

Associated Canadian Theological Schools of Trinity Western University

THS 540: Introduction to Theology

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Summer 2019
2 credit hours

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Course Dates: May 6-9, 2019
Class days and times: 8:30 am-12:30 pm daily

I. Course Description

This foundational course assists the student in gaining an overall orientation to the purpose and language of theology. The specific areas of systematic theology will be surveyed including the impact of the church throughout history on the development of doctrine. The importance of the teaching of theology in the local church will be emphasized. THS 540 is required of those who have not studied systematic theology in their undergraduate training and it is conducted as either an intensive course or reading course.

II. Objectives

By the end of this course, each student should:

- Be able to articulate a solid understanding of the historical developments in the Christian theological tradition.
- Show competence in using foundational theological tools, articulate the sweep of major Christian doctrines, and describe their significance for life in the church.
- Express knowledge of and appreciation for the theological tradition of the church as it comes to expression in the various theologians and periods of the church's history.
- Demonstrate insight into the contemporary theological scene, especially of the global evangelical community.
- Understand the relationship between biblical authority and the authorities of tradition, experience, and theological imagination in the community's discernment of theological direction.

III. Course Textbooks

McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (6th ed.). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017.

Olson, Roger E. *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform*. Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1999.

Bring your Bible to class, please. I use the New International Version (NIV) because I read the Bible in English and I like its phrasing and inclusive language, but bring the Bible that you use, or plan to use regularly.

Because ACTS is a co-operative effort of 5 different denominational groups, each student is encouraged to possess a copy of her/his own denominational confession of faith or doctrinal statement and use it as a guide in thinking about and developing their own approach to Christian doctrine.

IV. Course Assignments

A. Reading and Reading Reports

For this course, you will be reading ...

- **Both textbooks!** (Approx. 1000 pages – okay, a little over 1000 pages)

Reading reports are due May 2, 2019. Yep, that's right, before the class starts. Cool, eh?

You will write one 4-page reading report that covers both course textbooks. Please use the following reading report guidelines for your work.

Reading Report Guidelines:

Your goal in the book review is to provide a brief summary and careful evaluation of the book that assesses its usefulness to you and other students. Therefore, a good book review should include the following components:

1. What is the essential message of this book? (Summarize the book in no more than a half page.)
2. What is the basic approach to Christian theology being expressed in the book? How does this shape the direction of the book and/or the author's conclusions?
3. What theological developments or parts of the book impact your ministry context most profoundly and why?

4. How has this book helped you to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of Christian theology as you have practiced it to date?
5. What, if anything, will you change in your ministry as a result of reading this book? If nothing will change, what about Christian theology has this book reinforced in your mind?

B. Critical Reflection paper on the nature, role, and expression of theology

- You will write a research paper (5-8 pages) reflecting on a theological issue of interest to you in your Christian life and ministry.**

The purpose of this paper is to help you reflect critically on how historical theological developments continue to shape contemporary ministry practice (put another way – to show how theology matters!) and to demonstrate your awareness of the Christian theological tradition. Your paper should contain four main elements:

- A thesis statement which clearly and concisely articulates the point you intend to argue in your paper.
 - A synopsis of the theological issues at play, the priorities inherent in the different options, strengths and weaknesses of each, and the implications for church ministry.
 - Historical examples of each – the positions, including their origins and outcomes.
 - Your conclusion, anticipating objections to your arguments and also exploring specific application to your personal life and ministry.
- The paper is due on May 30, 2019.** This is a formal research paper, so we are concerned about bibliography or sophisticated footnote apparatus. The paper should be written in good, clear prose, cleanly edited and properly and consistently formatted according to Turabian style (see below for more information).

C. Personal Journal

- During the week of the class, I want you to journal as part of your personal Bible study time (it may even become a habit!). On the due date, I want you to turn your journal notes in to me – it should not be more than about 4-6 pages in total. Here are some questions that I would like you to consider, and even answer, in the course of the week:**
- What am I understanding differently from Scripture as a result of what I have learned in this course?
 - How (if at all) has studying theology deepened my appreciation for Scripture as I read this text?
 - What insights about my church come to mind as I read this biblical passage?

☑ Your journal is due on May 17, 2019.

Assignment weight (%)

Reading Reviews	30%
Critical Reflection Paper	30%
Personal Journal	30%
Class participation	10%
Total:.....	100%

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	Grade Point
A+	Blew my mind	4.30
A	Excellent	4.00
A-	Very Good	3.70
B+	Proficient	3.30
B	Good	3.00
B-	Average	2.70
C+	Adequate	2.30
C	Acceptable	2.00
C-	Marginal	1.70
F	Inadequate	0.00

Late Assignments will be penalized as follows:

- Reduction by 5% of assignment value for each (working) day after due date.
- Late or incomplete reading is evaluated qualitatively.
- No late assignments will be accepted after June 30, 2019.

V. Miscellaneous Notes/Policies

Do your work before you come to class. I will come expecting that you have read the assigned pages beforehand (and making the reading reports due before the class is designed to motivate you to do just that). If you don't, you'll look foolish when I ask you questions. I love interaction, and think that people learn better when more than one person talks.

VI. Course Outline

Date	Topic for the Day	Chapters to read in Olson	How many pages is that?	Chapters to read in McGrath	How many pages is that?
May 6	What is Christianity all about?	Olson 1-8	137	1,5-8	119
May 7	Jesus, God, and some other stuff	Olson 9-16	114	2, 9-11	123
May 8	Sin, Salvation, Grace . . . Church?	Olson 17-24	146	3, 13-15	115
May 9	Being Christians, now, in the world, 'til we die	Olson 25-35	219	4, 12, 16-18	122

Supplement: Important Academic Notes from ACTS

Web Support – Student Portal <https://www.twu.ca/students/current-students>

All students at TWU have a TWUPass username and password. This is determined at the time of an online application or can be managed through the computing services help desk or the link on the student portal. Your student email account is also available through this student portal and is vital for communication about grades, account statements, lost passwords, sign-up instructions, etc. If you do not know your account or password, there is a link at the login area called “I forgot my password.” When you click on that link, you will be walked through the process of retrieving your account information.

Campus Closure

In the event of deteriorating weather conditions or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to the following radio stations CKNW (980 AM), CKWX (1130 AM), STAR FM (107.1 FM), PRAISE (106.5 FM) and KARI (550 AM). As well, an announcement will be placed on the University’s campus closure notification message box (604.513.2147) and on the front page of the University’s website (<http://www.twu.ca> – also see <https://www.twu.ca/campus-notification> for more details).

An initial announcement regarding the status of the campus and cancellation of classes is made at 6:00 AM and covers all classes beginning before 1:00PM. A second announcement is made at 11:00AM that covers all classes which begin between 1:00PM and 5:00PM. A third announcement is made at 3:00PM and covers those classes which begin after 5:00PM.

Paper Formatting

Students need to adhere to Turabian Notes (Bibliography) format except for in counselling courses, for which APA format is used and for CanIL courses. Please refer to the TWU Citations Style Guides page (https://www8.twu.ca/library/style_guides.html) for information on different styles.

Students are strongly encouraged to use RefWorks (available through the library home page <https://www.twu.ca/library>) as their bibliographical manager and as a tool for formatting bibliographies. They will need to be aware of the need to “clean up” most bibliographies generated by this program. Students are encouraged to view the documents on the following websites for format samples:

http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html or <http://www.macmillanlearning.com/catalog/static/bsm/hacker/resdoc/home.htm>. Note that in RefWorks the available formatting styles are those of Turabian (Notes), 7th edition, and APA – American Psychological Association, 6th edition. For Turabian, note that there are two formats –

Notes (or Bibliography Style) and Reference List (a short format citation style). ACTS uses the Notes (Bibliography) format, not Reference List.

Counseling students are expected to purchase the APA Publications Manual. More information found at the following website. <http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html>.

For free online programs that will enable you to create properly formatted bibliography citations, go to <http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/> ("Chicago stands for "Turabian") or <http://www.citationmachine.net/>.

Please check with your professor to see which one he/she recommends you use!!

Course Evaluations

Course evaluations are an important aspect of improving teaching outcomes and for students and faculty professional development. Therefore, completion of course evaluations are considered a course expectation. Professors will schedule time to fill out the online course evaluation (20-30 minutes) during their last scheduled class of the semester, for students to complete on their personal laptop or a collegium computer. Students who are absent or otherwise unable to complete the online course evaluation in the last class, will be expected to make every effort to do so by the last day of exams. Information about how to access online evaluation forms will be provided to the faculty and students prior to the last week of classes by the ACTS Administration.

Research Ethics

Please note that all research projects involving human participants undertaken by members of the TWU university community (including projects done by ACTS students to satisfy course or degree requirements) **MUST** be approved by the Trinity Western University Research Ethics Board. Information and forms may be found at <https://www.twu.ca/research/research-services/research-ethics>

Those needing additional clarification may contact the ACTS Academic Dean's office. Please allow at least three (3) weeks from the date of submission for a review of the application.

Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism at TWU

As Christian scholars pursuing higher education, academic integrity is a core value of the entire TWU community. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship at TWU. This includes, but is not limited to, avoiding all forms of plagiarism and cheating in scholarly work. TWU has a strict policy on plagiarism (see 2016-17 Student Handbook, pp. 48-50). Further details on this subject are contained in the ACTS Student Handbook in section 4.12. The handbook is available online on the ACTS webpage (www.actsseminaries.com) at the following link: <http://www.actsseminaries.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ACTS-Catalogue-2014-15-Final-14-10-03.pdf>.

Learning what constitutes plagiarism and avoiding it is the student's responsibility. An excellent resource describing plagiarism and how to avoid it has been prepared by TWU Librarian William Badke and is freely available for download (PPT file) or used as flash (self-running) tutorials of varying lengths from:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/10ujmBKDRdb53SZ3XHRoXJF6M52Uhu-kr2CV8l654XeA/edit#slide=id.p4>

http://williambadke.com/Plagiarism_Spectrum_US_8.5x11.pdf
<https://prezi.com/dcbl-pnzuv9i/whats-the-big-deal-about-plagiarism/>

Equity of Access

It is the responsibility of a student with a learning disability to inform the ACTS Director of Student Life of that fact before the beginning of a course so that necessary arrangements may be made to facilitate the student's learning experience. To repeat: To ensure that instructors know to accommodate a student who has a learning access issue, the student must inform the Director of Student Life of a disability before the beginning of the class. After that is too late.