Syllabus: TH504

TH504: Systematic Theology I with Dr. Jack Davis

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Snapshot of Course Requirements
TH504 requires timely completion of the following **five** course requirements:

1. Reading and Reading Project - 25% of your grade
2. Examinations - 50% of your grade
3. Theology Practicum - 25% of your grade
4. Interactivity (required for course grade to be submitted to registration office)
5. Course Checkout/Reading Report (after you have finished all course requirements above)

Course Description

“Systematic Theology I: God's Unchanging Word in an Ever-Changing World” has been designed to benefit you in three specific ways: to provide you with firm doctrinal foundations for your Christian life and ministry; to help you prepare a coherent biblical framework for the reading, teaching, and application of scripture; and to help you have a greater sense of freedom and assurance in responding to questions about the Christian faith.

This course is the first of three semesters of study in evangelical theology. We begin with a consideration of relating the gospel to a specific culture and then turn to the Bible. The roles played by tradition and personal religious experience are explored as important aspects of the larger issue of authority in the Christian life and ministry. The course then proceeds to study the doctrine of the Trinity and God’s attributes and concludes with a comprehensive consideration of election and predestination. This course also serves as a general introduction to other courses in systematic theology.

Course Requirements

**Please Note:** In the case of discrepancies between the course requirements mentioned in the audio material and the requirements given in this syllabus, the syllabus takes precedence. It is highly recommended that you do not turn in all of your written work at one time. Doing so will not allow you to benefit from the feedback of the instructor.

**I. Reading**

- **Required Textbooks:**
  Each student will be required to report what percentage of the required textbooks he/she has read (see the description of the reading project report below). Specific reading assignments are included in the workbook.

  ○ Davis, John Jefferson. *Foundations of Evangelical Theology* (Reprinted in a packet available exclusively from the
Recommended Textbook:
“A Brief Glossary of Theological Terms,” reprinted from Theology Primer by John Jefferson Davis (out of print and available only through the Gordon-Conwell BookCentre)

Optional Videos:
Several optional videos are recommended to view for this course. Most of these correspond to the lecture topics and can be viewed as an optional assignment. These will greatly enrich and broaden understanding of the topic discussed.

Reading Project
The objective of the reading project is to give the student an opportunity to explore one theological issue in some depth and to develop skills for doing theological analysis and research. The reading project is in addition to the required textbooks. A minimum of 500 additional pages should be read for the reading project. The reading project should be typewritten. See the document here for further information and guidance for your reading project (this document is also available under Resources).

Sample Topics:

- Contextualization and World Missions
- Contextualization of the Gospel in an Islamic Context
- Contextualization and Contemporary Culture: Rock Music
- Biblical Criticism and Inerrancy
- “Limited” Inerrancy
- Canonicity of the Old Testament
- Canonicity of the New Testament
- Dispensational Hermeneutics
- Old Testament Prophecy and the Modern State of Israel
- General Revelation and Law in a Pluralistic Society
- Are There Apostles Today?
- New Revelation Claims and the Cults
- What About Those Who Die Never Having Heard the Gospel?
- Biblical vs. Eastern Concepts of God
- Pastoral Implications of the Attributes of God
- Does Prayer Change Things?
- Is the Doctrine of the Trinity Scriptural?
- Creation and Evolution
- Providence and the Problem of Evil

These topics are only suggestions. Other topics relevant to the course may be selected with the instructor’s advice and approval. The reading project report is due by the course due date.

1. a cover sheet on which you, in one paragraph of 50-150 words, state the issue or question investigated, the major sources read, and the conclusion(s) reached;
2. a listing of works read with pages and cumulative total;
3. sheets in which you interact briefly with each of your sources. The interaction sheets should include the author and title of the work cited, a quote from the work that seemed especially significant to you, and your interaction/comments. Sources consulted should include both books and scholarly journals (where available).
4. required reading report listing the percentage read of each of the required textbooks listed above. You may complete the required reading report on the Course Checkout Form (see Modules, left menu).

II. Examinations
Two examinations will be given during the course which will involve responding in short essay form to four out of six of the workbook “Focus” questions and in long essay form to two out of three study guide “Develop” exercises in the covered lessons (unmarked, non-study Bible allowed, no notes or books). The final exam will also include a scripture memory section (closed Bible).

- Midterm: Covers lectures and readings from Lecture 1 through Lecture 6.
- Final: Covers lectures and readings from Lecture 7 through Lecture 12. This will include a scripture memory section covering the eight metaphysical attributes of God on pp. 23-28 in the Handbook of Basic Bible Texts. You will need to list, define, and give a supporting memory verse for the attributes.

There are two ways you may take an exam for this course:
1. **Electronically** (preferred format): To take an exam electronically, click "Tests & Quizzes" on the left menu (under Project Tools).
   - Select the exam you plan to take. You must provide proctor information (including your proctor's email address) to the Semlink office prior to taking your exam. You cannot login to and/or take an exam without a proctor present.
   - Before taking your exam, your proctor will review important information with you and will then log you into the exam when you are ready to begin. Your proctor must remain present throughout the duration of the exam. You may use your own computer (e.g. a laptop) or a computer provided by your proctor.
   - Ensure you have a reliable internet connection.
   - This format allows you to type your essay responses directly into Sakai.

2. **Paper-based Exam**: To take your exam by paper, click "Tests & Quizzes" on the left menu (under Project Tools). Select the exam you plan to take (it will include "paper exam" in the title).
   - The exam will be available in PDF format. You will need to provide proctor information in order to access your exam (including your proctor's email address).
   - Your proctor will need to print your exam, and preferably have access to a scanner to submit your exam.
   - When you have completed your exam, your proctor may either 1) scan and upload your exam to Sakai, 2) email a scanned copy to the Semlink office; 3) mail to the address provided.
   - This format requires you handwrite your responses on notebook or blank white paper.

If you plan to take an exam in one of the **GCTS libraries**, you do not need to request your exam through the Semlink office. You may take the exam any time provided the library is open and able to accommodate your request. Library computers can be used to take the exam, but are limited and not always available at all times of day. Use of your own laptop computer is highly recommended. Check with the library also for special summer and holiday hours, or other changes to their schedule that may affect your ability to take your exam.

Boston/CUME, Charlotte, and Jacksonville students may need to contact the library to set up a time to take an exam.

### III. Theology Practicum

The theology practicum consists of three separate assignments: two teaching projects and one prayer and scripture memory project. The three theology practicum assignments should be done consistently throughout the course but will be submitted to the professor together as one unit. All practicum reports should be typewritten. The theology practicum is due by the course due date.

- **Teaching Projects**: These projects are designed to challenge you to apply your work in this course to a practical area of ministry by creating and teaching a lesson on an assigned topic of theology. Using the “Teaching Project Report Forms”, describe your preparation before teaching your lesson, the outline of your lesson content, the occasion on which you presented your lesson, and your evaluation of the response to your lesson.

   See a sample teaching report here.
   
   Teaching Project Report Form 1 (PDF)
   Teaching Project Report Form 2 (PDF)

- **Prayer and Scripture Memory Project**: Designed to enhance your devotional times as you study systematic theology, this project on prayer and the attributes of God will guide you in your study of various attributes of God, encourage you in prayer, and challenge you to memorize key passages concerning God’s attributes. Using the “Prayer and the Attributes of God Report Form” (PDF), you will keep a log of your reflections. See the report form for specific directions.

### Submitting Assignments

Assignments can be submitted electronically through the Drop Box tool in Sakai. On the left menu, under "Project Tools," select "Drop Box." To add a file, click "Add" and upload from there.

Some guidelines for this process:

- Paper submissions should be in either .doc, .docx or .pdf format.
- Submitting your work through drop box is considered a formal (and final) submission. Nothing further will be needed on your part.
- All submissions are time/date stamped and will be retrieved by the Semlink office and routed to your professor for grading.
- Assignments may be returned to you electronically, in most cases through your Sakai drop box or via email. If your assignment was graded by hand, it will be scanned and delivered to you as a PDF file.
- Remember to use a full heading, including your name, professor, course, and date.

Please let the Semlink office know if you have any further questions about electronic submission. semlink@gordonconwell.edu or 978-646-4144.
Interactivity

As a member of the Association of Theological Schools, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary recognizes the value of interactivity in distance learning and complies with the standards for accreditation set by ATS which include interactivity as a compulsory component of any distance learning program that wishes to continue granting credit for its courses. The purpose of Semlink interactivity is to enhance learning by providing an online environment for students to engage meaningfully and substantively with professors, teaching fellows, and other students in order to achieve an enriching and academically challenging distance learning experience.

There are two interactivity requirements for this course:

1. **An online discussion forum:** converse with other students and with instructors on the Semlink forum. You are required to participate four (4) times in the discussions relating to your area of study. To ensure successful completion of this requirement, please complete your participation in the discussion forums at least one week prior to your course due date. This will allow sufficient time for you to resubmit any responses if necessary.

2. **Email-based conversation** with your Semlink teaching fellow. You are required to email a total of three (3) times, including your original response to the conversation starter. Please allow a minimum of one month to complete this conversation to allow time for the teaching fellow to respond. Allow five business days for a response to each of your submissions.

To begin your interactivity (and for more details about this requirement), see the Interactivity section under Modules. This section will explain in more detail what is expected for this requirement.

**If you fail to complete the interactivity requirements, you will fail your course.**

Grading

Your final grade for the course will be computed on the following basis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Examination</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Project</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theology Practicum</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Completion Required</td>
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Course Outline

This suggested program of study is designed to help you work consistently through the course material for “Systematic Theology I, God’s Unchanging Word in an Ever-Changing World.” Establish your own “due dates” for lessons and assignments using this program as a guideline to supplement your own method of study; you should complete all of the requirements for this course within the designated semester. The total number of hours needed to complete the course should be 100-120.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Learning Objectives</th>
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| Lecture 1: Nature and Method of Systematic Theology | - State three basic benefits of studying systematic theology.  
- Clearly define the term “systematic theology.” |
| Lecture Practicum: Prayer Project, complete “Independence.”  
Lecture Practicum: Prayer Project, complete “Spirituality.” | |
| Lecture 2: Theology and Contextualization | - Explain the term “contextualization.”  
- Discuss the biblical basis for the concept of contextualization and the need for such a method in light of contemporary realities.  
- List seven basic principles for contextualization, and give examples of each. |
| Lecture Practicum: Prayer Project, complete “Immutability.”  
Lecture Practicum: Prayer Project, complete “Eternity.”  
Reading Project: Topic chosen and approved if necessary. | |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecture 3: Revelation and Inspiration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theology Practicum: Prayer Project, complete “Simplicity.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theology Practicum: Prayer Project, complete “Omnipresence.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Project: Complete 50 pages of reading (100 total).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Distinguish and define the terms “revelation,” “inspiration,” and “illumination” with reference to specific biblical texts.
- State two important consequences of an evangelical view of inspiration and truth.
- Explain the four theories of the nature of inspiration, including the evangelical view.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Lecture 4: Inspiration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theology Practicum: Prayer Project, complete “Omnipotence.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theology Practicum: Prayer Project, complete “Omniscience.”</td>
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- Discuss, with extensive references to biblical texts, the basis for the evangelical view of the divine inspiration of scripture.
- Reply to the four common objections to the evangelical view of inspiration.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Lecture 5: Inerrancy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Project: Complete 125 pages of reading (225 total).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theology Practicum: Prayer Project, complete “Holiness.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Project 1 completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request that the midterm exam login be sent to your proctor, and/or arrange for the exam to be taken on campus.</td>
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</table>

- Define and discuss the term “inerrancy;” distinguish the terms “limited inerrancy” and “comprehensive inerrancy.”
- Reply to three common objections to the concept of inerrancy.
- Discuss, with extensive reference to specific biblical texts, two basic types of arguments that support the concept of inerrancy.

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<tr>
<th>Lecture 6: The Canon of Scripture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Project: Complete 125 pages of reading (350 total).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theology Practicum: Prayer Project, complete “Love.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare for and take midterm exam.</td>
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- State and explain, with reference to specific New Testament texts, four propositions on the formation of the Old Testament canon.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Lecture 7: Hermeneutics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Project: Complete 50 pages of reading (400 total).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theology Practicum: Prayer Project, complete “Wisdom.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theology Practicum: Prayer Project, complete “Grace/Mercy.”</td>
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- Define the term “hermeneutics,” and explain the difference between “exegesis” and “hermeneutics.”
- State and discuss three basic assumptions of evangelical hermeneutics.
- List and explain eight basic principles of evangelical hermeneutics, and illustrate these principles with reference to specific biblical texts.
- Define the term “dispensationalism,” and discuss two basic features of dispensational interpretation.
- Compare and contrast “covenant theology” with dispensational interpretation, and explain four implications of covenant theology for biblical interpretation and a Christian understanding of the modern state of Israel.

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<th>Lecture 8: General Revelation and Religious Experience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theology Practicum: Prayer Project, complete “Goodness.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theology Practicum: Prayer Project, complete “Patience.”</td>
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- Define the term “general revelation” and distinguish it from “special revelation.”
- Demonstrate the basis in the Old and New Testament for this concept.
- Discuss the strengths and limitations of this concept for understanding the content and claims of non-Christian religions.
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<tr>
<th>Lecture 9: Gifts of the Spirit and Religious Experience (cont.)</th>
<th>Lecture 10: Tradition and The Doctrine of the Trinity</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Reading Project: Complete 50 pages of reading (450 total).</td>
<td>- Reading Project: Complete 50 pages of reading (500 total).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Theology Practicum: Prayer Project, complete “Righteousness.”</td>
<td>- Theology Practicum: Prayer Project, complete “Truthfulness.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teaching Project 2 completed</td>
<td>- Theology Practicum: Prayer Project, complete “Faithfulness.”</td>
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- Clearly define the term “religious experience.”
- Discuss current issues in the church in light of similar issues of religious experience in church history.
- Use the criteria of Jonathan Edwards to evaluate claims for new revelation in contemporary religious movements.

- Discuss some of the key differences in the Roman Catholic and Protestant understandings of tradition in relation to biblical authority.
- Comment on the historical influences that shaped the Roman Catholic concept of tradition.
- What are some distinctive teachings of the Roman Catholic church ascribed to tradition, and how would you evaluate these from an evangelical perspective?
- Discuss the biblical basis for the doctrine of the Trinity.
- State the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in three simple statements.
- Explain various models and analogies of the Trinity.
- Discuss the implications of this doctrine for other aspects of biblical truth.

- Define and distinguish the terms “communicable” and “incommunicable” attributes.
- List, with at least one relevant biblical reference, give a brief definition of, and discuss the practical implications of fifteen divine attributes.

- Distinguish and define the terms “providence,” “predestination,” and “election.”
- Discuss the points in common and the points of difference between the Arminian and Calvinistic positions.
- Discuss the key biblical texts cited in support of the two positions, and defend your own position.