TH 504: SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY I
Fall 2016; Thursdays, 2:00-5:00 p.m.
Dr. John Jefferson Davis, Instructor

Introduction

This course is designed to give you a general introduction to the nature, history, and methodology of systematic theology, and insight into the nature of the relationship of systematic theology to the other disciplines of the seminary curriculum. The course will focus on a study of authority in Christian theology, scripture, revelation, hermeneutics, and the doctrine of God. This course also serves as a general introduction to other courses in Systematic Theology.

Course Objectives

Attitudes

1. To increase appreciation for the value of theology in ministry and the Christian life.
2. To increase confidence in the authority of scripture.

Information

1. To increase knowledge of basic theological concepts, definitions, and doctrines.
2. To provide information for building a personal theological library.

Skills

1. To provide tools and skills for doing theological research.
2. To increase skills for applying theological insights to practical situations in ministry.

These objectives are believed to be in keeping with the seminary’s educational goals as stated in its Mission Statement, e.g., Art.1, helping students to become “knowledgeable in God’s Word … competent .. in its application in the contemporary world”; Art.2, “academic excellence in … theological disciplines”; Art.3, to “encourage students … to become skilled in ministry”; Art.4, to “cultivate Christ-like character”; and Art.5, to provide resources for “shaping an effective evangelical presence in Church and society.”

Textbooks

Davis, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (on CAMS) ["D"]
Davis, Meditation and Communion with God ["M"]
Davis, Practicing Ministry in the Presence of God ["PMPG"]
Twiss, One Church, Many Tribes ["Twiss"]
Rah, The Next Evangelicalism ["Rah"]

Erickson, Christian Theology, 3rd ed., v. 1, chpts. 1-15. ["E”]; Recommended; not required
Davis, Handbook of Basic Bible Texts ["H"]; Recommended: not required
Other Required Readings:

Jacquelyn Grant, *White Woman’s Christ*, pp. 1-3; 9-14; 218-222. ["Grant"]
Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail” ["King"]
Paul Tokunaga, “Understanding Our Asian DNA,” pp. 32-51. ["Tokunaga"]
Paul Knitter, “Hermeneutical Privilege of the Oppressed,” pp. 190-191. ["Knitter”]

Requirements

1. Scripture memorization assignment: 10 Commandments; Beatitudes (Matt 5:3-10); In-class quiz on October 20th.
2. Complete “Ten Compliances” assignment (p. 9; due October 20th)
3. Conduct an Intercultural Awareness Interview. (p.7; due Thursday, November 17th).
4. Sustain a final exam. (Thursday, December 15th; or date announced by Registrar).
5. Complete a scripture meditation exercise (p.6; due Thursday, December 1st).
6. Complete a teaching project on the Trinity (p.3; due Thursday, December 8th).

Evaluation

For the final evaluation, the teaching project will count for 90 points; the final exam, 90 points; and the Intercultural Awareness Interview, scripture meditation assignment, scripture memorization assignment, and the “Ten Compliances” assignment will each count 5 points.

Grade Scale: A = 93-100; A- = 90-92; B+ = 88-89; B = 83-87; B- = 80-82; C+ = 78-79; C = 73-77; C- = 70-72; D = 65-69; F = 0-64.

Outline of Course Topics:

   (PMPG: 1,2; D: 1; M: 1,2; Twiss, 17-89; Rah, 11-63)
2. Introduction: II: Contextualization: Race, Ethnicity, American History
   (Grant, King, Wallis, Alexander; Tokunaga, Sue; Knitter: on CAMS; Twiss, 90-157; Rah, 64-126)
3. Introduction III: The Ontological Project (PMPG: 3, 5, 8; M:3,4; Twiss, 158-213; Rah, 126-208)
4. Doctrine of the Trinity: I (Davis, “Doctrine of the Trinity” [CAMS]; [E: 14])
6. Attributes of God ([E: 11, 12]; [H: 23-37])

7. Experience of God: Worship, Meditation: ([E:13]; M:5)

8. Election and Predestination ([E: 15]; [H: 39-43])


7. Inerrancy ([E: 9]; D: 186-199;)

8. [General Revelation [E: 6]]

9. Spiritual Experience in Theology and the Christian Life ([E: 1,2]; D: 5; M:7)

10. Canon of Scripture (D: 199-205)

11. [Biblical Hermeneutics (D: 245-263; [review: M:6]]

12. [Church Tradition and the Roman Catholic Understanding of Authority (D: 7)]

Appendix I: Teaching Project: Doctrine of the Trinity

Your assignment is to make a thirty minute presentation on the doctrine of the Trinity, adapting the textbook and classroom content to an audience and context of your choosing. You may present to friends or family members; a youth group or church school class; a Bible study, campus ministry, or other small group; or preach a sermon on this topic in church. You may set up a simulated context, e.g., presenting the doctrine of the Trinity in a Muslim or other non-Christian context. The group to which you present must consist of at least two persons. You should expect to spend no less that ten to twelve hours on this project, including both preparation and delivery.

The due date for the teaching project is Thursday, Dec. 8th. Your project report is to consist of three parts:

1. Describe the time, place, context, and audience of your presentation. State the learning objectives ["What?"/"So What?"] that you hoped to achieve;

2. Describe the amount of time you spent in preparation; list the sources that you used; Include an outline of your presentation, including references to any visual aids, exercises, or media;

3. Describe the feedback from your audience on your presentation. Encourage them to be frank and honest in their responses – both what they liked, and areas that needed improvement. In light of your experience, and the feedback given, what, if anything, would you have done differently?
In assigning a grade to the teaching project, the instructor will take into account: the amount of time invested; the quality and range of sources used; the quality and clarity of the outline and content; the degree of creativity and pedagogical effectiveness for the audience that was chosen.
Appendix II : Study Questions

1. What functions has systematic theology fulfilled in the life of the church over the centuries? How is it related to ministry today?

2. What is the difference between "Biblical theology" and "systematic theology"? How are they related?

3. How would you respond to someone who said, "Why study theology? Isn't the Bible enough?"

4. Who are some of the chief figures in the history of systematic theology?

5. What are some of the ways in which the relationship of faith and reason has been understood over the centuries? In your view, what place does reason play in the Christian life?

6. How would you respond to a Roman Catholic argument that there are oral traditions which are necessary for church doctrine?

7. How would you respond to someone who claimed to be an "apostle" who had received new doctrines through a private revelation?

8. What role does personal spiritual experience play in Christian theology? Could an unregenerate person write an orthodox theology textbook?

9. What is the biblical basis for the concept of "general revelation?" How is general revelation related to apologetics? Does the non-Christian know God? In what sense?

10. How would you reply to someone who claimed that special revelation is "personal," not propositional? Cite scripture texts.

11. In what sense do we as Christians possess "absolute" truth? How does this affect our view of non-Christian religions? Can anyone be saved without hearing the gospel?

12. Distinguish between revelation, inspiration, and illumination. In what sense does God "inspire" Christians today?


14. How is the inspiration of the New Testament established?

15. Discuss the concept of "limited" inerrancy. Do you consider this a viable option?

16. What are some of the common objections to inerrancy? How would you reply?

17. Is the Christian canon still open? How was the canon established?

18. List some basic rules of biblical hermeneutics. How are these rules related to a Christian doctrine of God's nature?

19. "The Bible is a culturally conditioned book." Comment on this assertion, as it relates to biblical authority.

20. List the common theistic proofs. In what sense are they valid?
21. Discuss the concepts of equivocal, univocal, and analogical language about God. What is the basis for analogical language?


23. What are some practical implications of the holiness of God?

24. Does God's will have any limitations?

25. Demonstrate the deity of Christ from specific scripture texts.

26. State the essential elements of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. What are some of the more common Trinitarian heresies?

27. Prove the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit from scripture.

28. What texts could a Calvinist cite on the doctrine of election? How would an Arminian interpret these texts? What are the key differences between the two positions?

29. Does prayer change things? Does it change God's mind? If not, why pray?

Scripture Meditation Assignment: (due: Dec. 1st)

1. Text Selection:

It is suggested that you choose a text from among the following: Psalm 23; Jn.1:1-18; Jn.10:1-18 (Good Shepherd); Jn.15:1-17 (True Vine); Jn.17:20-26 (High Priestly Prayer);
Matt.17:1-9 (Transfiguration; cf. 2Cor.3:17,18); Eph.1:1-23; Rom.8:1-17 (Spirit & Sonship); Matt.3:13-17 (Baptism of Jesus); Lk.15 (Prodigal Son). You may, however, choose another extended text that is meaningful to you; or, perhaps, the “Jesus Prayer” (“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”).

Text(s) selected: ____________________________________________

2. **Text Meditation:**

Your assignment is to meditate on your chosen text for at least 20 minutes a day for five days. Indicate below the month/day that you fulfilled this assignment:

Days completed: 1.____ 2.____ 3.____ 4.____ 5.____

It is suggested that you follow the following classic pattern of *lectio divina* reading: first, place yourself in the presence of God and ask for the illumination of the Holy Spirit; second, reflect in a leisurely and contemplative way on the text for at least 20 minutes; third, thank God for any insights or “touches” received; fourth, reflect again on the text and any insights received at some later time during the day.

3. **Text Reflection:**

Report below on your reflections on the text and this exercise in biblical meditation. What new insights, if any, did you receive? Did you have any trouble concentrating? How was this different from your previous patterns of scripture study and devotion?

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**Personal Interview Assignment: Intercultural Awareness (due: Nov. 17**

For this assignment, you are to conduct a 30 minute interview with a person whose cultural and ethnic/national background is different from your own. The questions you may pose may include, but are not limited to the following: family of origin; important
aspects of the culture of origin; educational experiences and settings; how the person came to faith; church and denominational background(s); how, in the person’s view, his or her family and culture of origin and church experiences have shaped: views and images of God the Father; Jesus Christ; the Holy Spirit; how these experiences have shaped the person’s sense of personal identity and calling to ministry.

Report on your interview by supplying the following information:

Person interviewed & their background:

Place, time, and circumstance of interview:

How did the person’s family of origin, home culture, and church experiences shape their views and images of God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit? Their sense of personal identity and calling to ministry?

Did conducting this interview provide any new insights or questions about your own images of God, personal identity, or views on church ministry? Explain:

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“Ten Compliances” Assignment:
(Due Thursday, October 20th; 5 points)
“If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will know whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own”: Jn 7:17 (“Primacy of Practical Reason”)

“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another”: Jn 13:35
“We are God’s people: caring, helpful, and attentive”:
or:
“Ten Right Actions” (Sermon on Mount: Matt 5-7)
or:
“Discipleship according to Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew” (Matt 5:7 – 26:41)

Date: Compliance: Description:
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Name: ____________________________________ email: _________________