

Basic Christian Theology

TH 250 at Lewis House

Fall 2023

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Lewis House
507 Columbia Ave.
T/Th 3:00 - 5:00 PM
September 5th - November 21

[SYLLABUS IS TENTATIVE; SUBJECT TO CHANGE]

Course Description

This course provides foundational knowledge of Christian thought, focusing on theology and its relation to the Christian life. It studies the basic doctrines and practices of historic Christianity, such as the being, attributes, and workings of the Triune God; the nature, fallenness, and redemption of human beings; the character and mission of the church; the disciplines and duties of personal faith; and the nature of Christian hope. Attention is given to major formative events and key persons in the history of the church that have helped to shape what Christians believe and how they live.

Course Style & Format

This course will make minimal use of technology. Phones and computers (and so electronic books) are not allowed in class. Classes will include lectures and discussions. The readings—especially readings from primary sources—will direct the discussion, but will not exhaust it.

Intended Outcomes

At the completion of this course, you should be able...

1. ...to identify the core beliefs of orthodox Christianity.
2. ...to define and outline basic Christian doctrines.
3. ...to relate theology to Christian living.
4. ...to see a wider historical and geographical context of Christian belief and practice.
5. ...to weave Christian thinking into Christian living for the rest of your life.

Books

- Bible (if *not* ESV, KJV, NASB, NET, NIV, NLT, or NRSV, clear translation with prof.)
- Ben C. Blackwell and R.L. Hatchett, *Engaging Theology: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019)
- Alister McGrath, *The Christian Theology Reader* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2017)

Course Activities

Reading and Participation | The core of the class is the reading. The textbook will cover a broad range of themes to set the context, but special emphasis will be placed on primary readings in the Christian theological tradition. The student should prioritize slow, careful readings of primary texts. For primary texts, expect to work through only a few pages at a time (between 2-10), but in great detail. Reading assigned texts and discussing them well will almost certainly result in a good grade. 10% of final grade.

Quizzes | Ten quizzes will be administered throughout the course. These encourage accountability and encouragement for the readings. The three lowest scores of the ten will be dropped. An average will be taken of the remaining seven. The questions will be very basic and straightforward. If you read, you will do well. 20% of final grade.

Christian Living Short Essays | Three papers on theology and the Christian life will test your ability to integrate Christian thinking with Christian living. The goal of these papers is *not* to demonstrate how smart you are or present a polished, academic paper. Rather, the goal is to show how you can “translate” Christian doctrine and theology into normal, accessible language and communicate the relevance of doctrines to people without theological training. In each paper, I present a scenario (e.g., typing an email to a friend) and you respond as part of that scenario. 10% of final grade.

Theological Reflection Papers | Two papers test your ability to reflect theologically. The first paper is a theological reflection on Christian practice. You will attend one of the following churches in the Lexington area that you have never been to and is most foreign to your own tradition: Southland Christian Church, Tates Creek Presbyterian, Apostle’s Anglican, Christ the King, or Saint Athanasius Eastern Orthodox Church. Then, you will write a theological reflection on the worship of that church. The second paper is a theological reflection on pop culture. You can watch one of the following TV Shows or Movies and reflect on it: *The Good Place* (4 Seasons), *Little Flowers of Saint Francis of Assisi* (1950), *Babette’s Feast* (1987), *The Tree of Life* (2011), *Calvary* (2014), or *Silence* (2016). More details provided in the prompt. The goal is to show how well you can think theologically. 30% of final grade.

Christian Thought Paper | The final paper is on a key theme or issue in theology. You will select a contested theological theme that interests you and write about it. You should demonstrate a knowledge of all “sides” of the debate and weigh in on the debate yourself. This is an academic paper, so it should follow an academic style and show an ability to use sources well and cite them. 30% of final grade.

Class Schedule

Schedule is subject to change. Reading Abbreviations:

- Blackwell and Hatchett’s *Engaging Christian Theology* (ECT)
- McGrath’s *The Christian Theology Reader* (CT)
- Supplied Reading (PDF)
- Supplied Extra, Audio/Visual Resource (AV)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Assignments</i>
Week 1 9/5 & 9/7	Syllabus and Introduction; Prolegomena	Introduction (ECT 15-29); Nicene and Apostle's Creeds (CT 9-12); Clement of Alexandria & Tertullian on Theology & Philosophy (CT 4-7); Karl Barth on Nature and Task of Theology (CT 45-47); Sarah Coakley, <i>Why Study Theology?</i> (AV)	
Week 2 9/12 & 9/17	What is theology? Theological Method	Theological Method (ECT 30-51); Thomas Aquinas on the Principle of Analogy (CT 19-22); Martin Luther on the Theology of the Cross (CT 25-26); Karl Barth on Revelation as God's Self-Disclosure (CT 146-148); T. F. Torrance on Barth's Criticism of Natural Theology (168-171)	Short Essay #1 Due
Week 3 9/19 & 9/21	Who is Jesus? <i>Logos</i>	John 1:1-14 Craig Keener <i>Commentary on the Logos</i> (PDF 338-363); N. T. Wright on History and Christology (CT 336-339); Gregory Palamas on Divine Condescension (CT 291)	
Week 4 9/26 & 9/28	Who is Jesus? Incarnation	Colossians 1:15-20; Philippians 2:5-11; Jesus the Christ (ECT 121-144); Origen, Arius, and Athanasius	

		on Jesus Christ (CT 264-270); Gregory of Nazianzus on Apollonarianism (CT 269-270); Jesus as God: A Philosophical Inquiry (AV)	
Week 5 10/3 & 10/5	Who is God? Father	Hosea 11, John 17; Gregory of Nazianzus on Gradual Revelation of Trinity (CT 192-193); Julian of Norwich on God as our Mother (CT 216-217) Beau Branson on Monarchy of the Father (AV)	Short Essay #2 Due
Week 6 10/10 & 10/12	Who is God? Spirit	Isaiah 11:1-3, Romans 8, Galatians 5:13-26; Holy Spirit (ECT 145-165); Basil of Caesarea on the Holy Spirit (CT 190-192); Cyril of Alexandria on the Spirit (CT 205-206);	
Week 7 10/17 & 10/19	Who is God? Trinity	Matthew 3:13-17; Trinity (ECT 52-76); Gregory of Nyssa on Human Analogies (CT 187-190) Richard of St Victor on Love within the Trinity (CT 211-212); Augustine on the Trinity (CT 194-199); The Trinity: A Philosophical Inquiry (AV)	Reflection Paper #1 Due
Week 8 10/26	What is God doing? God, Revelation, and the World	John 3:16-21; God and the World (ECT 100-120); Augustine on the Relation between God and Evil (CT 200-204);	No class on 10/24 (fall break)

		<p>Gerard Manley Hopkins on God's Grandeur in Nature (PDF)</p> <p>Aquinas Institute, <i>Creation isn't what you think it is</i> (AV);</p> <p>Can the Arts Reveal God's Traits? (AV)</p>	
<p>Week 9 10/31 & 11/2</p>	<p>What is God doing? Salvation</p>	<p>Romans 5:12-21; Salvation (ECT 189-216); Anselm of Canterbury on the Atonement (CT 356-358); John Donne, George Herbert, and Charles Wesley on Salvation (CT 368-371); Atonement: A Philosophical Inquiry (AV)</p>	
<p>Week 10 11/7 & 11/9</p>	<p>What is God doing? Sacraments</p>	<p>1 Corinthians 11:17-34; Augustine on the Sacraments (552-554); Thomas Aquinas on Transubstantiation (CT 562-564); Huldrych Zwingli on the Nature of Sacraments (CT 576-578); John Wesley on the Eucharist and Salvation (CT 584-586); Alexander Schmemmann and Rowan Williams on the Eucharist (CT 597-601)</p>	<p>Short Essay #3 Due</p>
<p>Week 11 11/14 & 11/16</p>	<p>Who are we? Flourishing and Failure</p>	<p>Genesis 1 - 3; Humanity and Sin (ECT 166-188); Augustine on Fallen Human Nature (CT 416); Thomas Aquinas on Grace (CT 431-432); Mechtild of Magdeburg on</p>	<p>Reflection Paper #2 Due</p>

		Humanity's Longing for God (CT 433) A Biblical Theology for Human Flourishing (PDF)	
Week 12 11/21 & 11/23	Who are we? The Church	Acts 1-2; The Church (ECT 217-242); Irenaeus on the Function of the Church (CT 490); Richard Hooker on the Purity of the Church (CT 511-512)	
Week 13 11/21	Where are we going? Eschatology	1 Corinthians 15; Eschatology (ECT 243-269); John Donne on the Resurrection (CT 659); Tom Wright, Imaging Eternal Life (AV)	*Final Paper due 12/8

Extra Credit Opportunity

Book Review. Read one of the books listed below and write a 750-word book review of it. The assignment will be given an A, B, C, or P (Participation). The extra credit corresponds with the amount of extra credit received. An A review adds 10 points **to final grade**; a B adds 8 points; a C adds 6 points; and a P adds 4 points.

This book list for the review extra credit opportunity doubles as recommended reading:

- Anselm's *Monologion* or *Proslogion*
- Athanasius' *On the Incarnation*
- Augustine's *The Confessions*, *On the Trinity*, or *Enchiridion*
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship* or *Life Together*
- Eleonore Stump's *The God of the Bible and the God of the Philosophers*
- Gregory of Nyssa's *Catechetical Discourse* or *On the Soul and the Resurrection*
- Irenaeus' *On the Apostolic Preaching*
- John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (work with prof. for selections)
- John Chrysostom's *On Wealth and Poverty*
- John of Damascus' *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*

- Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*
- Karl Barth's *The Epistle to the Romans* or *Dogmatics in Outline*
- Martin Luther's *Galatians* or *Bondage of the Will*
- Maximus the Confessor's *On the Ecclesiastical Mystagogy*
- Nonna Verna Harrison's *God's Many-Splendored Image*
- N. T. Wright's *Surprised by Hope*
- Peter Vermigli's *Dialogue on the Two Natures of Christ*
- Richard Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Laws* (any of four books)
- T. F. Torrance's *The Mediation of Christ*
- Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* (work with prof. for selections)
- Any book from Crossway's "Theologians on the Christian Life" series
- If you want to review a book not on this list, ask the professor.

Class Policies

- **No Technology in class** - If you need an exception, please talk to the professor. Otherwise, we expect that phones will be stored away on silent and you'll take notes on good, old fashioned paper.
- **Attendance** - There is no attendance policy, but note that poor attendance will adversely affect your Participation and Quiz grade (or around 30% of your final grade).
- **Late Penalties** - Late assignments will be deducted 2 points per day. Exceptions to this are considered if you contact the professor prior to the due date and explain why the assignment will be late.
- **Submissions** - All assignments not completed in class will be submitted to the instructor via email in PDF format.
- **Format** - Format and bibliography should follow [The Chicago Manual of Style](#).