

Introduction to Christian Theology  
SAH - TH500, Fall Semester  
September-November 2019  
Tuesday 9-12 noon

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

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this course is to further reflective understanding and appropriation of major Christian teachings 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). The goal of the course is doxological: to learn to praise God who is revealed in Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**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. While theology is always written in a context and influenced by it, theological endeavour also seeks to depict what the context is; that is, to discern what God is doing and some shapes of faithful response.

- (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 including discussion of questions raised by 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 and say what difference it makes to the church and the world. **It is due for the class for which the material is read.**
- (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 beyond class reading should be included. **Deadline: Monday December 16, 2018.**
- (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 beyond class reading should be included. You should also draw on assigned class reading. **Deadline: Monday December 16, 2018.**

**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 recording. The link will be uploaded to canvas for those who will listen to recording.

The daily assignments are due according to the schedule indicated on the course outline. They must be emailed no later than 12 p.m. on the day of class 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 phone call, at least one, with the Professor will be scheduled **for all students** who are not physically present in the class. This will give you opportunity to ask questions related to the course, although these are always in order via email.

### **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. Students registered for this course onsite are permitted no more than two absences. More than two absences will result in a loss of credit for the course.

**Required Texts/Readings:** The textbook is available at the UBC book store and on Amazon. It is your responsibility to secure a copy and come to the first class having read the readings for the day.

**Rigby, Cynthia. *Holding Faith: A Practical Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2018)**

During the summer you should read:

**Jenson, Robert. *A Theology in Outline: Can These Bones Live?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.**

**Robinson, Marilynne. *Gilead* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2004).**

All of these books will be available at the UBC bookstore and Amazon.

All other course readings can be found on Canvas – access codes are provided with course registration.

## **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). You will get great benefit from this resource for the whole of your theological education.

## **Course Schedule/Readings:**

### **Week 1: September 10      The Task of Theology**

HF, pp. xi-xxxv; Placher, William. 'Why Bother with Theology,' 1-10. In *Essentials of Christian Theology*. Edited by William Placher. Westminster John/Knox: Louisville, 2003; McIntosh, Mark. *Mysteries of Faith*. Chicago: Cowley, 2000, pp 1-23; Doris Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (University of NC Press, 1996), 44-60.

### **Week 2: Sept. 17      The Meaning of Revelation**

HF, 3-29; Ford, David. 'Types of Christian Theology,' 20-30. In *Theology: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

### **Week 3: Sept 24      The Authority and Interpretation of Scripture**

HF, pp. 31-68.

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.

Fennell, Rob. *The Rule of Faith and Biblical Interpretation* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2018), xiii-160.

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 1      The Triune God**

HF, pp. 141-167; Coakley, Sarah, 'Seeing God: Trinitarian Thought Through Iconography,' pp. 190-248. In *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay on the Trinity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

### **Week 5: Oct 8      The Good Creation and Providence**

HF, pp. 141-167; Cavanaugh, William, 'Freedom and Unfreedom,' pp. 1-32. In *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Week 6: October 15 **Humanity, Evil and Sin**

HF, pp. 169-185; Taylor, Barbara. 'Sin as Our Only Hope,' pp. 41-68. In *Speaking of Sin: The Lost Language of Salvation*. Cambridge: Crowley, 2000; Francis Spufford, *Unapologetic*. London: Faber and Faber, pp. 167-204.

Week 7: October 22 - Reading Week, NO CLASS

Week 8: Oct 29      **The Person and Work of Christ**

HF, pp. 185-201; Wilken, Robert Louis, 'The Council of Nicaea and the Christian Creed,' pp. 88-98. In *The First Thousand Years: A Global History of Christianity*. New Haven: Yale, 2012.

Week 9: Nov 5      **Christ, Context and Religious Pluralism**

Okure, Teresa SHCJ, 'The Global Jesus,' pp. 237-249. In the *Cambridge Companion to Jesus*. Edited by Markus Bockmuehl. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001; Victor Aquilan, "Encountering Jesus in the Midst of Struggle." In *Christologies, Cultures and Religions*, eds. Buzzell and Penamusa. Quezon City: OMF Literature, 2016, pp. 23-33; Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *Christ and Reconciliation: A Constructive Theology for the Pluralistic World*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013, vol. 1. 381-407.

Week 10: Nov. 12    **The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life**

HF, pp. 205-255; 285-303.

Week 11: Nov 19    **Church, Proclamation, Ministry and Sacraments**

William Willimon, *Proclamation and Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005, pp. 1-49.

Week 12: Nov 26    **Hope for this Life and the Next**

HF, pp. 259-284; Fergusson, David. 'Eschatology,' pp. 226-244. In *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*. Edited by Colin Gunton. Cambridge: CUP, 1999.

## 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.

Ford, David. *The Modern Theologians*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 2005.

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).

Northey, Margot, Editor, et.al. *Making Sense: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing in Religious Studies*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2012. (**The checklist for a good paper inside the front cover is worth the price of the book!**)

Vyhmeister, Nancy Jean. *Your Guide to Writing Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

Webster, John B., Tanner, Kathryn and Torrance, Ian. *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

### Introductions, Thematic and General and Import Contemporary Work 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*. 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.

- Cavanaugh, William, 'Freedom and Unfreedom,' pp. 1-32. In *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
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- Felski, Rita. *The Limits of Critique*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.
- Ferguson, David. 'Eschatology,' pp. 226-244. In *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*. Edited by Colin Gunton. Cambridge: CUP, 1999.
- 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.
- Granberg-Michaelson. *Future Faith: Ten Challenges Reshaping Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2018.
- 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.
- Gunton, Colin E. Editor. *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1997.
- Guthrie, Shirley. *Christian Doctrine*. Revised Edition. Westminster/John Knox, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Gutierrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*. New York: Orbis, 1988.
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- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Power of the Poor in History*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004.
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- 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.
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