

Constructive Theology 1  
SAH - TH500, Fall Semester  
September-November, 2016

Richard R. Topping  
VST Room 401  
Principal's Office: 604-822-9808  
Email: richardt@vst.edu

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this course is to further critical understanding and appropriation of major Christian doctrines in loving engagement with God and the world in the context of the contemporary church. It treats principally central themes of Christian doctrinal reflection (e.g., revelation, scripture, Trinity, creation, sin, Christ, reconciliation, Holy Spirit, church and hope) as well as contemporary critiques and reformulations of the faith in the light of the ordered and sanctified components of Christian theological expression (Scripture, tradition, experience and reason).

**Competence Objectives:**

In completing this course a student will be able to:

- (1) Describe and relate central doctrinal themes of the Church universal. Students will acquire fluency in the language surrounding sites of perennial Christian discussion and become alert to the systematic (inter-implications) of doctrinal loci.
- (2) Differentiate between some major streams of Christian theological reflection. Students will be reading in different theological traditions and so acquire the ability to distinguish between them and to articulate what is at stake in their differences.
- (3) Deploy theological language to interpret, construct, challenge, reform and recontextualize. Students will acquire fluency in doctrinal language in order to interpret by means of it. First conceptual language is learned and then students will learn to interpret by means of this language. A competent student will be working toward the acquisition of a 'second' first language.
- (4) Deliberately misread our culture (time and place) in the light of the Gospel in the service of the triune God, the love of the neighbour and the world.

**Format:**

This class meets for three hours a week over 11 weeks. The primary format will be lecture followed by discussion of questions raised on the basis of the student's close reading of required texts.

**Expectations/Evaluation:**

- (1) Class attendance and preparation of all required reading **before** class.
- (2) A one-page summary of the material read for each class. This page should engage a theme that runs through the readings. **It is due for the class for which the material is read.** Each one-page summary should be written in a different social location- library, coffee shop, hospital, commons room, at home, at church, etc. The last two lines of your summary should articulate what this theme means for this setting. Please identify where in the world you wrote it.
- (3) A paraphrase of the Apostles' Creed of **six pages in length**. This paraphrase should work at unpacking the content of the creed, as though you were doing so in the context of an adult study group (or you can imagine yourself offering a description to an inquirer re. the general outline of Christian confession). It should draw on readings and class material and address **five major themes** of the course; a bibliography of at least five resources should be included.  
**Deadline: Dec 16, 2016**
- (4) A creed of your own that summarizes in six pages what you believe about **five of the major themes** of the content of the course. Students can include methods and sources of theological reflection as one theme. Students will not be evaluated on the "correctness" of their expressions, but on the lucid, careful and consistent articulation of the elements of their "creed" as a work in progress. A bibliography of at least five resources should be included. **Deadline: December 16, 2016**

**Offsite Education Students:**

Students taking this course by distance education will listen to the lectures either at the same time as the class or by means of recordings. The link will be uploaded to moodle for those who will listen to recordings.

The daily assignments are due according to the schedule indicated on the course outline. They will be emailed no later than 12 p.m. to the professor at richardt@vst.edu

In the place of class discussion, an interactive component of online discussion will also be included for asynchronous students. This will take the form of a discussion string.

Each week 1 student will post his/her one-page summary of a theme from the readings. All other students will post a response, of no more than 500 words and of no less than 300 words, which considers the following: (1) is it fair to the sources; (2) does it adequately address the theme and; (3) what could be added to make the piece more complete. Before the course begins a schedule of posts will be sent to asynchronous participants.

A bi-weekly adobe connect conversation with the Professor will be scheduled **for all students** who are not physically present in the class.

### **Deadlines:**

Submission of assignments on time is a part of academic, professional and pastoral competence and a part of every course at VST. All assignments in courses are due on the dates specified in the syllabus for each course. Failure to submit an assignment on time will be noted in the narrative evaluation of an assignment. Repeated failure to submit assignments on time will affect the final grade for the course. Two late assignments will result in a reduction of one letter grade for the course without legitimate excuse.

### **Required Texts/Readings:**

Migliore, Daniel L. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. **3rd Edition**. Eerdmans, 2014 (do not use previous editions)

Placher, William. Editor. *Essentials of Christian Theology*. Westminster/John Knox, 2003.

Course readings on Moodle – access codes provided.

### **Recommended Text:**

McKim, Donald. *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996. (\*This is an especially good resource since it provides short two or three sentence [not article length] definitions for theological terms).

### **Course Schedule/Readings:**

Week 1: Sept. 13     **The Task of Theology**  
FSU, pp. 1-20; ECT, pp. 1-10.  
MacIntosh, Mark. *Mysteries of Faith*, 1-23.

Week 2: Sept. 20     **The Meaning of Revelation**

FSU, pp. 21-45, 354-369; ECT, pp. 11-50.

Week 3: Sept 27     **The Authority and Interpretation of Scripture**

FSU, pp. 46-65.

Davis, Ellen F. "The Soil that is Scripture," pp. 36-44. *Engaging Biblical Authority: Perspectives on the Bible as Scripture*. Edited by William P. Brown. Westminster/John Knox, 2007.

Hayes, Richard B. "Reading Scripture in the Light of the Resurrection," pp. 216-238. *The Art of Reading Scripture*. Edited by Ellen F. Davis and Richard Hayes. Eerdmans, 2003.

Jones, Serene. "Inhabiting Scripture, Dreaming Bible," pp. 73-80. *Engaging Biblical Authority: Perspectives on the Bible as Scripture*. Edited by William P. Brown. Westminster/John Knox, 2007.

Week 4: Oct 4       **The Triune God**

FSU, pp. 66-95; ECT, pp. 51-92.

Week 5: Oct 11     **The Good Creation and Providence**

FSU, pp. 96-142; ECT, pp. 93-132.

Week 6: Oct 18     **Humanity, Evil and Sin**

ECT, pp. 132-181.

Reading Week

Week 7: Nov. 1     **The Person and Work of Christ**

FSU, pp. 168-204; ECT, pp. 183-220.

Week 8: Nov 8     **Christ, Context and Religious Pluralism**

FSU, pp. 205-231 and either pp. 314-346 or ECT, pp. 297-326.

Week 9: Nov. 15   **The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life**

FSU, pp. 232-258; ECT, pp. 257-295.

Week 10: Nov 22   **Church, Proclamation, Ministry and Sacraments**

FSU, pp. 259-313; ECT, pp. 221-256.

Week 11: Nov 29   Hope for this Life and the Next

## Select Bibliography:

### Reference Works:

- Audi, Robert. General Editor. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Bowden, John and Richardson, Alan. Editors. *Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Westminster/John Knox, 2003
- McKim, Donald K. Editor. *Encyclopaedia of the Reformed Faith*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996. (\*This is an especially good resource since it provides short two or three sentence [not article length] definitions for theological terms).
- Webster, John B., Tanner, Kathryn and Torrance, Ian. *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

### Introductions, Thematic and General Works in Theology:

- Augustine. *On Christian Doctrine*. Translated with an introduction by D.W. Robertson, Jr. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1958.
- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. Volume III/2: *The Doctrine of Creation*. Translated by Bromiley and Torrance. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1960.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Dogmatics in Outline*. Translated by G.T. Thomson. London: SCM Press, 1949.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*. Translated by Grover Foley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963, pp. 63-73.
- Brunner, Emil. *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*. *Dogmatics*, Volume 2. Translated by Olive Wyon. London, 1952.
- Bonino, José Miguez. *Room to Be People: An Interpretation of the Message of the Bible for Today's World*. Translated by Vickie Leach. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979, pp. 9-25 ("Only An Atheist Can be a Good Christian").
- Brown, Robert McAfee. *Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.
- Carr, Anne E. *Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women's Experience*. New York: Harper and Row, 1988, pp 180-200.
- Davis, Ellen F. "The Soil that is Scripture," pp. 36-44. *Engaging Biblical Authority: Perspectives on the Bible as Scripture*. Edited by William P. Brown. Westminster/John Knox, 2007.
- Dulles, Avery, S.J. *Models of Revelation*. New York: Doubleday, 1985.

- Coakley, Sarah. "Waiting for God – Feminist Christians and Contemplation." *Christian Century*, June 28, 2003.
- Crawford, Matthew B. *The World Beyond Your Head: On Becoming an Individual in an Age of Distraction*. Toronto: Penguin, 2015.
- Felski, Rita. *The Limits of Critique*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.
- Ford, David F. *Theology: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, 1999.
- Frei, Hans. *Types of Christian Theology*. Edited by George Hunsinger and William Placher. Yale University Press, 1992.
- Griffiths, Paul J. *Intellectual Appetite: A Theological Grammar*. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Religious Reading: The Place of Reading in the Practice of Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Guthrie, Shirley. *Christian Doctrine*. Revised Edition. Westminster/John Knox, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Gutierrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*. New York: Orbis, 1988.
- Gutierrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*. New York: Orbis, 1988
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Power of the Poor in History*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004.
- Hart, David Bentley. *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Hayes, Richard B. "Reading Scripture in the Light of the Resurrection," pp. 216-238. *The Art of Reading Scripture*. Edited by Ellen F. Davis and Richard Hayes. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Hooker, Morna D. "Chalcedon and the New Testament." *The Making and Remaking of Christian Doctrine*. Edited by Sarah Coakley and David Pailin. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.
- Jenson, Robert W. "Scripture's Authority in the Church," pp. 27-37. *The Art of Reading Scripture*. Edited by Ellen F. Davis and Richard Hayes. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Johnson, Elizabeth A. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*. New York: Crossroads, 1992.
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Creed: What Christians Believe and Why it Matters*. New York: Doubleday, 2003.
- Jones, Serene and Paul Lakeland, Editors. *Constructive Theology: A Contemporary Approach to Classical Themes*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004.
- Jones, Serene. "Inhabiting Scripture, Dreaming Bible," pp. 73-80. *Engaging Biblical Authority: Perspectives on the Bible as Scripture*. Edited by William P. Brown. Westminster/John Knox, 2007.
- Leith, John H. *Basic Christian Doctrine*. Westminster/John Knox, 1993.

- Lochmann, Jan M. *The Faith We Confess: An Ecumenical Dogmatics*. Translated by David Lewis. Reprint. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2005.
- McFarland, Ian A. *From Nothing: A Theology of Creation*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2014.
- McGrath, Alister E. *Theology: The Basics* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Editor. *Theology: The Basic Readings*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008.
- McIntosh, Mark A. *Divine Teaching: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Blackwell, 2008.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Mysteries of Faith*. Chicago: Cowley, 2000.
- Marks, Darren C. *Shaping a Theological Mind: Theological Context and Methodology*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002.
- Ogden, Schubert M. *Faith and Freedom: Toward a Theology of Liberation*. Revised and Enlarged Edition. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.
- Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.
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- \_\_\_\_\_. *Jesus the Savior: The Meaning of Jesus Christ for Christian Faith*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001, pp. 166-181, 188-198.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Triune God: An Essay in Postliberal Theology*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2007.
- Reuther, Rosemary Radford. *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.
- Schillebeeckx, Edward. *On Christian Faith: The Spiritual, Ethical, and Political Dimensions*. Translated by John Bowden. New York: Crossroads Publishing, 1987.
- Suchocki, Marjorie H. *God, Christ, Church: A Practical Guide to Process Theology*. New York: Crossroad, 1984.
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- Willimon, William. *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2002, pp. 55-74.
- Wirzba, Norman, *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 23-59.