COURSE SYLLABUS

TH 501—Theology Survey I
Patrick T. Smith, Course Instructor
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
South Hamilton Campus
Fall Semester 2009
Mondays, 9:15 AM-12:15 PM
Phone: 978-468-7111
Email: ptsmith@gcts.edu

Course Description

This course is 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)

Required Course Textbooks*


Tennent, Timothy C. Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing the Way we Think About and Discuss Theology. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007.


Learning Outcomes

The student who successfully completes this course should have the ability:
1. To understand the importance and necessity of doctrine for Christian life and community.
2. To effectively read, understand, learn from and engage texts in theological studies.
3. To appreciate afresh the art of scripture meditation on key biblical passages that pertain to the doctrines of revelation; inspiration; the person, work, and majesty of God; human nature and the human condition.
4. To have a deeper appreciation for theology as it relates to preparation for ministry in the context of the local church, parachurch ministries and the broader contemporary culture.

*NOTE: M.A. students in counseling may and are strongly encouraged to substitute some of the textbook reading for Cornelius Plantinga’s Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995). See instructor for details. Though it is not required to do so.]
Course Requirements

1. **Assigned Readings**—some of the reading material is covered in class. However, there are elements that will not be brought out in class but are still essential to gaining an understanding of the material and successfully completing the course. Therefore, the reading provides a rich and necessary component of the learning experience.

   a. **Textbook Reading**—The students will be responsible for reading the assigned sections of the course textbooks by the assigned dates stated below.

   b. **Dictionary Readings**—Students are required to read from the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Second Edition*, edited by Walter A. Elwell the following entries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orthodoxy</th>
<th>Enlightenment</th>
<th>African Theology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberalism</td>
<td>Postmodernism</td>
<td>Historical Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of God Theology</td>
<td>Process Theology</td>
<td>Dogmatics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neo-Orthodoxy</td>
<td>Liberation Theology</td>
<td>Charismatic Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamentalism</td>
<td>Feminist Theology</td>
<td>Covenant Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelicalism</td>
<td>Black Theology</td>
<td>Dispensational Theology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   c. **Reading Handouts**—students are also responsible for reading all handouts, essays, and articles reserved by the instructor.

   d. **Additional Readings**—students are to read an additional 200 pages from standard theological texts suitable for a seminary context. (If you’re not sure about appropriateness of the readings please consult the course instructor). **NOTE**: This additional reading should be done this semester and not reading from a prior semester or something you’ve read in-depth before. Some suggestions are listed on the bibliography at the end of the syllabus. Beyond those suggestions listed, the library has a number of works that can be consulted to complete this part of the course requirements.

   Students are to indicate in writing how much of the assigned reading was completed. Students are also to provide a log of the title(s) and page numbers of the additional 200 pages of theological reading from the select list. Please include the dates the assignments were completed. This is to be turned in by the last day of the semester, December 22, 2009.

2. **Scripture Meditation**—a much-neglected spiritual discipline of the Christian life is Scripture meditation. Essentially Scripture meditation involves: (1) a continuous process of remembering and musing over Scripture’s teaching, and (2) a reassessment and a reshaping of one’s life in light of that teaching. [This description of the nature of Scripture meditation comes from Dr. Bruce Ware.]

   In this course, students are encouraged to grow in the spiritual discipline by engaging their minds and hearts in consistent Scripture meditation. Students are to submit a total of **two** reflections papers over the semester to be turned in at the beginning of the designated class
session. The assignment is to read thoughtfully and prayerfully the assigned passages of Scripture once a day, two times a week, for five weeks. At the end of each five-week section, each student will write, in **two (2) pages**, his or her personal reflections on these passages, focusing especially on how his or her life has been challenged or needs to be challenged by these texts of Scripture. This exercise is not to be an exegetical paper; instead it should focus on the practical application of the text to one’s personal life and ministry.

The following passages are assigned for meditation and reflection:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>God/ Revelation</th>
<th>Scripture/ Humanity/Sin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psalm 145 (all)</td>
<td>2 Peter 1:16-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaiah 40 (all)</td>
<td>Psalm 8 (all)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psalm 19 (all)</td>
<td>Romans 3:9-31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reflection Paper (1) Due:** WEEK 5  
**Reflection Paper (2) Due:** WEEK 10

The papers are to be typed, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, one-inch margins, double-spaced, black ink, neatly formatted, stapled (no binders or folders), and free of any spelling and grammatical errors on WHITE paper. The papers will be graded on their clarity and faithfulness to the assigned topic.

3. **Reading/Lecture Quizzes**—there will be four (4) reading and/or lecture quizzes given at the beginning of select class sessions. Students need to be familiar enough with the reading and previous lecture material to answer questions regarding its content. So class attendance and diligent note taking is essential. It is the responsibility of the student to read the material carefully, to take their own notes for personal study, and if needed read the assignment more than once to adequately prepare for the quizzes. It is imperative that students are disciplined in reading the assigned portions of the textbook and handouts and pay attention in class.

4. **Final Exam**—each student enrolled in the course for credit is to take a final comprehensive examination over the material covered in the course scheduled during the final exam week. Students should prepare well in advance of the exam date by keeping up with the assigned readings, paying attention in class discussions, and reviewing any notes taken in class.

**Course Grading**

The student’s grade will be determined as follows:

- Reading Report: 10%
- Scripture Meditation Papers (2): 20%
- Reading/Lecture Quizzes (4): 40%
- Final Exam: 30%
Grading Rubric: After all the requirements of the course have been completed, the instructor will use the following rubric for the assignment of grades, based on the overall performance of the class. The grades assigned will represent the instructor’s interpretation of the following standard:

A = Outstanding mastery of the subject: excellence is evident in preparation for and attendance in class sessions; unusual ability to retain, analyze and synthesize the material; with a positive attitude making productive contributions to the learning community in the classroom.

B = Superior mastery of the subject: sincere effort in preparation for and attendance in class sessions; ability to master the essential aspects of the material; with a mostly consistent attitude in making contributions to the learning community in the classroom.

C = Basic mastery of the subject: inconsistent effort in preparation for and attendance in class sessions; engagement with the material but difficulty in grasping some of its aspects; with occasional contributions to the learning community in the classroom.

D = Inadequate mastery of the subject.

F = Failure: course must be repeated.

Warning on Plagiarism: Helpful guidelines on plagiarism can be found on the Indiana University website [http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/plagarism.html](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/plagarism.html). This document has the official recognition of the Gordon-Conwell faculty and provides very helpful tools to guide you as you prepare for your assignments. If a student is caught plagiarizing, the student will receive the consequences of this act according to the process established by the seminary.
Intellectual Property Rights: To protect the professor’s intellectual property rights with regard to classroom content, students are asked to refrain from audio and video recording of classes, as well as audio, video, and written publication (including internet posting and broadcasting) or live transmission of classroom proceedings.

Internet Usage: Students are asked to refrain from accessing the internet at any point during class sessions, unless otherwise instructed by the professor. “Surfing the web,” checking email, and other internet-based activities are distracting to other students and to the professor, and prevent the student from fully participating in the class session.

Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading/Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course/ Theological Method</td>
<td>Erickson, Chs. 1 and 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>David K. Clark, “Theology and Philosophy” (on E-reserve)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Theological Method (cont.)</td>
<td>Tennent, Ch. 1, “The Emergence of a Global Theological Discourse” and Ch. 10, “The Emerging Contours of Global Theology”;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>David K. Clark, “Theology in Cultural Context (on E-reserve)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Conclude Theological Method/The Concept and Doctrine of Revelation</td>
<td>David K. Clark, “The Spiritual Purposes of Theology” (on E-reserve)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Erickson, Chs. 8 and 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Read in Hollinger’s <em>Head, Heart, &amp; Hands</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>The Doctrine of Scripture</td>
<td>Tennent, Ch. 3, “Bibliology”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Erickson, Chs. 10-12 (cf. Erickson Ch. 12 with Clark, “Scripture and the Principle of Authority”) (on E-reserve)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Week #1</td>
<td></td>
<td>DUE: Completed Reading of Hollinger’s <em>Head, Heart, &amp; Hands</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>The Doctrine of the Trinity</td>
<td>Erickson, Ch. 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Allan Coppedge, Chs. 1 and 2 from <em>The God who is Triune</em> (on E-reserve)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DUE: Scripture Meditation Paper (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>The Attributes of God</td>
<td>Tennent, Ch. 2, “Theology”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Erickson, Chs. 13-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>The Doctrine of Creation</td>
<td>Erickson, Chs. 17-18, and 21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reading Week #2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Week 8   | The Doctrine of Divine Providence               | **Erickson**, Chs. 19-20  
**Carson**, Chs. 11-12 in *How Long O’ Lord?*  
(Calvinistic perspective on human freedom and divine providence/sovereignty);  
**Jerry Walls** and **Joseph Dongell**, Chs. 3-4 in *Why I am Not a Calvinist*  
(Arminian perspective on human freedom and divine providence/sovereignty)  
(all on E-reserve)                                                    |
| Week 9   | Theological Anthropology: The Doctrine of Humanity  | **Erickson**, Chs. 22-26;  
**Thielicke, A Little Exercise for Young Theologians** completed.  
DUE: Reading Quiz on *A Little Exercise...* |
| Week 10  | Theological Anthropology: The Doctrine of Sin     | **Tennent**, Ch. 4, “Anthropology”  
**Erickson**, Chs. 27-31;  
**M. L. King Jr.** “Letter from a Birmingham City Jail”  
(King essay on E-reserve)  
DUE: Scripture Meditation Paper (2)                                    |
| Final Exam Week | TH 501—Theology Survey I Final Exam | TBA                                                                                           |

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR ADDITIONAL READING

**Prolegomena/ Theological Method**


Concerning Theology Proper:


Concerning Theological Anthropology and Sin:


## Representative Systematic Theologies


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)*

---

1 (* = Introductory. I am endebted to Professor Peter Anders for the categorization scheme.)


