TH 501 — THEOLOGY SURVEY I

COURSE SYLLABUS

FALL 2008

Instructor

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

Office Hours

Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays 9:00–10:30; and after class.

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. For M.A. students only. The class will meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:45–12:15, in room AC 254.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course you will have:

• Cultivated the life of the mind in your own relationship with God through an increasing understanding of the nature and role of theology in your Christian life and ministry; and through an increasing awareness of the task and method of theology, and your responsibilities as a Christian theologian.

• 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**


Additional supplemental reading is 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.)

Barth, Karl. *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*. Trans. by Grover Foley. Eerdmans, (1963), 1992. (This book discusses important issues related to the nature of evangelical theology and what it means to be an evangelical theologian. Written in Barth’s insightful and reverent style, it is both intellectually challenging and devotional. These lectures delivered by Barth in the later years of his career to audiences at Princeton Seminary and the University of Chicago are a good introduction to his thought, as well as to theology in general.)

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:


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.)

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. 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

An eight page essay responding to the whole of the course required reading. This 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. This assignment is due at the last class meeting.

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)
In addition to the Reading Response Essay that is required for all students, the course requires a second written assignment that will be your choice of EITHER a Personal Doctrinal Essay OR a Theological Research Essay as described below.

**Personal Doctrinal Essay**

A ten page well thought through discussion of your personal beliefs concerning the doctrines covered in this course. Students choosing this option will have the opportunity in Theology Survey II to write a similar essay on the remaining doctrines in the theological system. For this essay you must address only the topics of theological method, revelation, Holy Scripture, doctrine of God, the doctrine of creation, providence, theological anthropology, and sin.

The personal doctrinal statement should include the following:

1) A carefully articulated representation of your beliefs. You should make use of additional research, the course texts, lecture notes, and doctrinal statements from your own church or denomination to point you to the key issues and biblical passages relevant to them. However, you should then write your beliefs in your own words. This is a great opportunity to work through your beliefs on key doctrines of the Christian faith and clearly articulate them.

2) A demonstrated awareness and understanding of the important issues concerning each doctrine. These are your beliefs, but they are also relative to a biblical and historical Christian perspective. Therefore showing an understanding of the central issues for each doctrine in light of Scripture and tradition is essential. While your grade will not be affected by your personal beliefs regarding these central issues, it will be affected if the key doctrinal issues are not addressed.

3) A sufficient biblical basis for all key statements.

**This assignment is due by 4:00 on December 16.**

**Theological Research Essay**

A ten page essay addressing a key issue of personal interest that is related to one of the doctrinal topics in Christian theology covered in this course. These topics will include theological method, revelation, Holy Scripture, doctrine of God, the doctrine of creation, providence, theological anthropology, and sin. The essay should demonstrate significant engagement with Scripture and at least five theological resources clearly identified in the footnotes/endnotes and bibliography. The essay should also include a discussion of the practical relevance of the issue to Christian life and ministry.

The research essay will be evaluated on the following: 1) relevance of the chosen topic to the subject of this course; 2) thoroughness, conciseness, and clarity in which the topic is treated; 3) demonstrated engagement with Scripture and theological resources; and 4) quality of argumentation, writing, and presentation.

**This assignment is due by 4:00 on December 16.**
Additional Information Concerning Written Assignments

- Written assignments should be typed in 11-12 point, Times New Roman-type font, approximate double spacing (not more), at most 1 inch margins, and with a cover page that clearly states your campus mailbox number.

- The preferred means of submitting assignments is in hard copy at the beginning of class, in my campus mailbox (#223), or slipped under 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 normally not be accepted. Exceptions will be subject to a grade reduction penalty at the discretion of the instructor.

Final Exam

Also required for the course will be an in class Final Exam scheduled during final exam week. The exam will consist of both objective and short answer/essay questions covering the course lectures and required texts (the essay questions and a study list of terms will be distributed in advance). You are encouraged to discuss the essay questions and the study list with other students in the class before the exam date. You will be given three hours to complete the exam. **Bluebooks will be provided for the short answer/essay portion of the 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. You will be able to account for your attendance and completed reading on a form to be submitted **at the last class meeting.**

Grading

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

- Reading Response Essay 20%
- Personal Doctrinal Essay or Theological Research Essay 35%
- Final Exam 35%
- Participation 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](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/
Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics: http://www.reformed.org/
Christian Classics Ethereal Library: http://www.ccel.org
The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: http://www.iupui.edu
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 ONE (9/9, 9/11) — Course Introduction;
The Evangelical Theological Orientation

WEEK TWO (9/16, 9/18) — Revelation and the Word of God

Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding: ch. 2
Cambridge Companion: chs. 1, 3
Stott, Evangelical Truth: complete

WEEK THREE (9/23, 9/25) — The Task and Method of Evangelical Theology

Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding: ch. 1
Cambridge Companion: chs. 5–6

WEEK FOUR (9/30, 10/2) — Trinity

Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding: ch. 4
Cambridge Companion: ch. 7
WEEK FIVE (10/7, 10/9) — *The Nature and Perfections of Holy Scripture*

Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*: ch. 3  
*Cambridge Companion*: ch. 4  
R. C. Sproul, *Explaining Inerrancy: A Commentary*: complete

WEEK SIX (10/21, 10/23) — *Knowledge of God*

Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*: Appendix A  
Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God*: chs. 1–17

WEEK SEVEN (10/28, 10/30) — *Attributes of God*

Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God*: complete

WEEK EIGHT (11/4, 11/6) — *Creation and Providence*

Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*: chs. 5–6  
*Cambridge Companion*: ch. 8  
Blocher, *In the Beginning*: chs. 1–3

WEEK NINE (11/18, *11/25*) — *Theological Anthropology*

Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*: ch. 7  
*Cambridge Companion*: ch. 9  
Blocher, *In the Beginning*: chs. 4–5

WEEK TEN (12/2, 12/4) — *Creation, Sin, and Reconciliation*

Blocher, *In the Beginning*: complete  
Plantinga, *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be*: complete

**Reading Response Essay Due 12/4**

**Completed Reading Form Due 12/4**

**IMPORTANT DATES:**

10/14, 16 — READING WEEK  
11/11, 13 — READING WEEK  
11/20 — NO CLASS  
11/27 — NO CLASS, HAPPY THANKSGIVING!  
12/10–12 — FINAL EXAMS  
12/16 — LAST DAY TO SUBMIT WRITTEN WORK

**Personal Doctrinal Essay Due OR Theological Research Essay Due 12/16 by 4:00**
Representative Systematic Theologies (* = Introductory.)


Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley and others. Four volumes. T. & T. Clark, 1956–75. (Neo-Orthodox)


Bloesch, Donald G. *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*. Hendrickson, 2005. (Evangelical)*


Grenz, Stanley J. *A Theology for the Community of God*. Broadman/Holman, 1994. (Neo-Evangelical)*


