

# THEO5300 Systematic Theology I

NEW ORLEANS BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
DIVISION OF THEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL STUDIES  
FALL 2020 • W 8:00-10:50 A.M.



ANSWERING GOD'S CALL

**JEFFREY RILEY, PhD**  
PROFESSOR OF ETHICS  
ASSOCIATE DEAN OF RESEARCH DOCTORAL PROGRAMS

504.816.8017  
DODD 207  
JRILEY@NOBTS.EDU

*"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them,  
because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."*  
1 Timothy 4:16

## Mission Statement

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

## Core Value Focus

The seminary has five core values: Doctrinal Integrity, Spiritual Vitality, Mission Focus, Characteristic Excellence, and Servant Leadership. The core value focus for this academic year is **mission focus**.

## Curriculum Competencies

All graduates of NOBTS are expected to have at least a minimum level of competency in each of the following areas: Biblical Exposition, Christian Theological Heritage, Disciple Making, Interpersonal Skills, Servant Leadership, Spiritual and Character Formation, and Worship Leadership. The curriculum competencies addressed in this course are: Biblical Exposition and Christian Theological Heritage

## Course Description

This first course in systematic theology introduces the student to the methodology of theology (Prolegomena) and the doctrines of revelation, God, humanity, and the person of Christ. The biblical foundations and the relevant historical developments are considered in construction of a Christian understanding of each doctrine.

## Student Learning Outcomes

The student, by the end of the course, should:

1. **Be able to understand** theological method and the doctrines of revelation, God, humanity, and the person of Christ biblically, historically, and systematically.
2. **Be able to apply** theology by integrating these doctrines into a coherent, comprehensive, and consistent Christian worldview.
3. **Be able to communicate** these doctrines in the particular ministry calling and context of the learner.

## Statement on 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 and liberal 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 operates under the assumption that the Bible is the inspired, totally true and trustworthy Word of God which is “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). The Baptist Faith and Message (2000) provides the confessional framework from which the instructor leads the course.

### Required Textbooks

Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. 3d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013.

Putman, Rhyne. *When Doctrine Divides the People of God: An Evangelical Approach to Theological Diversity*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020.

### Recommended Resources

Akin, Daniel, ed. *A Theology for the Church*. 2d ed. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2014. This “systematic” theology is a collection of essays on different doctrinal topics written by some of the leading voices in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Bird, Michael F. *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013. Bird is an Anglican and Reformed NT scholar from Australia who has written a systematic theology that integrates the insights of contemporary biblical theology into a systematic textbook.

Frame, John. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013. Frame is a Presbyterian and Reformed theologian in the Westminster Tradition.

Garrett, James L. *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*, vol. 1, 4th ed. North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 2011. Dr. Garrett is a SBC theologian who offers an excellent historical examination of each of the doctrines discussed. Dr. Garrett is the go-to expert on Baptist doctrine.

Grider, J. Kenneth. *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1994. J. Kenneth Grider was a Nazarene systematic theologian in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition.

Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994. Grudem, a Calvinistic Baptist with charismatic undertones, has written one of the most popular and accessible theology texts available today.

Horton, Michael F. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011. Horton is a well-known Reformed theologian and apologist who engages many contemporary issues and important philosophical trends in his work.

Lewis, Gordon and Bruce Demarest. *Integrative Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010. This evangelical theology—available in one-volume and three-volume editions—integrates biblical exegesis, historical research, apologetics, and pastoral application in its discussion of every doctrine.

Oden, Thomas C. *Classic Christianity: A Systematic Theology*. New York: HarperOne, 2011. Oden is a Methodist/Wesleyan evangelical theologian who utilizes the resources of patristic Christianity to make a case for Christian doctrines. This book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the thought of early church fathers.

Ryrie, Charles C. *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*. 2d ed. Chicago: Moody, 1999. This volume is a systematic theology written with lay persons in mind. Ryrie writes from a classic Dispensationalist perspective.

Williams, J. Rodman. *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996. Williams was a leading intellectual figure in the neo-charismatic movement called “renewal theology.” This is an excellent exposition of contemporary charismatic and Pentecostal theology.

### Course Teaching Methodology

The course will involve the following methodologies: lectures from the professor, reading, and directed research questions.

## Course Requirements

### **1. Required Reading, Attendance, Critical Responses, Participation, and Hard Work (10% of grade):**

Students are expected to participate in classroom discussion and to read all required materials prior to class attendance. The professor reserves the right to require of students a “pop” quiz to keep them accountable for required readings. *Students will be required to hand in a reading report at the end of the semester.*

Dr. Riley may assign **critical responses** to questions drawn from the text or other assigned readings. Students will be required to write a 500-800 word, single-spaced response which will be due the next class period. Students should expect that they may be called upon to read their critical response during class.

### **2. Exams (50% of final grade):**

Two take-home exams will be assessed. Exams will evaluate the student’s understanding of the theological content and critical reflections gleaned through the reading and classroom experience. Dr. Riley reserves the right to determine how the exams or exam questions are delivered.

### **3. Erickson Chapter Summaries (10%)**

Students must read ALL chapters required in the schedule below and submit a **one-paragraph summary** of each chapter read the day it is due in Blackboard. Each Summary should include one question raised by the chapter reading.

### **4. Putman Book Review and Discussion (15% of final grade):**

Each student will read and review *When Doctrine Divides the People of God*. Students should be prepared to discuss the book on the day the reviews are due.

All book reviews should reflect the following guidelines:

#### **Regarding form and style:**

1. Do not use a title page. In the heading of the first page, include your name and the bibliographic data of the book being reviewed:  
     Jeffrey Riley. Review of Rhyne Putman, *When Doctrine Divides the People of God: An Evangelical Approach to Theological Diversity*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020.
2. Include proper referencing of direct citations, using in-text parenthetical notes: (page #)
3. If you use or cite other books, include a bibliography and reference using in-text parenthetical notes: (last name, page #).
4. Use Subheading based on content instructions below.
5. On all other questions of style, refer to Turabian, *A Manual of Style* (approved edition)
6. Edit. Edit. Edit. Someone has said, “There are no good writers, just good editors.” Perhaps an overstatement, but heed the advice (I actually had to edit this point 4 times).
7. Use a standard, 12-point font like Times New Roman, double-spaced, one-inch margins.
8. Length: 1500-2000 words (approximately 6-8 pages).

#### **Regarding content:**

Get a sense of the big picture. The review is not a summary of the book. You are engaging and evaluating the content of a book. Broadly divide the review into the following, attending to specific matters recommended within each section (pages are approximations; balance is the key):

1. Introductory matters (1 page):
  - a. Information on the author. What are some of the author's working assumptions (e.g., his or her denominational background, field of research, view of Scripture, etc.)?
  - b. State the book's primary aim/thesis and approach
  - c. Situate the book in a larger context, discussion, or issue
  - d. State the book's primary contribution
2. Content of the book (2-3 pages)
  - a. Brief outline (describe in prose)
  - b. Sketch the book's contents, being sure to account for the main threads of the book's arguments.
  - c. Present the whole book, remembering, however, that this is not a chapter by chapter summary.
3. Critical Engagement (2-3 pages)
  - a. Major theological and practical insights communicated by the book. What points are particularly helpful for applying Christian doctrine?
  - b. Does the author provide strong biblical, philosophical, and historical support for his or her positions?
  - c. Ideas that are interesting, novel, or problematic
  - d. Ideas that changed or challenged your thinking. How and Why?
  - e. Insights in this book that practically relate to life and ministry, the life of the church, and the relationship Christians have to the broader cultures
  - f. Major strengths and weaknesses of the book
4. Conclusion (1 page)
  - a. Of review, not the book
  - b. Did the author fulfill his or her purpose?
  - c. Sum up importance and/or liabilities of the book
  - d. Include a recommendation (or not) and for whom

### How Reviews are evaluated (see Rubric below):

- **“A” papers (93-100)**
  - clearly state the book’s thesis
  - successfully and succinctly outline its argument in its own terms
  - demonstrate advanced critical engagement with the argument and content of the book
  - make clear and well-structured arguments that engage the content
  - exhibit a proficient grasp of grammar, spelling, and style
  - Use full allowable words/pages: approximately 2000/8 pages
- **“B” papers (85-92)**
  - clearly state the book’s thesis
  - show an attempt to understand the book on its own terms, though overly as summary
  - attempt critically to reflect on the issues at hand,
  - make satisfactory arguments that engage the content
  - show sufficiency in grammar, spelling, and style
- **“C” papers (84 and less)**
  - state the book’s thesis
  - present the content of the book in chapter to chapter summary without demonstrating evidence of grasping the books main ideas
  - shallow reflection on the issues at hand
  - raise preliminary critical questions for further evaluation
  - limit evaluation to preformed judgments without serious consideration of the book’s ideas ,or simply approve or disapprove the author’s ideas/arguments
  - make repeated mistakes in grammar, spelling, and style, and/or demonstrate little or no attempt to proofread
  - Use fewer than allowable words: less than approximately 1500 or 6 pages

### **5. Doctrinal Sermon or Teaching Event (15%)**

Every student will write a 4-6-page single-spaced manuscript for a doctrinal sermon or teaching event. Students can write on any doctrine addressed in this section of Systematic Theology (the doctrines of revelation, God, creation, providence, humanity, sin, and person of Christ). Each sermon should contain an introduction, a main idea, explanations of the biblical text, illustrations, applications, and a conclusion/invitation. *Students who preach or teach their lesson in a church context by the end of the semester and who provide a one-page summary of their feedback can get 25 extra-credit points on the grade of this assignment.*

The sermon or teaching may be a straightforward exposition of a doctrine in a particular text (e.g., the providence of God in Rom. 9) or a topical, yet text-driven manuscript that traces a doctrine through a book or multiple books of the Bible.

**Evaluation of Grades**

The student's grade will be computed as follows:

1. Reading, Participation, and so forth	10%
2. 2 Exams	50%
3. Chapter Summaries	10%
4. Putman Review	15%
5. Doctrinal Sermon/Teaching Event	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

All assignments must be submitted to pass the course. Students who fail to complete an assignment will not receive a passing grade.

**Embedded Assignment**

All students enrolled in every section of Systematic Theology I have a common Embedded Assignment utilized in evaluating our projected Student Learning Outcomes. It serves in this course as a Critical Response Assignment.

**Embedded Assignment**

- Using the materials from your assigned systematic theology textbook and other theological resources (like commentaries, other theological textbooks or monographs), briefly explain your understanding of the doctrine of general revelation, highlighting the differences between general and special revelation.
- What impact does the doctrine of general revelation have on your understanding of missions and evangelism?
- Describe how the doctrine of general revelation can affect your communication of the Gospel.
- This assignment should be 800-1200 words in length.

The rubric below shows how the question will be evaluated in terms of addressing Student Learning Outcomes. Students may use this rubric as a guide for how they answer other questions in the Theological Reflections Question Sets.

DOMAIN	LEVEL	INADEQUATE (0 PTS)	BASIC (1 PT)	COMPETENT (2 PTS)	GOOD (3 PTS)	EXCELLENT (4PTS)
UNDERSTANDING	Able to understand the doctrinal topic.					
APPLICATION	Able to apply knowledge by relating it to the broader Christian worldview.					
COMMUNICATION	Able to communicate the doctrine to a ministry audience.					

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## Extra Credit Opportunities

### 1. Hearers and Doers Reflection (worth a letter grade)

Read *Hearers and Doers* by Kevin Vanhoozer. Write a two-page double-spaced summary of the book's contents, offer a one-to-two-page critique, and then write two pages about their own plan for integrating doctrine into their own discipleship ministry (5-6 double-spaced pages total)

### 2. Writing Center Evaluation

Students who their Book Review to the **Writing Center a week before the due date** will receive a seven-point bonus on their paper grade. Students must show proof of this by attaching the email from the Writing Center.

## Technical Assistance

For assistance regarding technology, consult ITC (504-816-8180) or the following websites:

1. [Selfserve@nobts.edu](mailto:Selfserve@nobts.edu) - Email for technical questions/support requests with the [Selfserve.nobts.edu](http://Selfserve.nobts.edu) site (Access to online registration, financial account, online transcript, etc.)
2. [BlackboardHelpDesk@nobts.edu](mailto:BlackboardHelpDesk@nobts.edu) - Email for technical questions/support requests with the NOBTS Blackboard Learning Management System [NOBTS.Blackboard.com](http://NOBTS.Blackboard.com).
3. [ITCSupport@nobts.edu](mailto:ITCSupport@nobts.edu) - Email for general technical questions/support requests.
4. [www.NOBTS.edu/itc/](http://www.NOBTS.edu/itc/) - General NOBTS technical help information is provided on this website.

## Help for Writing Papers at "The Write Stuff"

NOBTS maintains a Writing Center designed to improve English writing at the graduate level. Students can receive writing guides, tips, and valuable information to help in becoming a better writer.

## Plagiarism on Written Assignments

NOBTS has a no tolerance policy for plagiarism. Plagiarism in certain cases may result in expulsion from the seminary. See the NOBTS Student Handbook for definition, penalties, and policies associated with plagiarism.

Week 1

**Prolegomena:** What is Theology and What Should it Accomplish?

Week 3

**Revelation and Bibliology:** What is the Authoritative Source of Theology?

Week 5

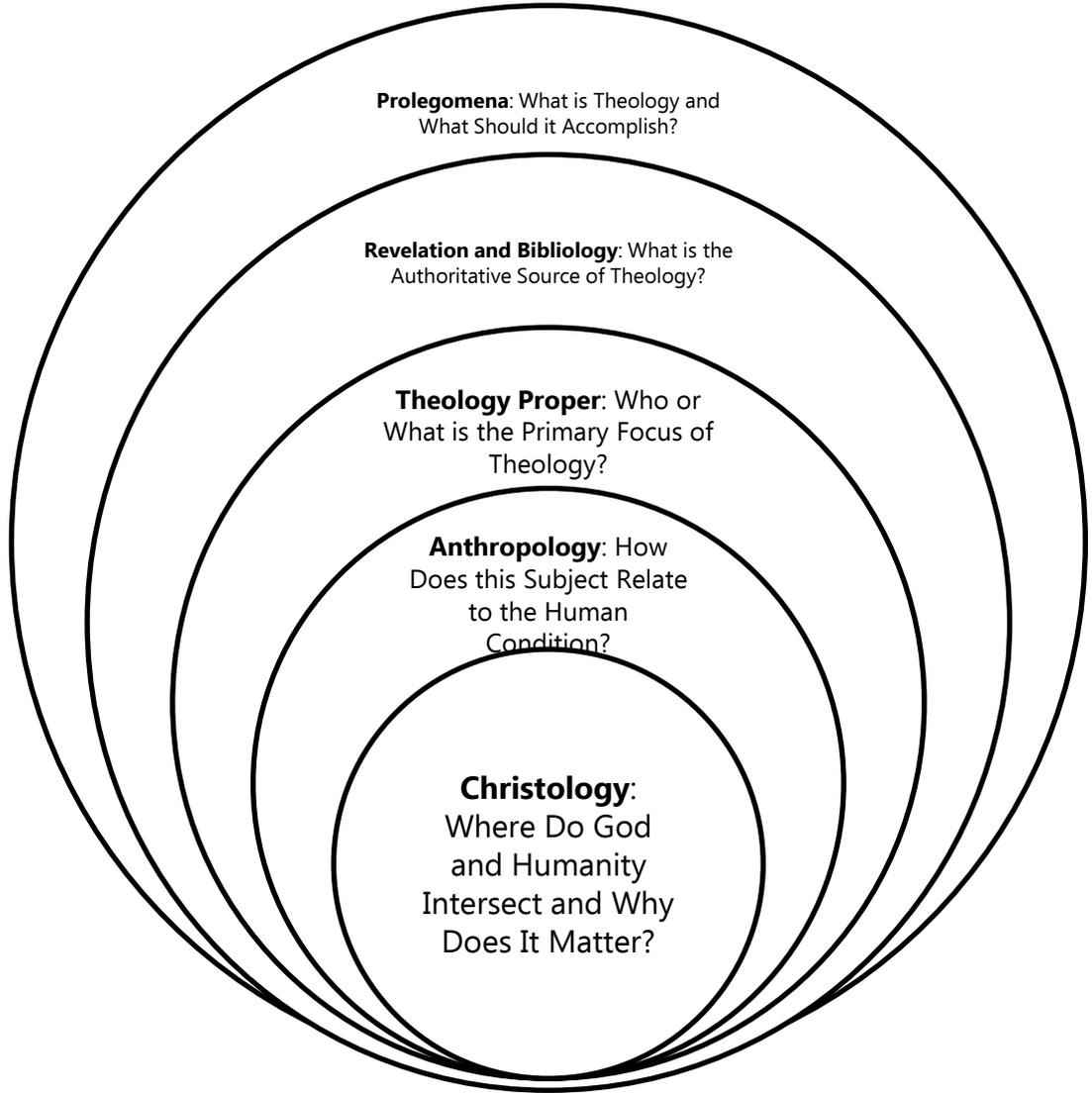
**Theology Proper:** Who or What is the Primary Focus of Theology?

Week 10

**Anthropology:** How Does this Subject Relate to the Human Condition?

Week 12

**Christology:** Where Do God and Humanity Intersect and Why Does It Matter?



**Course Schedule: Fall 2020**

**Note: This schedule is tentative. A more complete schedule will be provided on the first day of class.**

Date	Topic	Assignments
W1 8/26	Introduction to the Course What is Theology? Prolegomena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• READ the syllabus</li> </ul>
W2 9/2	What is Theology? Prolegomena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter summaries: Erickson, chs. 1, 3-4</li> </ul>
W3 9/9	Knowing God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter summaries: Erickson, chs. 6-7</li> </ul>
W4 9/16	Knowing God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter summaries: Erickson, chs. 8-10</li> </ul>
W5 9/23	What is God Like—Existence and Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter summaries: Erickson, chs. 11-13</li> </ul>
W6 9/30	What is God Like – The Trinity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter summary: Erickson, ch. 14</li> </ul>
W7 10/7	What is God Like -- Creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter summary: Erickson, chs. 16, 21</li> <li>• <b>Tentative: Exam 1 Due: Submit via Blackboard</b></li> </ul>
W8 10/14	What is God Like – Providence and Evil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter summaries: Erickson, chs. 15, 17-18</li> </ul>
W9 10/19-10/23	FALL BREAK <i>"...give him rest from days of trouble..."</i> (Psalm 94:13)	
W10 10/28	Open Topic Putman Review Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Putman Review Due: Submit via Blackboard</b></li> </ul>
W11 11/4	Humanity – Image of God, Human Constitution, and Human Sexuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter summaries: Erickson, chs. 22-23</li> </ul>
W12 11/11	Humanity – Sin and Its Effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter summaries: Erickson, chs. 25-28</li> </ul>
W13 11/18	STUDY DAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Doctrinal Sermon due: Submit via Blackboard</b></li> </ul>
W14 11/23-11/27	<b>THANKSGIVING WEEK</b>	
W15 12/2	<b>Class Meets Via BlueJeans Only</b> Person of Christ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erickson, chs. 30-31</li> </ul>
W16 12/9	<b>Class Meets Via BlueJeans Only</b> Person of Christ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erickson, chs. 32-34</li> <li>• <b>Exam 2 Due: Submit via Blackboard</b></li> <li>• <b>Submit Reading Report via Blackboard</b></li> </ul>

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

**Dictionaries and Encyclopedias**

Angeles, Peter A. *The HarperCollins Dictionary of Philosophy*. 2nd ed. New York: HarperCollins, 1992.

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Cross, Frank L. and Elizabeth A. Livingstone. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

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Ferguson, Sinclair B., David F. Wright, and J.I. Packer, eds. *New Dictionary of Theology*. Downers Grove/Leicester: InterVarsity, 1988.

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**Systematic and General Theologies**

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- Woodbridge, John D., and Thomas E. McComsky, eds. *Doing Theology in Today's World*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991.

## 2. Theological Reflections (50%)

Every student will give **ten** 2-3 page (double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt.) answers to the following questions based on reading assignments in four sets of three questions. In each of these assignments, students should demonstrate (1) reading comprehension of the assigned materials, (2) critical reflection on the ideas and content in the reading, and (3) the student's ability to apply the theological content to vocational ministry. **These questions are due in sets of three. Put all answers to a Question Set in a SINGLE document on Blackboard.**

### Question Set #1 (due 9/14) – Theological Method

1. **Read Putman 1-39.** Do we need some sort of systematic theological formulation of doctrine in addition to the interpretation of the Bible? Why or why not?
2. **Read Erickson, ch. 10; Putman 209-55.** Describe how the use of authorities like the Bible shape the formation of doctrine.

### Question Set #2 (due 10/5) – Revelation and Bible

3. **Read Erickson, ch. 6, any critical commentary on Romans 1:18-32.** Using the materials from your assigned systematic theology textbook and other theological resources (like commentaries, other theological textbooks or monographs), briefly explain your understanding of the doctrine of general revelation, highlighting the differences between general and special revelation. What impact does the doctrine of general revelation have on your understanding of missions and evangelism? Describe how the doctrine of general revelation can affect your communication of the Gospel. **(SEE EMBEDDED ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS DOWN BELOW.)**
4. **Read Erickson, ch. 9; Putman 257-324.** Explain and defend the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. What practical implications does a doctrine of biblical inerrancy have for the way we address contemporary theological issues?
5. **Read Putman 325-73.** Suppose a skeptic were to tell you that many of the doctrines you hold dear—such as the doctrine of the Trinity or the doctrine of inerrancy—are not explicitly stated in the Bible and therefore not valid theological positions by our own standards. What would you say?

### Question Set #3 (due 11/9) – Doctrines of God, Creation

6. **Read Erickson, ch. 11.** Does God change his mind? How do you explain Scriptures that seem to indicate that he does?
7. **Read Erickson, ch. 14.** Explain the doctrine of the Trinity as you would to a student in a youth group. Be careful to avoid bad analogies that implicitly reflect trinitarian heresies.
8. **Read Erickson, ch. 17.** How do you make sense of the “days of creation” in Genesis 1. Explain your position.

### Question Set #4 (due 11/23) – Anthropology, Christology

9. **Read Erickson, ch. 28.** How do you understand the “age of accountability” doctrine?
10. **Read Erickson, ch. 32.** The Scriptures repeatedly affirm the sinlessness of Jesus, but the question of whether Jesus could have sinned has significant implications for understanding the relationship between his human nature and his divine nature. Could Jesus have sinned? Is

he impeccable? Why or why not?

**Question Set #5 (OPTIONAL ASSIGNMENT for up to one letter grade of EXTRA CREDIT; Due 12/11)**

11. **Read Erickson, ch. 8.** Briefly survey the various theories on the authority (inspiration) of the Bible. What is the primary emphasis that each of these theories makes? Identify strengths and weaknesses of each position. Which of the theories do you advocate and why?
12. **Read Erickson, ch. 34.** One of the more debated issues regarding the person of Christ is the doctrine of the virgin birth. What does the Bible teach on this matter? How important is this doctrine to Christian theology?
13. **Read Erickson ch. 35 and carefully study Philippians 2:5-11.** What does this passage teach us about the person of Christ? His deity? His humanity? What was Paul's intention in giving us this insight about Jesus of Nazareth? Did Jesus give up his divinity in the incarnation? Defend your answer.
14. **Read Erickson, ch. 31.** Give a brief overview of the four major Christological heresies regarding the person of Jesus Christ. What was each position trying to assert about Christ? What are the theological shortcomings of each position?
15. What does the expression "communication of attributes" mean? How does this expression inform our understanding of the person of Christ?
16. **Read Erickson, ch. 22.** Survey the various positions on the constituent elements of human nature. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each position. Which position do you support, and why? What implications does this issue have for a philosophy of ministry?
17. How would you describe/define sin to a person who knows nothing about the Bible? Your answer should minimize as much as possible "religious" or theologically technical words.
18. "Jesus never said in so many words, 'I am God.'" **Read the following passages regarding who Jesus understood himself to be: Matthew 25:31-46; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 6:1-5; John 8:48-59; John 10:24-39.** In light of these texts, what conclusions could one draw regarding Jesus' self-perception?

The schedule below has the reading assignments and questions asked for each theological reflection.