

ASSOCIATED CANADIAN THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS OF TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY

Graduate Course Syllabus

Course Number: THS 571 OL

Course Name: Theology I

Semester and Year: FA23

Instructor: Brian Cooper, PhD

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Course Instruction: Oct 23 – Dec 16, 2023

Course Description

This course lays a foundation for theological study and reflection in all ACTS graduate degree programs. We will begin with a discussion of the nature and importance of theology and a review of key tools and methodological principles for the Christian thinker. We will also reflect on the particular dynamics of doing theology in the Evangelical and Believers' Church tradition. As an illustration of good theological reflection in action, we will explore the doctrines of Revelation, Scripture, and Church, which are basic to our work. And we will provide a practical orientation to the expectations and opportunities for theological study in the ACTS curriculum.

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, a student should be able to:

- 1) describe the **nature of theology, its role and importance** in the life of the individual Christian and of the church as a whole;
- 2) discuss the general **structure and function of theology as an academic discipline**, demonstrating an understanding of the relationship between various areas of theological study and their significance in the ACTS curriculum;
- 3) explain the key features that mark the **theological perspective of the Believer's Church Tradition**, showing an appreciation for its relationship to other theological traditions within historic Christianity and recognizing the significance of such concepts in their own ministry setting;
- 4) articulate the **historic Christian doctrines of Revelation and Scripture**, together with their biblical basis, contrasting these with other non-Evangelical perspectives;

- 5) discuss important **theological issues which arise in relation to these doctrines**, together with significant historical perspectives on those issues and key biblical concepts which apply to them;
- 6) apply basic **methodological principles, techniques, and tools for effective theological reflection and ministry application** in an Evangelical, Believer's Church Christian framework;
- 7) formulate concrete **plans for appropriate personal theological development** through the course of the student's program;
- 8) **integrate personal theological development with practical aspects of personal Christian life and ministry.**

Required Texts and Materials

Required texts (i.e.: you will need to read these for the course)

Donald Bloesch, *Holy Scripture*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2000.

W. David Buschart, *Exploring Protestant Traditions: An Invitation to Theological Hospitality*. Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2006.

Brad Harper and Paul Louis Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology: An Evangelical and Ecumenical Introduction*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2009.

Howard W. Stone and James O. Duke, *How to Think Theologically*. 3rd Edition: Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013.

Recommended (i.e.: these are appropriate for course reading but not required; they would be good additions to your library)

Michael Bird, *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.

Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *Who Needs Theology?* Downers Grove: IVP, 1996.

Course Instructional Content

You are required to watch, listen to, and/or read the course instructional content and interact about the content in the online forums. The full instructional script along with links to the videos and audio podcasts will be posted in the Moodle online classroom.

Course Assignments

Assignments are due by midnight (your time) on the day they are due. I would ask that you submit your assignments in the online Moodle classroom. When you go to there, you will see assignment folders where you can submit assignments. Once I have marked your assignment, I send you an email with your grade. You can also review the comments I made on the assignment (you will receive an automatic notification whenever I make comments on assignments). Please note that I may deduct 5% of an assignment's total possible value for each day that it is late. I will consider extensions in exceptional circumstances. For the

rare occasions when I allow a student to rewrite an assignment, I reserve the right to deduct from the assignment’s value before assigning a grade to the rewritten assignment.

Here is an overview of all the assignments followed by a detailed description of them:

Week	Due Date	Assignments	% Final Grade	Cumulative %
	October 23	Pre-reading Due		
1	October 23-28	Forum Week #1	5%	5%
2	Oct 30-Nov 4	Forum Week #2	5%	10%
3	November 6-11	Forum Week #3	5%	15%
4	November 13	Essay #1	30%	45%
5	November 13-18	Forum Week #4	5%	50%
6	November 20-25	Forum Week #5	5%	55%
7	Nov 27-Dec 2	Forum Week #6	5%	60%
8	December 16	Essay #2	40%	100%
8	December 16	Course Evaluation	0%	100%

Course Pre-Reading Requirement

Due to the condensed nature of this course, please have the following read before the course begins on October 23, 2023:

Donald Bloesch, *Holy Scripture*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2000.

W. David Buschart, *Exploring Protestant Traditions: An Invitation to Theological Hospitality*. Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2006.

Brad Harper and Paul Louis Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology: An Evangelical and Ecumenical Introduction*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2009.

You will be expected to integrate ideas from textbook readings into the forum discussions and other assignments.

Online Forum Participation (20% of the final grade, 5% each)

This course has four online forum weeks where you will have an opportunity to interact with others in the class around key questions, assignments and/or additional lecture material. These discussions are designed to foster creative discussion and growth in theological understanding and acumen. You should plan to invest approximately four hours into each forum week. Each forum is worth 5% of your final grade.

Students are expected to contribute to the forum discussions by posting a minimum of three conversational and two substantive contributions per forum week. Please make sure that you spread out your contributions over at least three days during the designated forum weeks so that you engage in the forum conversations at different points.

By conversational contributions, I mean simply joining the flow of discussion with shorter responses (e.g. questions, affirmations, quick thoughts about what someone has said).

By substantive responses, I mean responses that show a deep processing of relevant ideas (this usually takes 200-300 words). We have a tremendous opportunity to build upon one another's knowledge, insights, and experience. Our goal is to collaborate in the forum. At times, we will respectfully challenge each other. We anticipate that this will be a rich time of dialogue. To create a safe environment for this to take place, we must build a supportive subculture that encourages one another. Disagreeing and challenging can be stimulating if done in an edifying manner.

Substantive participation may include (among other things):

- Providing and developing a new thought, idea, or perspective.
- Citing an experience or example of what we are learning and showing how it applies.
- Adding a new twist on a perspective.
- Critically reflecting on an idea/concept.
- Questioning or challenging a principle/perspective and giving reasons for your questioning.
- Integrating Scripture and other sources in a meaningful way

What Substantive Participation is NOT:

- Very basic comments such as "I agree" or "I disagree."
- Restating what someone has said (*unless there is a direct purpose in doing so*).
- Disrespectfully disagreeing.
- Pat answers that are not thought-provoking.

Below are examples of how to stimulate your own and others' thinking:

- What would happen if...
- Other times it may be helpful to...
- It is my understanding...what is your experience with this?
- You might approach this from...
- Is it possible that...
- Would you consider...
- Maybe...
- Possibly...
- Sometimes...
- I'm wondering if...
- Do you think...

Have fun!

Note: You can use any of your forum posts in other papers for this course. I would also encourage you to view the posts of others as resources that you can cite in your papers. Everyone brings a wealth of insights into the class!

Essay #1 – What is Church About? (30% of the Final Grade)

Read the two articles (one on Ecclesiology and one on Religious Toleration) from the *T&T Clark Handbook of Anabaptism*. Using these resources to stimulate your thinking, write an essay describing what you see as the essential characteristics (or “marks”) of church. PLEASE DO NOT COPY content from the readings into your paper. Rather, contextualize your paper – use your own words, and speak about church in a context today. Tell me what features a church needs, what it does, and why. Your paper should be 5-7 pages in length (**no longer**) and typed using 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced on 8.5x 11 paper. It should be submitted in the drop box marked “Short Essay” on the Moodle web site for this course, on the following date: **Due November 13.**

Essay #2 (40% of the final grade)

Students will produce a research paper of not less than 15 and not more than 20 pages in length. It is to be typed using 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced. All supporting documentation and bibliography should be done in accordance with Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, 9th ed. The paper should demonstrate a clear understanding of the topic under discussion. It should also seek to establish, by weight of evidence from the Scriptures and secondary sources, a thesis statement in relation to the topic under discussion. You can request further guidance from me if you require it. **Due December 16.**

Course Evaluation

Near the conclusion of this course, you will be asked to complete a course evaluation. Because feedback is very important, the course evaluation is a required part of the course and is tied to the submission of your last assignment. The course evaluation will be integrated into the Moodle classroom in Week 8.

Grading System

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description	Grade Point	Meaning in Graduate Work
A+	97-100	Superior	4.30	Exceptionally well-reasoned, compelling development of position. Outstanding incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Strikingly appropriate examples. Extraordinary insight, critical analytical and evaluative ability, and creativity. Superlative style and language usage. Makes an original contribution and is potentially publishable.

A	93-96.99	Excellent	4.00	Well-argued and convincing development of position. Insightful incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Notably appropriate examples. Excellent insight, critical analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Impressive style and language use.
A-	90-92.99	Very Good	3.70	Thorough and plausible development of position. Skilful incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Very good examples. Very good insight, analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Commendable and fluent style and language usage.
B+	87-89.99	Proficient	3.30	Proficient development of position. Appropriate incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Relevant examples. Good quality insight, analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Clear and correct style and language usage.
B	83-86.99	Good	3.00	Competent development of position, but possibly with some gaps and/or limitations. Good incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Good examples. Reasonable insight, analytic and evaluative ability. Little creativity. Generally good style and language usage, but possibly with some minor flaws.
B-	80-82.99	Average	2.70	Average development of position, but with obvious gaps and/or limitations. Satisfactory incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Satisfactory examples. Reasonable insight, analytic and evaluative ability. Little creativity. Generally satisfactory style and language usage, but possibly with some minor flaws.
C+	77-79.99	Adequate	2.30	Adequate development of position with significant gaps and/or limitations. Some incorporation of personal vision as well as references and resources. Adequate use of examples. Very little creativity. Considerable number of issues related to coherence and style.
C	73-76.99	Acceptable	2.00	Limited development of position with a noticeable lack of consistency with personal vision or references. Limited integration with external sources. Acceptable analytic and evaluative ability. Numerous weaknesses in terms of clarity, coherence, and grammar.
C-	70-72.99	Needs Work	1.70	Passable but unimpressive development of position. Position not completely consistent with personal vision <i>or</i> references and resources not taken fully into account <i>or</i> examples are basic or not completely convincing <i>or</i> barely acceptable insight and analytic and evaluative ability. Adequate style and language usage, but with weaknesses in some respects (e.g., clarity, coherence, grammar). Overall quality shows noticeable deficiencies.
F	Below 70	Below Standard	0.00	Unacceptable work at graduate level. Shows lack of understanding and/or competence in several of the criteria described above. This grade is a failing grade at the graduate level.

Grade Appeals

Students can appeal their grade to the course instructor by stating in writing their reasons for contesting the grade. Deadline for such appeals is one week after the student has receipt of grade. Formal course grade appeals can be made with the ACTS Academic Director's Office.

Course Policies

Student Portal

All ACTS Seminaries students are Trinity Western University students, and as such they have a TWUPass username and password. This is determined at the time of an online application and can be managed through the "Service Hub" (at www.twu.ca/help). Your student email account is also available through this Student Portal and is vital for communication with the university.

Add/Drop Policy

All OL courses are open for registration until the first day of class. Once the class has begun, students wishing to drop or withdraw from the class must contact the Registrar's Office by submitting a request through the "Service Hub" (www.twu.ca/help). Tuition (excluding fees) refund rates are as follows:

Weeks 1-2 - 100%

Week 3 - 60%

Week 4 - 50%

Week 5 - 40%

Weeks 6-8 - 0%

Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism at TWU

One of the core values of Trinity Western University is the integration of academic excellence with high standards of personal, moral, and spiritual integrity. The University considers it a serious offence when an individual attempts to gain unearned academic credit. It is the student's responsibility to be informed about what constitutes academic misconduct. For details on this, and on identifying and avoiding plagiarism go to the [academic calendar](#) (p. 47ff). Also see <https://prezi.com/od62fxnkbmxh/plagiarism-how-to-get-it-out-of-your-life/>.

Students with a Disability

Students with a disability who need assistance are encouraged to contact the Equity of Access Office upon admission to TWU to discuss their specific needs. All disabilities must be recently documented by an appropriately certified professional and include the educational impact of the disability along with recommended accommodations. Within the first two weeks of the semester, students must meet with their professors to agree on accommodations appropriate to each class. Students should follow the steps detailed by the Centre for Accessible Learning on their website at: <https://www.twu.ca/learning-commons/centre-accessible-learning/equitable-access-policy-students-disabilities>.

Hospitality in the Classroom

TWU is committed to an ethic of inclusion, centered on the principles of Christian hospitality, reciprocity and reconciliation. We seek to cultivate generous learning spaces that are based on respect for differences and are open to diverse views, opinions, and identities that are thoughtfully expressed in a collegial manner. We welcome and value all voices, including those from under-represented groups or those who

have been marginalized.

Campus Closure and Class Cancellation Policy

For more information on what happens in the event of extreme weather conditions or other emergency situations, go to <https://www.twu.ca/about-us/policies-guidelines/university-policies/campus-notification>.

Paper Formatting

The preferred manner for citations is the Turabian Notes (Bibliography) format. For information and accuracy, you may wish to reference the following style guide: Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 9th ed. Students may find the following website helpful: <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/turabian/turabian-notes-and-bibliography-citation-quick-guide.html>.

Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge that Trinity Western University, Langley campus is located on the traditional ancestral unceded territory of the Stó:lō people.