

TH 1A03 Systematic Theology 1

McMaster Divinity College
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Mon 10:30-12:20
Office: 216

Steven M. Studebaker, M.A., Ph.D.
Phone: 905.525.9140 ext. 20097
Email: studeba@mcmaster.ca
Office Hours: Mon 12:30-3:00; Wed 12:00-1:30;
and by appointment

I. Description:

This course introduces students to the documents and content of Christian theological reflection. It surveys the doctrines of revelation, the triune God, Christology, and anthropology. Care is taken to explore the application of theology to contemporary issues of Christian life and ministry.

II. Course Objectives:

Note: Given the introductory nature of this course and the degree track (MDiv and MTS) of the majority of its students most of the doctrines and issues covered will be those from within traditional evangelicalism, but not necessarily limited to them.

A. Knowing:

1. Know a range of Christian perspectives on the following: revelation, cosmology, Christology, pneumatology, anthropology.
2. Know key Christian thinkers and theological traditions.

B. Being:

1. Appreciate that theology is a dynamic and contextual effort to discern appropriate ways to embody the redemption revealed in Jesus Christ.
2. Embrace a deeper sense of your own theological vision vis-à-vis other Christian theological trajectories.
3. Appreciate the value of “generous orthodoxy.”

C. Doing:

1. Participate in the dynamic and personal nature of theology.
2. Develop the ability to engage in the process of constructive theological reflection.
3. Distinguish between the essentials and non-essentials of the Christian faith; particularly as this relates to cultural expressions of Christianity.

III. Required Text(s):

- A. Grenz, Stanley J., Guretzki, David, and Nordling, Cherith Fee. *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999.
- B. Two systematic theology texts: one should reflect the Christian tradition you most embody and the second an alternative one—e.g., if you are an evangelical (e.g., Baptist, CMA) Stanley Grenz’s *Theology for the Community of God* reflects your tradition and Amos Yong’s *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh* represents the Pentecostal tradition. See the bibliography for further ideas.
- C. Selections for What do you think? Book Reflection Essay:
- Choose one of the following books for the Book Reflection Essay (if you have ready these selections and/or have another option that you are burning to read, come talk to me about it)
- Rob Bell and Don Golden, *Jesus wants to Save Christians: A Manifesto for the Church in Exile* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008).
- Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974; New York: HarperPerennial, 1998).
- Anne Lamont, *Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith* (New York: Pantheon, 1999).
- Brian D. McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I am a missional . . .* (El Cajon, Calif.: Youth Specialties, 2006).
- Donald Miller, *Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003) or *Searching for God knows What* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2004).
- James Torrance, *Worship, Community, and the Triune God of Grace* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996).

IV. Course Performance Criteria:

Assignment	Percent	Due
A. Name that Theology (Quizzes):	20%	
1. First Quiz: (10%)		10/17
2. Second Quiz: (10%)		12/5
B. What do you think? Book Reflection Essay	25%	10/3
C. So What? Essay:	25%	10/31
D. Theologically Thinking about Christian Life & Ministry	25%	11/21
E. Reading:	5%	12/12
1. Text from your tradition: (2.5%)		
2. Text from an alternative tradition: (2.5%)		

F. Participation:

 X
Total: 100%

V. Assignment Descriptions:

General Guidelines:

- Electronic copies in MS Word preferred; alternatively, **all** hard copies should be **stapled** and submitted with a **cover sheet**. if you are unable to be in class on the due date because of a foreknown absence; please submit an electronic copy on the due date or a hard copy before the due date.
- Papers and assignments may be submitted early for feedback from the professor and resubmitted on the due date for grading.
- All assignments marked according to the Grading Criteria Form attached to the syllabus
- All papers and assignment should conform to (and will be marked against) the MacDiv Style Guide (<http://www.macdiv.ca/students/documents/MacStyleGuideApr1508.pdf>).

A. Name that Theology (Quizzes):

Exams provide an opportunity to demonstrate mastery of theological terms, concepts, and distinctions between various doctrines and/or systems of theological thought. They utilize objective and/or short-answer and essay questions. The exams/quizzes consist of approximately twenty to thirty questions. Study guides will be provided.

1. First quiz: objective &/or short answer/essay **(DUE October 17)**
2. Second quiz: objective &/or short answer/essay **(DUE December 5)**

B. What do You Think? Book Reflection Essay **(DUE October 6)**:

- In this assignment, you will show that you can:
 - 1) Distill and summarize the thesis and content of a theological work
 - 2) Engage theological analysis of it
- Purpose: Ministry leaders need the ability to understand and evaluate the theological ideas, themes, and assumptions of Christian literature. This assignment provides the opportunity to develop and hone these skills. For example, if you are a ministry leader, you will probably be asked about what you think about Rob Bells *Love Wins*.

- Select one of the books from the list of selections for Book Reflection Essay (e.g., Lamont, Dillard, Bell). If you have read the books listed or they spark no interest, suggest an alternative and we will work out a book that will be of interest to you and achieve the goal of the assignment.

1. Content:

- Write a descriptive and reflective essay.
- It should include elements such as the following:
 - a. A description of the book's thesis. That is, what is the primary point(s) advanced by the author? Describe its vision of Christianity: What are the key terms you can use to summarize it? What are the key ideas? What are the central arguments or supporting ideas?
 - b. Your personal interaction and assessment of the book:
 - Do you think it is correct?
 - Is its vision of the Christian life viable, helpful, and constructive?
 - Is the argument(s) and/or criticism fair or does it overstate its criticisms?
 - Is this book helpful or problematic for Christian thought, life, and ministry?

2. Argument:

- a. Write a detailed and coherent essay that describes the content of the book and your evaluation of it.
- b. Organize the book in a way that reflects thoughtful progression from description to analysis and interaction. The essay should have an introduction, content section, and conclusion.

3. Presentation:

- a. Write a stylistically clean essay.
- b. Length: minimum of five and maximum of seven double-spaced pages in 12 point Times New Roman font.
- c. Document additional sources with footnotes and follow the MacDiv Style Guide. References from the book may be placed in parentheses in the text, for example (Miller, 34).

C. So What? Essay (**DUE November 10/31**):

- Theology is not simply reading thick theological tomes. That is important, but only the initial step in the theological process. Theology serves the church when it helps us to understand the theological ideas that are central to Christianity and our particular tradition and opens up new insight on Christian thought, life, and ministry.

- This assignment provides the opportunity to answer the “so what” question of your theological textbooks. Based on reading in one of the topics covered in the class (nature of theology, God, Christology, theological anthropology, and theology of creation), you will articulate why it is important for Christian life and ministry. Endeavor to relate the material the concrete circumstances of your life and ministry.
- For example, how has your reading in for example Christology helped you better understand the Christian faith; what it means to relate to God, to other people, and to God’s kingdom; in other words, what difference does it make for Christian thought, life, and ministry?

1. Content:

- a. Describe the topic. You may not be able to describe everything about the topic, so if necessary, focus on the area of the topic that is of interest.
- b. Articulate why theology is important. For example, what difference does it make that Jesus Christ is the union God and humanity, how does it relate to contemporary Christian thought and life?
- c. Be sure to use at least the two theology textbooks you selected for the class

2. Argument:

- a. Write a detailed and coherent essay that moves from your description to appropriation of the topic.
- b. The essay should have an introduction, content section, and conclusion.

3. Presentation:

- a. Write a detailed and coherent essay that details the views of the selected authors and your evaluation of them.
- b. Write a stylistically clean essay.
- c. Length: approx. 5-7 double-spaced pages in 12 point Times New Roman font.
- d. Document additional sources with footnotes and follow the MacDiv Style Guide. References from the textbooks may be placed in parentheses in the text, for example (Grenz, 34).

D. Theologically Thinking on Christian Life & Ministry (**DUE November 21**):

- This essay enables you to fulfill the objective of identifying and describing the dynamic and personal nature of theology.
- Theology should be like poetry, a moving film, or a good book; it should open a horizon of new insight that promises to transform our lives. For example, when I began to work in the area of theology of creation and grapple with the theological notion that the Holy Spirit is the immanent source of life for all creatures, I adopted more environmentally friendly habits—e.g., diligent recycling.
- Most of us do theological reflection all the time, but in a casual and unintentional manner: we wonder about this or that, have flashes of insight, but do not take the time to record these thoughts and breakthroughs nor reflect on them in a sustained way. Unfortunately, they are often lost down the memory hole.
- This assignment helps to develop an intentional habit of theological reflection
- Specific steps you can take to accomplish this task include the following:

1) Select a topic of personal interest and related to the topics covered in the class

Issues that you might address include the following . . .

- Does God speak in popular culture? In other words, can cultural mediums be a source of theological insight and why or why not?
- What is a Christian understanding of creation and how does it relate to environmental concerns?
- What does it mean to be in but not of the world (John 17:13-19)? Should churches be involved with politics and social issues?
- What is the relationship between prayer and God’s foreknowledge, between human initiative and divine providence?
- What is the nature of the human? Holistic? Body, soul, spirit? How does our view influence the way we approach ministry, discipleship, and our lives in this world?

2) Detail your thoughts on the selected theological topic within the first week of the semester in order to obtain an accurate description of your views prior to reflecting on the issue in the course. You do not need turn in this part, but please do it as it will be used in the submitted essay.

3) Record/journal references to the theological issue heard in songs, worship, conversations, sermons, readings, lectures, etc. You should start your record as soon as possible. Include in your record a brief description of the theology explicitly or implicitly assumed in the statement. Keeping track of your thoughts throughout the semester will be helpful for submitted essay.

Examples of “references” are:

■ Topic: Creation and the environment.

A popular worship song contains the words, "...the universe declares your majesty, you are Holy, Holy..." This affirms the revelatory nature of creation. If creation declares the majesty of God, does this have implications for a Christian environmental ethic? Perhaps environmental involvement is a "spiritual" activity.

■ Topic: Theological anthropology/embodied existence.

A pastor said, "I can't wait to leave this bag of bones behind and go to heaven." Does his statement marginalize the embodied nature of human existence and the body itself? Does it conflict with the creation narrative and thus a legitimate Christian anthropology? Does it perhaps reflect a gnostic strain in popular evangelical Christianity?

GRADING RUBRIC MATTERS

1. Content:

The essay should contain at least the following parts:

- a) The first part of the essay *summarizes*, first, your view of the theological topic (cut and paste from the first draft) described in the first stage of this assignment and second, the findings from your record keeping.
- b) In the second part of the essay, you construct and write your revised understanding of the theological issue. You should interact with your earlier outlined view and the perspectives you have recorded throughout the semester. How has your view changed, deepened, challenged?

2. Argument:

- a. Write a detailed and coherent essay that details ways your perspective has been challenged, developed, and/or nuanced on a theological topic over the course of the semester.
- b. Integrate assigned and other readings, discussions, etc. into your essay.
- c. Adherence to the methodological steps.

3. Presentation:

- a. Write a stylistically clean essay.

- b. Length: approx. five double-spaced pages in 12 point Times New Roman font.
- c. Document sources with footnotes and follow the MacDiv Style Guide.

E. Reading (**DUE December 12**):

1. Reading assignments introduce students to documents of Christian theological reflection and facilitate attaining all of the learning objectives. You should read the sections of the systematic theologies that correspond to the lecture topic outline in the syllabus.
 - The professor may at times assign supplementary readings.

VI. Lecture Outline (*tentative*):

Week	Date	Topic	Reading Assignment	Due
1	9/12	Introduction to the Course I. The Nature and Task of Theology		
2	9/19	I. Continued	Study your systematic theology texts (STs) on revelation, Scripture, and theological method/nature of theology	
3	9/26	II. Revelation and Scripture	Ibid.	
4	10/3	II. Continued	Ibid.	■ Book Reflection Essay
5	10/10	<i>Thanksgiving Holiday</i>		
6	10/17	III. The Triune God	Study your STs on God and Trinity	■ First Quiz approx. 20 minutes
7	10/24	III. Continued		
8	10/31	IV. Christology	Study your STs on Christology	■ Comparison Essay
9	11/7	IV. Continued	Ibid.	
10	11/14	VI. Theological Anthropology	Study your STs on anthropology & sin.	
11	11/21	IV. Continued	Ibid.	■ X Formation Essay
12	11/28	VII. Creation	Study your STs on Creation	
13	12/5	IV. Continued		■ Second Quiz approx.

				20 minutes
14	12/12-16	Exam Week	Ibid.	■ Submit reading report 12/12

VII. Policies:

A. Textbook Purchase:

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 218, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstores, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9C 5K1: phone 416-620-2934; fax 416-622-2308; e-mail books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

B. Academic Honesty:

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ www.madciv.ca/regs/honesty.php.

C. Gender Inclusive Language:

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

VIII. Late-Assignment and Exam Policy:

A. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified in the syllabus.

B. Students take exams on the date and at the time scheduled in the syllabus.

C. Late assignments are reduced five percentage points for each day late (e.g., if the grade is 90 and it is one day late, the grade will be reduced to 85).

D. Assignments and exams will be accepted without penalty after the specified date in the syllabus **only** in the case of an excused absence. If a student misses an exam or assignment submission due to a reason that he/she believes is excusable, then he/she must notify the instructor and schedule an exam

date and/or late-assignment submission date within twenty-four hours of the beginning of the missed class session.

- E. Assignments and exams will not be accepted late on the basis of the student's involvement with school-approved activities. If you are not able to be in class for an exam or assignment submission, then you must pre-arrange with the instructor to take the exam and/or submit the assignment before the scheduled date in the syllabus.
- F. Open communication is the best policy. If you think you will have trouble submitting an assignment or taking an exam due to health issues and/or unexpected life circumstances, please contact the instructor as soon as possible so that we can make the appropriate arrangements in order to make your course experience a successful one and so that you earn the best possible grade for your hard work.

Please Note: This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.

Suggested Bibliography for Reading Assignments:

Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologiæ*. Numerous translations and still substantial abridgements are available, (Roman Catholic).

Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975, (Reformed and Neo-orthodox).

Bicknell, E. S. *A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles*. New York: Longmans, 1919, (Anglican).

Bloesch, Donald G. *Christian Foundations*. This is a multiple volume set that began in 1992 with *A Theology of Word and Spirit: Authority and Method in Theology*. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, (Barthian Congregationalist).

Burtner, Robert W. and Robert E. Chiles, editors. *John Wesley's Theology: A Collection From His Works*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983, (Wesleyan).

Calvin, John. *The Institutes of the Christian Religion, Volumes I & II*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979, (Reformed).

Catechism of the Catholic Church. Image, 1995, (Roman Catholic).

Chan, Simon. *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998, (Asian, with emphasis on the practice of personal transformation).

Eck, Diana L. *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras*. 1993.

- Evan, James H. *We have been Believers: An African American Systematic Theology*. 1992.
- Finger, Thomas N. *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology: biblical, historical, constructive*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004 (Anabaptist/Moravian).
- Gonzalez, Justo L. *Mañana: Christian Theology from Hispanic Perspective*. 1990.
- Grenz, Stanley J. *Theology for the Community of God*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994, (Canadian Baptist).
- Lee, Jung Young. *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology*. 1995.
- Macchia, Frank D. *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005(Contemporary Pentecostal).
- Maddox, Randy. *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994, (Wesleyan).
- McBrien, Richard, *Catholicism* (1980), BX 1751.2 .M24
- McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994, (Reformed Anglican).
- Oden, Thomas C. *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity: A Plain Exposition of His Teaching on Christian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994, (Wesleyan).
- _____. *Systematic Theology: Volume 1 The Living God, Volume 2 The Word of Life, Volume 3 Life in the Spirit*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988, (Wesleyan, with particular interest in the early church fathers who founded the Eastern Orthodox traditions).
- Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991, (Lutheran).
- Peters, Ted. *God-The World's Future: Systematic Theology for the Post Modern Era*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992, (Lutheran, confessional, postmodern).
- Polkinghorne, John. *The Faith of a Physicist: Reflections of a Bottom-Up Thinker, The Gifford Lectures 1993-94*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, (Scientist and Anglican).
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*. 1993.
- Ryrie, Charles C. *Basic Theology*. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1986, (Dispensationalist).
- Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *The Christian Faith*. New York: Harper & Row, 1963, (Classic Liberalism).

Yong, Amos. *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: The Possibility of a Global Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005, (Contemporary Pentecostal).

Williams, J. Rodman. *Renewal Theology: God, the World, and Redemption: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Academic Books, 1988, (Reformed and Charismatic).

Williams, Rowan. *On Christian Theology*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2000, (Contemporary Anglican).