

COURSE SYLLABUS

TH 501—Theology Survey I

Richard Lints, Course Instructor
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
January 2018

Thursday morning January 11- Sunday afternoon January 14

Class Times: 9AM to 12NOON, 1:30PM to 4PM

Class will finish at 2PM on Sunday January 14

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Course Description

This course is designed to give you a concise introduction to the task of theology, the nature of Triune God, the overall meaning of Scripture and a Biblical understanding of creation. It should also provide a helpful stimulus in understanding the relationship between the practice of one's faith and the belief context into which that practice fits. Course topics include: the nature of a theological vision, the inspiration and authority of Scripture, the interpretation of those Scriptures, the nature of the God whom we worship and the character of creation and humanity.

Required Course Textbooks

1. Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Baker Academic, 2014)
ISBN: 0801049563
2. Timothy C. Tennent *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. (Read Only Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4)
ISBN – 0310275113
3. Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion*. London: InterVarsity Press, 2015
4. “Mission, Vision and Core Values” document, the “Statement of Faith” document and the “Doctrine” document of the Church of God of Prophecy. These can be found at:
<http://cogop.org/mission-vision-and-core-values/>
<http://cogop.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Statement-of-Faith.pdf>
<http://cogop.org/about/doctrine/>

Learning Outcomes

The student who successfully completes this course should have the ability:

1. To understand the importance and necessity of theology for Christian life and community.
2. To effectively read, understand, learn from the Bible.
3. To appreciate afresh the art of scripture interpretation as the Scriptures are read as one book and as many books which are threaded together by God's work of redemption.
4. To have a deeper appreciation for the Triune God in preparation for ministry in the local church, parachurch ministries and in broader contemporary contexts across cultures.

Course Requirements

1. **Class Attendance/ Participation**—Students are required to attend and participate in all class sessions for the entire meeting times. This is imperative for a class of this format.
2. **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.
 - a. **Textbook Reading-** The students will be responsible for reading the assigned sections of the course textbooks.
 - b. **Confessional Reading**—students are required to read the “Mission, Vision and Core Values” document, the “Statement of Faith” document and the “Doctrine” document of the Church of God of Prophecy. These can be found at:
<http://cogop.org/mission-vision-and-core-values/>
<http://cogop.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Statement-of-Faith.pdf>
<http://cogop.org/about/doctrine/>
3. **Theology Application** – each student is to pick one major topic from the course and explain, as if to a parishioner, why the topic is important, what difference it might make in their ordinary lives, and what would be the consequence of denying it. This essay should be 2-3 pages in length (total of 750 words). (Due on March 30)
4. **Hard Question** – each student is to pick one “difficult question” from the list below which non-Christians might have about the Christian faith and explain how you might go about giving a reasonable answer to the difficult question. This essay should be 2-3 pages in length (total of 750 words). (Due on March 30)

List of Difficult Questions:

The Problem of Evil and Suffering
God Is Irrelevant to My Life
The Trinity Does Not Make Any Sense
The God of the Bible is a God of Judgement
The Bible Has Too Many Mistakes in It
Because of Modern Science, We Cannot Believe the Book of Genesis
Sin is Too Depressing to Believe

5. **Final Exam**—each student enrolled in the course for credit is to take a final examination over the material covered in the course. It will be a take home exam with Multiple Choice, Fill-in-the-blank and True/False questions. You may have your Bible open for this exam, but no other notes (or computer windows) are to be open while you take this exam. The exam will be available online on the Gordon-Conwell CAMS site, and will also be emailed to your Gordon-Conwell email address. You will need to have a Gordon-Conwell email address and registration to access the final exam. The final exam will be due on March 30.

Course Grading

The student’s grade will be determined as follows:

Participation/Attendance	10%
Theology Application Essay	30%
Difficult Question Essay	30%
Final Exam	30%

Grade	Achievement	Quality Points	
A	93-100	<i>Work of exceptional quality</i>	4.00
A-	90-92		3.70
B+	88-89		3.30
B	83-87	<i>Work of commendable quality</i>	3.00
B-	80-82		2.70
C+	78-79		2.30
C	73-77	<i>Work of acceptable but minimal quality</i>	2.00
C-	70-72		1.70
D+	68-69		1.30
D	63-67	<i>Substandard and barely passing work</i>	1.00
D-	60-62		0.70
F	59-below	<i>Failure</i>	0.00

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.

Course Schedule

THURSDAY MORNING: INTRODUCTION

- a. Introduction to Course
- b. Course Mechanics and Requirements
- c. Why Does Theology Matter
- d. Christian Faith and Christian Theology

THURSDAY AFTERNOON: THE BIBLE AND THEOLOGY

- a. The Trajectory of Theology
- b. Culture, Tradition and The Great Tradition
- c. The Bible: Redemptive-History
- b. Inspiration and Inerrancy of the Bible
- c. The Authority of Scripture

FRIDAY MORNING: THE BIBLE (CON'T) AND GOD

- a. Reading the Bible
 - 1. The Canon of Scripture
 - 2. The One Story Plotline of the Bible
 - 3. Culture and Interpretation
- a. The Triune God
 - 1. Monotheism and Worship
 - 2. The Divinity of the Son and the Spirit
 - 3. The Nature of the Trinity

FRIDAY AFTERNOON: THE NATURE OF GOD

- a. The Character of God
- b. Knowing God and Knowing about God
- c. God is a Person

SATURDAY MORNING: CREATION

- a. God and Creation
- b. The “Story” of Creation - Genesis 1-3
- c. The Theology of Creation

SATURDAY AFTERNOON: ORIGIN AND NATURE OF HUMANITY

- a. Adam and Eve
- b. Imago Dei
- c. Personhood

SUNDAY MORNING: WORSHIP

- a. The “Seventh Day” and the “Lord’s Day”
- b. Preparation for Worship
- c. Worship Service

d. Small Group Prayer

SUNDAY AFTERNOON: ORIGIN AND NATURE OF SIN

a. The Fall – Image and Idol

b. Freedom and Fallenness

c. Implications of Sin

NOTES:

1. Class will begin at 9AM each morning
2. Sunday morning – class will begin at 9:30AM with ½ hour of preparation for Worship Service
3. Worship Service – Sunday morning from 10-11:30AM
4. Class will finish by 2PM on Sunday afternoon