TH 504 — SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY I
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Office / Hours: GL108 / Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays 9:00–10:30; and after class.

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

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.

• Identified, evaluated, and demonstrated 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, biblically supported, and confidently articulated 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.

• 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


A Systematic Theology text of the student’s own choosing (see sample list below).

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 has proven very helpful for developing better reading skills.)

Clark, David K. To Know and Love God: Method for Theology. Foundations of Evangelical Theology. Crossway, 2003. (A contemporary, thorough treatment of all the main issues pertaining to Evangelical theological methodology.)


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. (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. 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

Required for the course are three short written assignments, a final exam, and a completed reading form.

Responses to the Required Reading

1. A 3–5 page response to a set of questions covering John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book I, Chapters 1–IX (available on CAMS). This assignment is due October 24.

2. A choice of either a 1000-word Book Review or a less formal 4–5 page Reading Response Essay on Barth, Jensen/Webster, or Kärkkäinen/Bray. Please clearly indicate on the cover page which assignment and text you chose. This assignment is due at the last class meeting.

These two written assignments 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.
NOTE: Students choosing to write the Book Review will find many good examples in the theological journals located online and in the Goddard Library.

NOTE: Students choosing to write a Reading Response Essay must be sure that it is a response to the text, rather than merely a summary or explication of the text. Students should seek to analyze the text 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)

Theological Position Essay

3. A 5 page (no more than five pages) essay that will concisely state a point of doctrine covered in this course, and develop it in conversation with a concisely stated opposing point of view. This essay should address a doctrine and issue in Prolegomena/Doctrine of Revelation, Doctrine of Holy Scripture, or Doctrine of God. This assignment is due at the last class meeting.

INSTRUCTIONS: Students are required to: 1) chose a doctrinal issue that is of particular importance to you, discuss its meaning, its biblical support, and its practical implications; 2) identify a serious objection to your position, stating how and why it is opposed to your view; and 3) clearly state your own answer to this objection and why you think your own view is correct, more biblically accurate, or more practically significant.

The theological position you take will not affect your grade, but rather, the grade will be based on the clarity, thoroughness, and seriousness of thought that went into the presentation of your position, an objection, and your answer to that objection. Students should also seek to incorporate into these essays what they have learned from the lectures, discussions, and the required reading of this course. Scripture should also be engaged exegetically where appropriate. An example of a Theological Position Essay is posted on CAMS.

GUIDELINES FOR A SUCCESSFUL ESSAY:

- Keep your topic to a single issue. If you say that you want to argue this and this, you are most likely doing too much and the paper will be longer than the strict five page limitation.

- Stick as close as you can to the assigned structure: your clearly and precisely stated position; one concisely stated objection to your position; your answer to that objection.

- Give a topic sentence at the beginning of the essay that clearly lays out your goals strictly stated in terms of this structure, then let it guide you throughout. Ex: “In this essay I will state my position on the important issue of divine (im)possibility; I will state an important objection to my position from the theology of Jürgen Moltmann; and I will then answer this objection.”

- Give a clear and concise presentation of an objection to your position — 2 or 3 paragraphs in the body of your paper and no place else (this objection can be from a particular theology/theologian, a movement, a commonly held view, a view you used to hold, etc.), then answer this objection only.
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 Book Review/Reading Response Essay and the Theological Position Essay due at the last class meeting may be submitted earlier in the term in order to leave time for grading (at least one week) and one revision/resubmission to count as the final grade for those assignments. Assignments submitted after November 19 can not be revised and resubmitted.

- 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

There 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 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. An account of your attendance and completed reading will be submitted at the last class meeting.

Optional after class “lunchtime” lecture/discussion/review sessions will be scheduled (TBA).

Grading

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

- Response to Calvin’s Institutes 15%
- Book Review/Reading Response Essay 15%
- Theological Position Essay 25%
- 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/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/
- 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.iep.utm.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 (9/10, 9/12) — Course Introduction;
  The Evangelical Theological Orientation
Erickson, Christian Theology: ch. 1; Berkoff, Introductory Volume: 1.I–III

WEEK TWO (9/17, 9/19) — Revelation and the Word of God
Erickson, Christian Theology: chs. 8–9; Berkoff, Introductory Volume: 2.III
Stott, Evangelical Truth: Complete

WEEK THREE (9/24, 9/26) — The Systematic Task and Method of Evangelical Theology
Erickson, Christian Theology: chs. 2–7; Berkoff, Introductory Volume: 1.IV–2.II

WEEK FOUR (10/1, 10/3) — Trinity
Erickson, Christian Theology: ch. 16; Berkoff, Systematic Theology: 1.VIII
Barth, Evangelical Theology: Complete
WEEK FIVE (10/8, 10/10) — *The Nature of Holy Scripture*

Erickson, *Christian Theology*: ch. 12; Berkoff, *Introductory Volume*: 2.IV

WEEK SIX (10/22, 10/24) — *The Perfections of Holy Scripture*


Response to Calvin’s *Institutes*, Book I, Chapters I–IX Due 10/24

WEEK SEVEN (10/29, 10/31) — *Sola Scriptura and the Church: Canon and Tradition*

Jensen, *The Revelation of God OR Webster, Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch*: Complete

WEEK EIGHT (11/5, 11/7) — *Knowledge of God*

Erickson, *Christian Theology*: ch. 15; Berkoff, *Systematic Theology*: 1.I–II

WEEK NINE (*11/21, *11/26) — *Attributes of God*


Last day to submit an assignment in time for revision/resubmission, 11/19

WEEK TEN (12/3, 12/5) — *Attributes of God*


Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God OR Bray, The Doctrine of God*: Complete

Book Review/Reading Response Due 12/5

Theological Position Essay Due 12/5

Completed Reading Form Due 12/5

IMPORTANT DATES:

10/15, 17 — READING WEEK

11/12, 14 — READING WEEK

11/19 — NO CLASS

11/28 — NO CLASS, HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

12/10–12 — FINAL EXAMS

12/16 — LAST DAY TO SUBMIT WRITTEN WORK
Representative Systematic Theologies

(Texts in **BOLD** are integrated into the Course Outline; * = 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)*


