, and what this would mean for the way Evangelicals think and live.)

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. InterVarsity, (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 Schedule and Lecture Topics

WEEK 1 — Course Introduction; The Evangelical Theological Orientation

Erickson, Christian Theology: ch. 1; Horton, The Christian Faith: Introduction
Stott, Evangelical Truth

WEEK 2 — Revelation and the Word of God

Erickson, Christian Theology: chs. 8–9; Horton, The Christian Faith: ch. 3

WEEK 3 — The Systematic Task and Method of Evangelical Theology

Erickson, Christian Theology: chs. 2–7; Horton, The Christian Faith: chs. 1–2
Barth, Evangelical Theology

WEEK 4 — Trinity

Erickson, Christian Theology: ch. 16; Horton, The Christian Faith: ch. 8

WEEK 5 — Trinity

Fairbairn, Life in the Trinity
WEEK 6 — Holy Scripture as Word of God

Erickson, Christian Theology: ch. 12; Horton, The Christian Faith: ch. 4

WEEK 7 — The Perfections of Holy Scripture

Erickson, Christian Theology: ch. 10
Sproul, Can I trust the Bible?

WEEK 8 — The Perfections of Holy Scripture

Erickson, Christian Theology: ch. 11; Horton, The Christian Faith: ch. 5

WEEK 9 — Tradition and Canon

Webster, Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch

WEEK 10 — Knowledge of God

Erickson, Christian Theology: ch. 15; Horton, The Christian Faith: ch. 6

WEEK 11 — Attributes of God


WEEK 12 — Course Review; Final Exam

Kärkkäinen, The Doctrine of God

IMPORTANT DATES:

9/20 — NO CLASS

10/11, 13 — READING WEEK

11/8, 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.