

ASSOCIATED CANADIAN THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS OF TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY

Graduate Course Syllabus

Course Number: THS 571 OL

Course Name: Theology I

Semester and Year: FA21

Instructor: Archie Spencer, ThD

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Course Instruction: Aug 30 – Oct 23, 2021

Course Description

This course will focus on the nature, task and initial content of Christian Theology, expounded in a systematic fashion. It will cover such issues as defining theology, establishing its method of procedure and exploring its initial doctrines, namely the doctrine of Revelation, Scripture and the doctrine of the Trinity as *Missio Dei*. Related topics include the Church's theological task and the Trinitarian foundations of its mission.

Course Objectives

This course seeks to introduce students to the broad outlines of Christian Systematic Theology with the following outcomes:

- Students will learn the broad outlines of the task of theology as it relates to Christian nurture of the family of faith and Christian witness to the world.
- Students will become familiar with the historical and biblical content and context out of which Christian doctrines grew.
- Students will be introduced to the basic dimensions of theological method and a set of definitions that will enable them to navigate the field effectively.
- Students will begin to develop a passion for effective articulation of the faith as it relates to Christian ministry and witness.
- Students will be exposed to a mode of Christian thinking that should encourage them to emulate a thoughtful reflection on the Gospel message.
- Finally, students will be encouraged to think through the significance of the doctrines of Revelation, Scripture and the Trinitarian Being of God in terms of their significance for the Church's task their own spiritual development and formation.

Please Note: We will schedule an initial zoom meeting, with subsequent lectures available through the World Campus platform. Access to the course lectures will be established via Moodle links. The initial Zoom meeting on a mutually agreed time as much as possible, with the link being posted on Moodle for those who cannot attend. An invitation to the class will be issued by email and posted on Moodle. We may, or may not, have one or two meetings subsequent to that arranged by mutual agreement with the students. The majority of the class content will be in an on-line format through Moodle and World campus. Instructions for access will be forwarded to students soon. The course will be 8 weeks in duration, from August 30th to October 23rd. ***All assignments for the course will need to be posted by their due dates, and later assignment posted no later than October 23rd.***

Required Texts and Materials

Required:

Allen Michael, *Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics: An Introduction and Reader*, (New York: T & T Clark International, 2012) PDF Portion to be handed out on-line.

Barth K. "An Exegetical Study of Matthew 28: 16-20". To be handed out as PDF on line. Grenz Stanley. *Rediscovering the Triune God*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2004)

McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 5th edition, (London, UK: Blackwells Publishing, 2011, pp. 1-264) **Note:** There are at least 6 editions of this book in print. Any one of them are acceptable as a text but the pagination of required reading, and the reading schedule are based on the 5th edition. **PLEASE NOTE, It is up to the student to figure out the reading schedule based on a comparison of any other edition index with the 5th edition.**

Spencer, Archie J. *THS 571 Course notes* (Unpublished and in PDF on-line). **Note:** Students will have access to the course notes on line and are asked not to reproduce these notes or to distribute them to others. Students can print a paper copy if they so choose.

Recommended:

A Bibliography will be posted on Moodle in due course.

Course Instructional Content

There are a total of 9 sessions in this course that are designed to be covered over a period of 8 weeks. Readings will be apportioned to correspond to each of these sessions. Students are expected to keep pace with the readings and forum discussions for each main topic to be covered.

Session I. Introducing the world of Theology: Definitions, Sources Norms and Method I. Readings: McGrath, pp. 1- 97.

Session II. Sources Norms and Methods of Theology II. Readings: McGrath, pp. 99-151

Session III. The Doctrine of Revelation I: Definitions and General Revelation. Readings: McGrath, pp. 152-170

Session IV. The Doctrine of Revelation II: Special Revelation. The Authority of Scripture. Readings: McGrath, pp. 171-194 (**NOTE: *The rest of the McGrath readings should be spread out evenly over the remainder of the course. Students must read from Page 195 to the end of the book***)

Session V A & B. The Doctrine of Revelation and the Church's Theological Task I Reading: M. Allen *Barth Reader*, pp. 15-43.

Session VI. The Church's theological task II Reading: M. Allen *Barth Reader*, pp. **Session VII.** The Mission of God: The Christian Doctrine of the Trinity, Reading: Grenz, *Triune God*, PP. 1-72

Session VIII. The Mission of God and the Great Commission. Reading: Grenz *Triune God*, PP. 117-225 Barth, "An Exegetical Study of Matthew 28: 16-20". To be handed out as PDF on line.

Session IX. God and the Problem of Theology in the 21st Century

Course Assignments

Reviews

Course Pre-Reading Requirement: Due to the condensed nature of this course, please try to have the first 150 pages of McGrath's *Introduction*, read before the course begins on **August 30, 2021**: You will be expected to integrate ideas from textbook readings into the forum discussions and other assignments.

All three texts (or designated parts thereof) are required reading throughout the duration of the course, as assigned. The course requires up to but no more than 1500 pages of text readings plus further research for the paper. Much of your learning in this course will depend upon careful, disciplined reading of assigned texts. A *four-page* summary/review, one for each of the McGrath and the Grenz texts books, should be submitted in the drop box marked "Reviews" on the Moodle web site for this course, according to the following **due dates: Sep. 24th, Grenz and October 15th, McGrath. Value: 30%. There will be a video tutorial link on constructing reviews available on Moodle early on in the course.**

Essay

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 Writer's*, 7th ed or later. All versions of *Microsoft Word*, use this as a template for theses and term papers so I recommend this software to you. The paper should demonstrate a clear understanding of the doctrine, and/or methodological principle 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 doctrine under discussion. Again, refer to the *Syllabus Supplement* for expectations on the shape and format of a research paper. There you will find a list of possible subjects and bibliographic resources to get you started. You can request further guidance from me if you require it. **Value 40%. This assignment is due on: October 23rd.**

Forum Discussions

This course has **Five** online forum weeks where you will have an opportunity to interact with others in the class around key questions, assignments, your ministry context and/or additional lecture material. These forums are designed to foster creative discussion and growth in ***theological understanding, ministry context and academic/research acumen***. You should plan to invest approximately four hours into each forum week. ***Each forum is worth 6% of your final grade.***

Students are expected to contribute to the forum discussions by posting a minimum of **two** conversational (**150-250 words per/Max**), and **one** substantive contribution, (**150 words Max**), per forum post. 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 200-250 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!

Week	Due Date	Assignments	% Final Grade	Cumulative %
	Aug 30	Pre-reading Due		
1	Aug 30 – Sep 4	Forum 1 due	6%	6%
2	Sep 6-11	Forum 2 due	6%	12%
3	Sep-13-18	Forum 3 due	6%	18%
4	Sep 20-25	Grenz review due	15%	33%
5	Sep 27-Oct 2	Forum 4 due	6%	39%
6	Oct 4-9	Forum 5 due	6%	45%
7	Oct 11-16	McGrath review due	15%	60%
8	Oct 23	Research paper due	40%	100%

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 Office.

Course Policies

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 [University Homepage > Academics > Academic Calendar](#) (p. 47).

<https://prezi.com/od62fxnkbmxh/plagiarism-how-to-get-it-out-of-your-life/> (Prezi presentation)
<http://bit.ly/1p00KX3> (Google Slide presentation offering more comprehensive information)

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 Equity of Access Office on their website at: <http://www.twu.ca/student-life/student-success/disabilities-and-equity-access>.

HOSPITALITY IN THE CLASSROOM

TWU is committed to an ethic of inclusion centred 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.

The following policies are optional but recommended, to allow you to efficiently respond to student challenges to the syllabus. *Click on these fields and press delete if you do not wish to use them:*

CAMPUS CLOSURE AND CLASS CANCELLATION POLICY

In the event of extreme weather conditions or other emergency situations go to the <https://www.twu.ca/campus-notification>.

COURSE 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 Office.

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: http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html