TH501: Theology Survey I
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
Fall 2014
September 8, 2014- December 15, 2014

Course Designer/Lecturer: Dr. Don Fairbairn

Course Instructor: Benjamin DeSpain

Contact Information: bdespain@gordonconwell.edu

Office Hours: Professor DeSpain will be available by appointment

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.

Gordon-Conwell Mission
This course satisfies the following institutional learning objectives:
To maintain academic excellence in the highest tradition of Christian scholarship in the teaching of the biblical, historical and theological disciplines. (Article 2)

Course Learning Objectives
This course, like its successor TH502, is designed to give students a basic and growing competence in the area of theology through careful consideration of the Bible's teaching on core Christian doctrines, the church's formulation of those doctrines in history, and the expression of those doctrines in the varied contexts of contemporary society. In keeping with the institutional learning objective stated above, I intend that upon completing this course, you will:

1. Survey the biblical teaching on the doctrines covered in the course.
2. Articulate terms and issues important to theological discussion.
3. Analyze various theological positions critically and develop your own positions on the doctrines studied.
4. Articulate and value the implications of the doctrines studied for your own spiritual life, Christian character, and ministries.

Lesson Topics
The 14 weekly lessons of this course are arranged into five modules, as follows:

Module A: Getting Started in Theology (4 weeks)
Lesson 1: Introduction to Theology
Lesson 2: Approaches to Theology, Part a
Lesson 3: Approaches to Theology, Part b
Lesson 4: A Key Idea for Theology

Module B: The Doctrine of Scripture (3 weeks)
Lesson 5: Scripture- Gathering and Learning
Lesson 6: Scripture- Interacting and Analyzing
Lesson 7: Scripture- Articulating and Valuing
Module C: The Doctrine of God/The Trinity (3 weeks)
Lesson 8: God/The Trinity - Gathering and Learning
Lesson 9: God/The Trinity - Interacting and Analyzing
Lesson 10: God/The Trinity - Articulating and Valuing

Module D: The Doctrines of Creation and the Fall (3 weeks)
Lesson 11: Creation/Fall - Gathering and Learning
Lesson 12: Creation/Fall - Interacting and Analyzing
Lesson 13: Creation/Fall - Articulating and Valuing

Module E: Looking Ahead to TH502 (1 week)
Lesson 14: Looking Ahead - Foundations for Christology

Required Materials


Tennent, Timothy C. *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing the Way We Think about and Discuss Theology*. Zondervan, 2007. (ISBN 978-0310275114; ASIN of e-book: B000SIYT06)

“Chicago Statement on Inerrancy” and “Fairbairn’s Statement on Scripture,” both available on Sakai

PLEASE NOTE that in all assignments, the five books above will be cited by author’s/editor’s last name (Elwell, Erickson, Fairbairn, McGrath, and Tennent).

Course Requirements

Achievement of the course objectives will be measured through a variety of activities as described below. The successful completion of these activities will require each student to spend at least 135 hours devoted to coursework, both in class and out of class. The following chart indicates approximate time commitments for the various learning activities. Descriptions of the assignments are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Assignment</th>
<th>Approximate Time Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading and viewing video lectures</td>
<td>75 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producing theological glossary</td>
<td>15 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in forums</td>
<td>15 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papers</td>
<td>30 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning Activities

Part 1: Gathering and Learning Information
The learning activities in this part all work together to help you identify and absorb the information you need to handle the theological doctrines of this course appropriately. These activities enable you to achieve course objectives 1 and 2 above.

Readings
You must complete all the reading prescribed below, including approximately half of Erickson and McGrath, all of Fairbairn and Tennent, 63 short articles on theological terms from Elwell, and two short documents available on Sakai. This reading totals the equivalent of about 1700 single-spaced pages. (McGrath is double-columned, so this total counts each page of McGrath as two pages.) The schedule for this reading is listed in the individual lessons. You will be required to submit a Reading Report at the end of the course.

Video Presentations
You must view/listen to the video presentations as listed in the individual lessons. The lectures (as opposed to module introduction videos) are accompanied by handouts, which are available in the Resources tool of Sakai.

Part 2: Interacting, Analyzing, and Developing your own Positions
The learning activities in this part combine to help you analyze theological positions on each of the doctrines and to articulate your own position. These activities help you to achieve course objective 3 above.

Theological Terms
In lessons 2, 3, 6, 9, and 12, you must read the short articles in Elwell on the theological terms for that lesson. You must write summaries or definitions (one or two sentences) for each term so as to make a personal glossary of theological terms. Compose your glossary in a Word file, and submit it at the end of the course.

Discussion/Interaction
As you read, view/listen, and learn, you must interact with the other students through three distinct discussion forums.

1. The first is the Key Idea Discussion Forum (in lessons 2 and 3 only), in which you work together to reflect on the various approaches to theology and their key ideas, and to begin crafting and refining your own key idea for theology.

2. The second is a Theological Discussion Forum (in lessons 6, 9, and 12 only), in which you work together to discuss which issues and questions related to each doctrine are worthy of consideration, what the various views on these issues are, and what questions you have about these issues/views.

3. The third is a Biblical Discussion Forum (in lessons 6, 9, and 12 only), in which you work together to discuss biblical passages relevant to the doctrine covered in each module. You may use this forum to contribute lists of important passages, to discuss how to interpret certain key passages, and/or to defend particular views of controversial passages.
Your participation in these forums will be graded on the basis of criteria described in the Discussion Forum Rubric available later in this document.

**Part 3: Articulating and Valuing the Implications of the Doctrines**

The learning activities in this part will help you integrate the doctrines you are studying with your own spiritual life and your ministry. These activities will thus help you to achieve course objective 4 above.

**Key Idea Statements**

In lesson 4, you must write a 1-page explanation of your tentative key idea for theology, explaining how it successfully relates various Christian doctrines to one another. Upon receiving feedback from me, you must revise this explanation into a **Key Idea Statement Paper**, written according to the Key Idea Statement Rubric available later in this document.

**Integrative Doctrinal Papers**

In lessons 7, 10, and 13, you must write an integrative doctrinal paper, for a total of three papers of 8-10 pages each, in each of which you do the following:

- Present an appropriate organizational scheme for the issues covered under the broad doctrine that is the subject of that module.
- For each issue/doctrine, interact with the following:
  - Relevant biblical teaching
  - Important statements from the history of the Church (early creeds, Reformation confessions, denominational doctrinal statements, or other historical materials described in the reading for the module)
  - Contemporary issues described in the reading for the module
- For each issue/doctrine, state your own belief clearly.
- Relate your belief on the doctrine as a whole to your key idea for theology.
- Explain how your belief on the doctrine as a whole affects your own ministry.

These papers must follow the Integrative Doctrinal Paper Rubric available later in this document.

**Grading Policy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Maximum Points Possible Per Assignment</th>
<th>Total Points Possible</th>
<th>% of Total Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course Introduction Forum</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Forums (8)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Glossary</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Idea Statement Paper</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrative Doctrinal Papers (3)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Report</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>500</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grading Scale
The number of points available for the course is 500, and then the total will be divided by 5. Final letter grades will then be applied with cutoffs as follows: A 95, A- 90, B+ 87, B 83, B- 80, C+ 77, C 73, C- 70, D+ 67, D 63, D- 60, F below 60. A grade of A+ will be given very rarely, when the student’s work is truly exceptional. (At Gordon-Conwell, a grade of A+ and a grade of A are both counted the same way in calculating the student’s GPA. Thus, a GPA above 4.0 is not possible.)

Instructor Feedback
I will attempt to respond to questions or messages within 24-48 hours, excluding Sundays. I will also do my best to provide feedback on assignments and post grades on Sakai within one week of submission.

Document Formatting and Submission
Assignments must be submitted electronically by posting on the Sakai site. Hard-copies will not be accepted. The key idea paper and the integrative doctrinal papers should be submitted as attached files in either MS-Word or PDF format. (If you use a different word processor than MS-Word, please convert the files to PDF before submitting them.) Assignments should be double spaced with 1” margins on all sides of each page, and should be printed in Times New Roman 12 point type or another font of similar size and appearance. Citations should preferably follow Turabian style, although APA style is also acceptable.

Late Work
All late work will be penalized the equivalent of one letter grade per week beyond the due date, unless arrangements are made ahead of time. Extenuating circumstances will be considered as appropriate. Work turned in later than Wednesday, May 14, will normally require that an extension be approved by the Seminary. If you anticipate a problem, contact me as soon as possible.

Netiquette
Gordon-Conwell does not tolerate disruptive or disrespectful behavior in the online communications in any course. Students should review the netiquette policy in the Student Handbook and this website: http://www.albion.com/netiquette.

Additional Seminary Policies
Academic Standards
Cheating and plagiarism are considered serious breaches of personal and academic integrity. Cheating involves, but is not necessarily limited to, the use of unauthorized sources of information during an examination or the submission of the same (or substantially same) work for credit in two or more courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructors. Plagiarism involves the use of another person’s distinctive ideas or words, whether published or unpublished, and representing them as one’s own instead of giving proper credit to the source. Plagiarism can also involve over dependence on other source material for the scope and substance of one’s writing. Such breaches in academic standards often result in a failing grade as well as other corrective measures. For more information, please consult the Student Handbook.
ADA Policy
The seminary complies with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. A student with a qualifying and authenticated disability who is in need of accommodations, should petition the seminary in accordance with the stated guidelines in the Student Handbook.

Extension Policy
Arrangements for submission of late work at a date on or before the “last day to submit written work”, as noted on the seminary’s Academic Calendar, are made between the student and professor. Formal petition to the Registration Office is not required at this time. This includes arrangements for the rescheduling of final exams.

However, course work (reading and written) to be submitted after the publicized calendar due date, must be approved by the Registration Office. An extension form, available online, must be submitted to the Registration Office prior to the “last day to submit written work.” Requests received after this date will either be denied or incur additional penalty. For a full discussion of this policy, please consult the Student Handbook.

Grades
Grades are posted on line within twenty-four hours of receipt from the professor. Students are expected to check their CAMS student portal in order to access posted grades. Those individuals who need an official grade report issued to a third party, should put their request in writing to the Registration Office. Faculty have six weeks from the course work due date to submit a final grade.

Contacting the Semlink Office
email: semlink@gordonconwell.edu
phone: 978-646-4144 (office hours only)
Office hours: 9:00 am - 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday.