Course Description

Christian theology is to be a faithful and coherent expression of the doctrines and practices the Christian church. At its best, theology serves the church’s proclamation of the gospel of Jesus in a way that is sufficient to express the vitality of salvation (at its worst, theology hinders or neuters such proclamation).

Comprehending the convergence of Scripture, discipleship, worship and critical reflection is the substance of Christian theology, and articulating this convergence in faithful ways is Christian discourse. This course is, therefore, an introduction to doing theology with attentiveness to the substance and articulation of Christian faith.

Theological and historical distinctions between Scripture (and its interpretation), faith (doctrine/s), discipleship (ethics/character), engagement (worship/prayer) and circumstantial reflection (philosophical and cultural interaction) are provisional and, in the end, artificial. To address this breakdown within the theological discipline this course will provide the opportunity to express uniquely theological statements on subjects of critical and personal interest, theological biography and theological comment on Scripture.

Inasmuch as this course is the first in a two-course sequence in Christian Theology designed to introduce the study of theology, its central themes, and its role within Christian faith, our time together during this Quarter will cover only a portion of topics.

Goals/Desired Outcomes

Our task together aims to:

- Actually do theology instead of simply speaking of the conditions one might employ if one ever gets around to doing theology.
- Acquire a significant awareness of the categories of Christian theology through an exposure to the ‘Christian tradition’.
- Grasp the significance of the interplay of theological assertion and fidelity to Scripture.
- Appreciate and similarly express the relationship of faith affirmations and their sufficient demonstration within the life of disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Express an awareness of the contextual orientation of theology within our present circumstances, affirming faith and reflecting upon the evaluations from ‘others’.
- Enjoy doing theology as an expression of the vitality of salvation and Christian faithfulness and reflect this enjoyment in class discussions, research and written work.
Required Course Texts


**Diploma Students:** Read all of Evans, *We Have Been Believers* (WB) and half of McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (CT). You do not need to read the O’Keefe and Reno book.

Course Requirements and Grading

**Note:** For all papers, use 12 point Times New Roman font and one inch margins.

Read all required assignments; attend and participate in each class session. This includes a four to five (4 to 5) page essay describing your own theological background. Describe your journey as a person of faith that has brought you to this class. In this essay you are not only telling a story of how you came to faith but how you have come to identify with a particular denomination, have certain theological emphases, and distinctive practices as a member of Christ’s church. Feel free to make reference to specific events, biblical texts and notable books that have significantly shaped your theological stance.

**Due:** October 7, 2013 (25% of grade).

Write three (3) reflection papers that will contribute to an evaluation of the convergence of Scripture, theological method and faith (25% each). Each paper should be five (5) pages in length, reflect the use of six or more (6+) resources in each paper (excluding the final paper), and include formative observations that pertain to the research topic. You will be evaluated not only on biblical/theological content but also on clarity of thought and expression.

**First Paper:** Theological commentary on a chosen text of Scripture.

Choose a topic/subject of theological significance or contention. Concisely present a history of the topic/subject, contentions and events having to do with the topic/subject, including person(s) who have figured significantly in its history, and an estimate of the topic’s significance historically, all with special reference to the use of Scripture in articulating the topic/subject.

**Due:** October 21, 2013.

**Second Paper:** Theological biography and (a text of) Scripture

Choose one individual of theological/Christian significance and learn that person’s theological/Christian biography (it is your choice, from Abelard to Zwingli, so choose someone accessible and/or you would like to learn about). Look for a significant biblical text either explicit to the individual or that is characteristic of the person’s theological/Christian significance and evaluate the biography in relationship to the chosen biblical text (how does
the biography fulfill, explain, enact, perform, or [negatively] reject or fail to exhibit faithfulness to the text).

Due: November 4, 2013.

Third Paper: Theological hermeneutics and the ancient tradition.
Write a response paper to Sanctified Vision. The aim of this assignment is to examine the relationship between your approach to reading the Bible and constructing theology in contrast to the approaches of the early church. Identify the aspects of ancient interpretation which are notably distinct from your own and also consider the manner in which you might incorporate at least one of the ancient methods of interpretation in your own approach to Scripture.

Due: December 2, 2013.

Diploma Students: You have a choice between either the second or third reflection paper.

Grading Scale: A 95-100
   A- 90-94
   B+ 87-89
   B 84-86
   B- 80-83
   C+ 77-79
   C 74-76
   C- 70-73
   D 60-69
   F 0-59

Course Topics and Reading Schedule

Note: Over the first 1-3 weeks, read through first four chapters in McGrath’s Christian Theology for notable historical material

September 23 Syllabus; Course Introduction, Using the textbooks, and Discussion
September 30 Theology: What Is It? CT chp. 5
October 7 Revelation and Authority, CT 6,7, WB 1-2 (Essay 1 due)
October 14 Doctrine of God, CT 9, WB 3
October 21 Doctrine of God, cont’d., CT 10 (1st paper due)
October 28 Doctrine of Creation, Olson (handout)
November 4 Who is Jesus?, CT 11, WB 4 (2nd paper due)
November 11 No Class
November 18 What did Jesus do?, CT 12
December 2 Being Human, Understanding Sin WB 5, CT 14 (3rd paper due)
NOTE: All communications from the seminary will go to your seminary email account. Contact ithelpdesk@seminary.edu if you need help forwarding your seminary email address to your personal email address.

As a seminary community we hold integrity/hospitality as core values. Individuals are able to do their best work and thinking when their peers are fully present and engaged. We expect each person to both participate in class and carefully listen to others with the belief that everyone’s contribution is equally important. Therefore, the following policies have been established in order to provide clarity in regard to attendance expectations and relationships in the classroom.

Class Attendance Policy
It is expected that students will attend and participate in all class sessions. Failure to attend at least 80% of class sessions is grounds for automatic failure. A professor may set other attendance expectations. Students are always expected to communicate with a professor in advance if they will be absent. Attendance expectations are higher for online and intensive courses (see syllabus for specific requirements).

Class Tardiness Policy
The third time a student is late to the start of class, it will be counted as a class absence. It is also expected that students will return from a break by the time specified by the professor.

Late Work Policy
If a student cannot complete the work for a course by the due date listed on the syllabus, they must submit a “Request for a Grade of Incomplete” form to the Registrar by 4:30 of the last day of the term. The form must be signed by the instructor and Dean of Students. The professor may set stipulations and grade reductions. In the absence of a formal request form, the student will receive a grade based upon work completed by the last day of the term.

Turabian Format
All papers, including footnotes and bibliography, must be submitted in the correct format according to Kate L. Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 8th ed., 2013.

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is the act of passing off as one’s own the words or ideas of someone else without providing proper acknowledgement or documentation. See the “Academic Honesty Policy” in the Seminary Catalog for more information on plagiarism and how to avoid it.

Electronic Format
Unless otherwise specified by the professor, all work submitted electronically must be in a Word document format (.doc, .docx).

Technology Use in the Classroom
Unless it is directly tied to note-taking or research for the class, students are expected to refrain from using cell phones, laptops, or other electronic devices during class.

Course Evaluation in Moodle
Students must complete an online course evaluation using the seminary Moodle system at http://moodle.seminary.edu in order to receive a final grade for the course. The evaluation will be open for one week starting the last day of the term. If you need assistance connecting to Moodle or accessing the evaluation, please send an email to ithelpdesk@seminary.edu.