

WHAT'S GOD GOT TO DO WITH IT?:

Christian Theology for Non-Theologians (1.0) - Rev. Dr. Richard Topping

March 13 and 14, 2015 – Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria

<http://www.christchurchcathedral.bc.ca/index.php/about-us/location-parking>

Friday 2:00 -5:00pm;

7:00 – 8:30pm (**public lecture: Why Beliefs? I'm More into Practice**)

Saturday 9:30 – 4:30

Instructor: Richard Topping

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A. Outline/Short Blurb

In this brief course students will be introduced to central topics of ongoing discussion within the Christian church. Topics or teachings we will explore include the Trinity, the Bible, creation and humanity, sin, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Church and hope for this world and the next.

In our discussion of these themes we will pay particular attention to the challenges and prospects for Christian confession in a time like ours. We will address questions like: 'What difference does our confession of God as Creator make to the current ecological crisis?', 'What does it mean to be human if we are made in God's image?', 'What does Jesus save us from and for and how did he do it?', 'What's Church for in these mobile disembodied times?' By taking this course students will become more fluent in central Christian teachings and so better able to make sense of their lives and the world.

B. Pre-Reading:

Before the course some reading to introduce you to the vocabulary of Christian theology will really help prepare you for discussion. **Please read 150-200 pages of the texts listed below.** You can read them in any combination or just one of them. The key is read 150-200 pages of this material to introduce you to the subject matter.

The resources listed just below are listed from the least to the most difficult. The first one is brief and recent. It is a lovely discussion of the essential elements of the Christian life by Rowan Williams. The second book is also by Rowan Williams, former archbishop of Canterbury. It is a lovely little book filled with art and is a popular treatment of the Apostles and Nicene Creed. The third reading is about how the Bible shapes imagination when Christians read the world. It is a beautiful essay; easy to read and it also shows one of the changes in current theology, lots of engagement of imagination. The fourth reading is a whole book by David Ford. It is a little more difficult and would be helpful if you've done some reading in theology. The fifth, by Mark MacIntosh, is wonderful. He talks about the mystery of God and how studying theology changes us; a little more difficult but a rewarding read. Finally, a full length book on the Nicene Creed by Luke Timothy Johnson. In this book Johnson says, 'there is something in the creed to offend everyone.' He shows how the creed is important and really a way to engage the big issues of our time. It would take a while to read, but it would be worth the effort. **Read 150-200 pages of any combination of these materials.** The Jones essay will be posted online. You will have to buy one (or more) of the others. Once you register for the course you will get a code that gives you access to the MacIntosh readings online on moodle.

1/Williams, Rowan. *Being Christian: Baptism, Bible Eucharist, Prayer*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014 (easily available on Amazon), pp. 84. You will need to buy this book if you choose to read it.

2/Williams, Rowan. *Tokens of Trust: An Introduction to Christian Belief*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2007 (easily available on Amazon), pp. 159. You will need to buy this book if you choose to read this one.

- 3/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. (We will put these pages on moodle (an online point of access to course material. You will get an access code once you register for the course and can access this reading for free online. When you register ask for this code if you want to do this reading!), pp. 8.
- 4/Ford, David F. *Theology: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, 1999. (easily available on Amazon), pp. 208. You will need to buy this book if you choose to read it.
- 5/ MacIntosh, Mark. *Divine Teaching: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Blackwell, 2008, pp. ix-54, pp. 63 of reading. You will need to buy this book if you choose to read it.
- 6/Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Creed: What Christians Believe and Why it Matters*. New York: Doubleday, 2003. (easily available on Amazon), pp. 336. You will need to buy this book if you choose to read it.

C. A Helpful Resource

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. If you are interested in having a single volume in your library that will help facilitate your ongoing reading in theology, this is it.

D. Course Requirements: Certificate in Theological Studies

1. Demonstrate the ability thoughtfully to engage the material and reading for the class.
2. Engage the readings and classroom material to interpret the world Christianly.
3. Write a personal reflection of 3 to 4 pages on your reading. You can identify how the reading helped you understand some aspect(s) of Christian life and action better or more thoroughly. **This is due by April 24, 2015.**
4. 100% attendance is required for students in the certificate in Theological Studies Program.

E. Bibliography (for future reference and reading!)

- Augustine. *On Christian Doctrine*. Translated with an introduction by D.W. Robertson, Jr. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1958.
- Barth, Karl. *Dogmatics in Outline*. Translated by G.T. Thomson. London: SCM Press, 1949.
- Bonino, José Miguez. *Room to Be People*. Fortress, 1979.
- 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.
- Coakley, Sarah. "Waiting for God – Feminist Christians and Contemplation." *Christian Century*, June 28, 2003.
- Guthrie, Shirley. *Christian Doctrine*. Revised Edition. Westminster/John Knox, 1994.
- Gutierrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*. New York: Orbis, 1988
- Johnson, Elizabeth A. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*. New York, 1992.
- Leith, John H. *Basic Christian Doctrine*. Westminster/John Knox, 1993.
- Lochman, Jan M. *The Faith We Confess: An Ecumenical Dogmatics*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2005.
- McFague, Sallie. *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- McGrath, Alister E. *Theology: The Basics* 2nd Edition. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008.
- Placher, William C. *Jesus the Savior*. John Knox, 2001.
- Placher, William C. *The Triune God*. Westminster/John Knox, 2007.
- Suchocki, Marjorie H. *God, Christ, Church: A Practical Guide to Process Theology*. New York: Crossroad,
- Willimon, William. *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2002.
- Wirzba, Norman, *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 23-59.

