



# THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

THEO6301 • Fall 2015 • Tuesdays 2:00-4:50 p.m.

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*“I find it necessary to write and appeal to you to contend for  
the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.”*

Jude 3 (NRSV)

## **The Mission of the Seminary**

The mission of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries.

## **Course Description**

This course provides a biblical, historical, and theological examination of the doctrines of revelation and the Bible. This study assists students to begin formation of a systematic, Christian perspective upon these issues. An understanding of the doctrine of revelation and the Bible is basic to all other doctrines because the Christian faith and theology are based upon God’s self-revelation. Students will investigate the theoretical issues involved in these doctrines as well as develop the implications of their findings for Christian living and ministry.

## **Core Value Focus**

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has five core values: Doctrinal Integrity, Spiritual Vitality, Mission Focus, Characteristic Excellence, and Servant Leadership. These values shape both the context and manner in which all curricula are taught, with “doctrinal integrity” and “mission focus” especially highlighted in this course. The core value focus for the 2015-16 academic year is “mission focus.”

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

1. The student will become familiar with the doctrinal developments and formations of significant movements, schools, and individuals in church history from the end of the first century to the end of the fifteenth century;
2. The student will gain a basic knowledge of the trajectory of thought in the development of ideas as they work out historically;
3. The student will become familiar with a broad survey of the institutional, political, social, and cultural conditions which influenced the development of Christian thought;

4. The student will be exposed to significant documents from the history of Christian thought;
5. The student will learn to appreciate the struggles and labors of the great saints of Christianity who helped shaped, establish, and defend Christian orthodoxy;
6. The student will develop and appreciation and understanding of how his or her own beliefs developed from the history of Christian thought.

### **Biblical Authority**

In order to develop competent theological researchers for the twenty-first century church and academy, students in this course will be exposed to seminal works in Christian theology from a wide array of theological perspectives, including the influential works of many prominent non-evangelical theologians. Students are expected to become familiar with and demonstrate advanced, biblically guided critical engagement with the works of these thinkers.

The instructor of this course operate under the assumption that the Bible is the inspired, totally true and trustworthy Word of God. While history, tradition, and reason play no small role in the theological task, the Bible holds ultimate authority in Christian doctrine and practice. *The Baptist Faith and Message* (2000) is the confessional framework from which this instructor works.

### **Required Texts**

Johnston, Robert K. *God's Wider Presence: Reconsidering General Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014.

Putman, Rhyne R. *In Defense of Doctrine: Evangelicalism, Theology, and Scripture*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.

### **Recommended Texts**

Bloesch, Donald G. *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration & Interpretation*. 2d ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006.

Carroll, Benajah Harvey. *The Inspiration of the Bible*. New York: Revell, 1930.

Carson, D. A. *Collected Writings on Scripture*. Edited by Andrew David Naselli. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010.

Criswell, Wallie Amos. *Why I Preach That the Bible Is Literally True*. Nashville: Broadman, 1969.

Dockery, David S. *Christian Scripture: An Evangelical Perspective on Inspiration, Authority, and Interpretation*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995

- Dulles, Avery. *Models of Revelation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992.
- Gunton, Colin. *A Brief Theology of Revelation*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995.
- Henry, Carl F. H. *God, Revelation, and Authority*. 5 vols. Waco, TX: Word, 1976-1983.
- Holcomb, Justin S. *Christian Theologies of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.
- Lindsell, Harold. *The Battle for the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976.
- Merrick, J. and Stephen M. Garrett, eds. *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.
- Smith, Christian. *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2012.
- Thompson, Mark D. *A Clear and Present Word: The Clarity of Scripture*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006.
- Warfield, Benjamin Breckenridge. *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, ed. Samuel G. Craig. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948.
- Witherington, Ben, III. *The Living Word of God: Rethinking the Theology of the Bible*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007.
- Wright, N. T. *Scripture and the Authority of God*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2013.

## Course Requirements

### **1. Attendance and Course Participation (10%)**

Students are expected to read the assigned pages listed for each class period as well as the others' papers. Our class meetings will be conducted seminar-style, and all students will participate in the discussions of the readings and students' papers. *Students will be required to hand in a reading report at the end of the semester.*

### **2. Discussion Leadership (10%)**

Each student is responsible for leading class discussion on

### **3. Weekly Reading Responses (20%)**

To aid engagement with course readings, students will write a response not exceeding 150 words to a question related to the reading for that week to be turned in during class. Students will also be required to write a question to facilitate class discussion for every reading assignment.

### **4. Research Papers (35%)**

Each student will prepare a research paper on a topic agreed upon by the professor and the student. Papers should be 12-15 double-spaced pages in length. *Research papers are due October 28, 2014.* A hard copy must be submitted to the professors, but digital copies can be submitted via Blackboard for other classmates.

The research paper will be evaluated as follows:

1. Grammar and style: Spelling, sentence and paragraph development; punctuation; and conformity to the 7th or 8th edition of Turabian. (15 points)
  2. Clarity and Coherence: Balance; thoroughness; organization; logical development; overall sense of the paper. (20 points)
  3. Research: Bibliography; type and variety of sources (primary, secondary, monographs, journal articles, websites, etc.); most bibliographic entries should be accompanied by footnote citations. (15 points)
  4. Historical Awareness and Insight: Factual accuracy; awareness of historical connections (continuity/discontinuity, cause/effect, contrasts/comparisons); sensitivity to historical context; awareness of the historical impact of a person. (20 points)
  5. Analysis and Evaluation: Going beyond the mere reporting of facts to include explanation, interpretation, analysis of material; evaluation of strengths and weaknesses; demonstration that you have thought about the material that you have researched. Give strong and insightful introduction and conclusion. (30 points)
- An “A” paper (93-100) has a clearly articulated thesis that guides the organization of the paper, the content of the paper, and the selection of resources. Such papers also show the author’s ability to do quality research, choosing quality resources, distinguishing between primary and secondary sources, and are conversant with up-to-date literature in the field. “A” papers demonstrate creative, substantive critical engagement with sources. Authors of “A” papers write with professional attention to grammar, form, and style.
  - “B” papers (85-92) clearly state a thesis but fail to connect the stated thesis with the organization and content of the paper. These papers include some material irrelevant to this issue at hand. “B” papers evidence that the student is growing in his or her ability to do research even if some source selections are questionable. Authors of these papers attempt to make critical arguments and show growing skill in this area. These papers evidence only minor errors in grammar, form, and style.
  - “C” papers (77-84) lack a clear thesis and structure and tend to be “survey papers” that are descriptive without argumentation. While these papers evidence some interaction with

current, quality sources, they gravitate toward secondary sources and out-of-date sources. “C” papers also contain numerous grammatical errors and problems with form and style, even to the point of distracting readers from the content of the paper.

- D” (70-76) and “F” (0-69) papers make no attempt to define the problem and show no evidence of a coherent structure. These papers show the author’s inability to do graduate level research, a failure to engage quality resources, and only a superficial grasp of sources that are cited. “D” and “F” papers contain major grammatical errors and show no evidence whatsoever of proofreading.

### **5. Final Exam (15%)**

Every student will complete a take-home final comprehensive final exam. Students will be evaluated on their mastery of the course content and their ability to engage it critically.

### **Course Evaluation**

Grades will be determined on the basis of the NOBTS grading scale—an A for 93-100, B for 85-92, C for 77-84, D for 70-76, and F for 69 or below. Borderline grades will normally be determined by the numerical grade received (we round up from .5), unless the student’s promptness and faithfulness in class attendance, positive attitude and contribution in class discussions, and preparedness and attentiveness in class warrants special consideration. These factors only apply when the student is fractionally close to the next highest grade.

• Attendance and Course Participation	10%
• Historical Theology Report	20%
• Research Paper	35%
• Book Reviews	20%
• Final Exam	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **Class Policies**

#### **1. Attendance and Class Participation**

As noted above, attendance and class participation are necessary for meeting the requirements of this class. Students are expected to be attentive and prepared for each class session. Students who are engaged in private conversations or doing work for other classes may be asked to leave the class; repeat violations may result in removal from the course. Rude or disruptive behavior is also not permitted.

## **2. Laptop Guidelines**

Laptops are permitted in class as long as they are used for taking notes or accessing Dropbox materials related to this particular course. *Students using laptops are requested to sit in the front of the classroom for accountability purposes.* Gaming, e-mail, social networking, and web browsing of any kind are strictly prohibited. Failure to heed this policy may result in dismissal from the class session and loss of laptop privileges; repeat violations may result in removal from the course.

## **3. Plagiarism**

The instructor calls attention to the policy on plagiarism found in the NOBTS Graduate Catalog and Student Handbook. Remember the words of the proverb: *“Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out”* (Prov. 10:19).

## **Extra Credit**

### **1. Book Review**

Students may write one (1) additional critical book review of another book from the list of review monographs for extra credit. All of the requirements for the critical review listed above apply to extra credit book reviews. Students can earn up to five points on their final grade with a quality critical book review.

### **2. ETS Report**

Students attending the annual national meeting of the Southwest Regional meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in New Orleans, LA on April 10-11 may write a 1000-word report on papers about historical theology attended (at least three). Students can earn up to seven points on their final grade with submission. For registration information, please visit <http://www.etsjets.org>.

<b>THEO6301 Fall 2015</b>			
<b>Reading and Assignments Schedule</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Response Question</b>
<b>8/25</b>	Course Introduction	Syllabus	
<b>9/1</b>	The Nature of Revelation	Packer, "Contemporary Views of Revelation," 57-71 Warfield, "The Biblical Idea of Revelation," 71-102	<i>In your own terms, define "revelation."</i>
<b>9/8</b>	The Nature of Revelation	Dulles, "Revelation as Doctrine," 36-52 Dulles, "Revelation as History," 53-67 Dulles, "Revelation as Inner Experience," 68-83	<i>Are Dulles' criticisms of "revelation as doctrine" helpful? Why or why not?</i>
<b>9/15</b>	The Nature of Revelation	Dulles, "Revelation as Dialectical Presence," 84-97 Dulles, "Revelation as New Awareness," 98-114 Dulles, "The Models Compared," 115-28	<i>Which of the five models offered by Dulles best describes your understanding of revelation? Explain your choice.</i>
<b>9/22</b>	General Revelation	Johnston, <i>God's Wider Presence</i>	<i>What do you make of Johnston's re-construal of the doctrine of general revelation?</i>
<b>9/29</b>	Authority and Inspiration of Scripture	Packer, "The Necessity of the Revealed Word," 85-99 Warfield, "The Biblical Idea of Inspiration," 131-66 Rice, <i>Our God-Breathed Book</i> , 241-91	<i>What discernible differences can we establish between a classical plenary-verbal model of inspiration and a dictation model?</i>
<b>10/6</b>	Authority and Inspiration of Scripture	Brown, "Scripture and Tradition in the Theology of Karl Barth," 3-19 Vanhoozer, "God's Mighty Speech Acts," 127-58 Vanhoozer, "From Speech Acts to Scripture Acts," 159-203	<i>According to Vanhoozer, how does God express authority through Scripture? How do we submit to that authority?</i>

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<b>10/13</b>	Inerrancy of Scripture	Mohler, "When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks," 29-58 Enns, "Inerrancy, However Defined, Does Not Describe What the Bible Does," 83-116 Vanhoozer, "Augustinian Inerrancy," 199-235	<i>Which of the three statements on inerrancy read here best describes your position? Why?</i>
<b>10/20</b>	<b>FALL BREAK</b> "...give him rest from days of trouble. . ." (Psalm 94:13)		
<b>10/27</b>	Inerrancy / Clarity of Scripture	Erickson, "Problem Areas Related to Biblical Inerrancy," 175-89 Packer, "Problem Areas Related to Biblical Inerrancy," 205-13 Carson, "Is the Doctrine of <i>Claritas Scripturae</i> Still Relevant Today?" 179-96	<i>Is a doctrine of the clarity of scripture still a defensible position? Why or why not?</i>
<b>11/3</b>	From Scripture to Theology	Putman, <i>In Defense of Doctrine</i>	<i>Is a sola scriptura doctrine a defensible, coherent position for evangelicals? Why or why not?</i>
<b>11/10</b>	From Scripture to Theology	Putman, <i>In Defense of Doctrine</i>	<i>What is a "performance" interpretation of Scripture?</i>
<b>11/17</b>	<b>EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING</b> <b>Atlanta, GA</b>		
<b>11/24</b>	<b>THANKSGIVING BREAK</b> <i>"The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me" (Psalm 50:23)</i>		
<b>12/1</b>	Paper Presentations		
<b>12/8</b>	Paper Presentations		
<b>12/15</b>	Paper Presentations	<b>Final Reflection Paper Due</b>	

### ADDITIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Bainton, Ronald H. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. Charleston, SC: Forgotten Books, 2012.
- Bettenson, Henry, and Chris Maunder, eds. *Documents of the Christian Church*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Bobrick, Benson. *Wide as the Waters: The Story of the English Bible and the Revolution It Inspired*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2002.
- Brecht, Martin. *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation, 1483-1521; Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation, 1521-1532; and Martin Luther: the Preservation of the Church, 1532-1546*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990-1994.
- Byrne, James M. *Religion and the Enlightenment: From Descartes to Kant*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.
- Carpenter, Joel A. *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Chadwick, Owen. *The Church in the Cold War*. Penguin, 1993.
- Cox, Harvey. *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2009.
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- Gritsch, Eric W. *Martin—God’s Court Jester*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2009.
- Jenkins, Philip. *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007.
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- . *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*. 3d ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
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- Williams, Daniel H. *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism: A Primer for Suspicious Protestants*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Yarnell, Malcolm B., III. *The Formation of Christian Doctrine*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2007.