



Systematic Theology 1 (THEO 5300)
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Division of Theological and Historical Studies
Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 8:00-9:20 AM, Fall 2021
Location: TBD



Tyler R. Wittman, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of
Theology

Office: Dodd 208
Email: twittman@nobts.edu

Office hours/coffee/lunch by
appointment

Teaching Assistant:
Mr. Josh Hagans
joshah925@gmail.com

I. MISSION STATEMENT

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

II. COURSE DESCRIPTION

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

III. COURSE TEACHING METHODOLOGY

As an introductory course, class time will consist primarily of lectures, accompanied by short discussion of the day's assigned reading if and when applicable or necessary. Students are expected to arrive ready to engage the topics, listen attentively, and discuss the readings and topics if required.

IV. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. *Understanding.* By the end of the course, the student should:

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

2. *Transferable skills*

- Students should show a capacity for attentive and reflective reading of ancient and modern texts.
- Students should demonstrate a capacity to analyze concepts and arguments.
- Students should demonstrate an ability to formulate arguments and articulate critical judgments, both orally and in writing.
- Students should demonstrate an ability to engage in and profit from group discussion.

V. COURSE GUIDELINES

1. *Academic Misconduct.* 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.
2. *Technical Assistance.* For assistance with any matters related to technology, please consult the Information Technology Center (504-816-8180; itcsupport@nobts.edu; <https://www.nobts.edu/itc>) or the following email addresses, where relevant:
 - a. Selfserve@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the Selfserve.nobts.edu site (Access to online registration, financial account, online transcript, etc.)
 - b. BlackboardHelpDesk@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the Blackboard Learning Management System.
3. *Assignments and Attendance.* Assignments are not optional: to pass, students must complete all assignments and watch all the uploaded lectures. *These are minimum expectations, and do not guarantee a passing grade* - but no one has ever failed one of my classes who has turned in all their assignments and done their best.
4. *Writing.* 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. A copy of the approved NOBTS Style Guide can be found online at [the Writing Center's page on the seminary website](#).
5. *Technology.*¹ Digital devices are prohibited in the classroom (laptops, tablets, phones of any sort, recording devices, etc). This guideline might appear draconian, but it exists strictly for the benefit of everyone involved. Though many may feel that their use of technology makes them better, more efficient scholars, the [best research](#) says that [it does not](#). In fact, studies show that it significantly impairs your learning and [the learning of others around you](#). Taking notes by hand [improves recall](#) and apprehension, as does [reading on paper and not on screens](#). During

¹ I have adapted and expanded this section mostly from Prof. Alan Jacobs at Baylor University.

class, phones will be completely silenced. Even then, if you are dependent on your smartphone, its mere presence – even if powered off – [has been proven to diminish your cognitive capacities](#). All that to say, we will use our short time together to practice a little technological asceticism. Computers are obviously allowed for students attending class remotely, but only to connect to class.

- a. In accordance with this stipulation, you are required to have physical copies of the course texts; e-books are not allowed.
- b. Students should use standard tools (pen and paper) for notetaking, even when attending lectures remotely through a computer.
- c. Recording is prohibited, as is sharing course content through any platform (like social media).

VI. TEXTBOOKS

1. Millard Erickson. *Christian Theology*. 3rd ed (Baker Academic, 2013).
2. Scott R. Swain, *The Trinity: An Introduction* (Crossway, 2020).
3. Gerald Bray, *The Attributes of God: An Introduction* (Crossway, 2021).
4. Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*. Popular Patristics Series 23 (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002).

VII. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Précis Packet: 35 %
2. Embedded Assignment: 5%
3. Position Paper: 40%.
4. Course Notes: 10%
5. Reading Report: 10%

1. ***Précis Packet (due Week 6)***. Theology demands joyful and serious intellectual work, which is cultivated around the reading of and critical interaction with texts. Your principal task in this course is to discover and/or cultivate some of the virtues that enable you to read and think about substantive theological matters in a responsible manner. To this end, you are required to write a précis on Gregory of Nazianzus’s classic “theological orations” concerning the Trinity and Christ, in which you carefully outline the argument and respond to it briefly and thoughtfully in a short reflection. The précis should focus on the argument Gregory makes in each *Oration*, with an eye trained especially on how he reads Scripture and supports his larger argument exegetically, philosophically, and doctrinally. Your précis packet will conclude with a brief reflection where you interact critically and analytically with the readings, having given them thorough consideration. This is a major assignment and will require considerable attention.
 - a. **Instructions for Reading.** Among other matters, ask yourself the following questions as you read all your texts this semester, including Gregory:
 - i. **Argument:**
 1. What is the chief claim being made and how is it constructed as well as supported?

2. What are the main questions to which the author's arguments are intended as answers?
 3. What are the highs and lows of the argument?
 4. What objections could be raised against the author and how might they respond?
- ii. Interpretation
 1. Identify areas of the argument that are ambiguous or difficult; what are the most charitable and just ways of understanding these portions?
 2. Identify any the larger context(s) for the argument; how do these bear upon its intelligibility? What's in the background? Who are the author's interlocutors?
 - iii. Claims
 1. Where does the argument succeed and where does it fail?
 2. What are some unexplored/unarticulated consequences of the argument?
- b. **Instructions for Précis.** You will write a précis for each of Gregory's five "theological orations" (*Orations 27-31*). Your first précis will be on *Oration 27* and we will all discuss it in class on **Week 3**; the professor will walk through his own précis with you so that you can contrast your précis with his and calibrate your approach accordingly. All five précis of *Orations 27-31* (4,000 to 7,500 words), along with your concluding reflection (1,500 words), will be submitted in one packet, in lieu of a mid-term examination. This will be due on **Week 7**. For the précis:
- i. Outline the author's argument and demonstrate your understanding of the lines of reasoning and how they contribute to the overall point being made (try not to quote the reading too much, use your own words, but quote the author or cite the text regularly so we know where you are in the argument). Please summarize what you take to be the author's main thesis/point and how they support this. See *instructions for reading* above.
 - ii. Highlight how all the sections of the text flow together to form one coherent argument about the topic at hand.
 - iii. If applicable, offer some brief comments on the strengths or weaknesses of the argument and, to the extent you can, on the pastoral implications of the argument.
 - iv. Use Times New Roman, 12pt font, with single spacing.
 - v. This précis should be anywhere from 3,000 to 4,000 words (include word count at the beginning of each précis).
 - vi. At the conclusion of your précis, please provide a short reflection (1500 words) on three or four of the *central* - not just any - themes in the *Orations*, especially concerning the doctrine of the Trinity and the nature of theology. Do not provide your mere impressions of the text (e.g. "I really enjoyed reading this" or "Gregory was devout"), but interact with it critically and analytically, drawing out the significance and meaning of the themes you select and responding to them. To do this well, you may have to do a little outside reading.
2. **Embedded Assignment (due Week 4).** All students enrolled in Systematic Theology 1 have a common "Embedded Assignment" used for evaluating the school's projected Student Learning Outcomes.
- a. **Instructions.**
 - i. Use Erickson, *Christian Theology* ch. 6 and three to four other sources (books, essays, commentaries on Romans 1:18-32, etc), briefly explain your understanding of the doctrine of general revelation, highlighting the differences

between general and special revelation. Your professor strongly recommends Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, chapters 9-12 (or Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God*, chs. 3-6).² 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.

- ii. This assignment should be 800-1200 words in length. Strive to be concise, accurate, and readable.
- iii. The following rubric will be used to evaluate the Embedded Assignment.

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.					

3. **Position paper.** Seminary is one of the few occasions you will have to explore any number of theological questions in some depth, both so that you understand the faith and arrive at some convictions (however open to improvement these may be). This course requires you to write a position paper, which addresses one of the doctrines covered in this course.
 - a. This assignment is designed to facilitate and improve your ability to think theologically and communicate a coherent argument with the written word. To this end, you will submit a **proposal** so that you receive some evaluation and guidance before writing the **paper**, in an effort to improve the overall quality of your essay and to teach you some valuable lessons about research and planning. You are responsible for reading the following handouts, provided by your professor on Blackboard: *Writing Position Papers* (valuable information on what a thesis statement is, the nature of your evidence, etc), *Toulmin Argument* (an overview of how to think about the nature of arguments), and *Paper Proposal Template* (a template showing you what the proposal should look like).
 - b. **Instructions for Proposals (due Week 9).** Proposals will include the following elements:

² *Wonderful Works of God* was previously published under the title *Our Reasonable Faith*. Either version will do.

- i. Title Page
 - ii. First paragraph of your paper, which should include a clear thesis statement, a methodology (how to will argue this thesis), and a preview of the sections of your paper.
 - iii. Short outline of your paper, consisting of the headings and subheadings to the sections you plan on writing, with a one or two-sentence description of what you plan on writing under that heading.
 - iv. Annotated bibliography, with one or two sentences on why you have selected your sources for this essay.
- c. **Instructions for Papers (due **Monday of Finals Week**)**. Papers must include the following elements:
- i. **Issue:** Unceremoniously state what the paper is about and precisely what you intend to argue, as well as how you will argue it.
 - ii. **Various positions:** Papers are position papers, evaluating two to four different positions on the issue, and then arguing for one of those views. You are responsible to describe the views you discuss carefully and charitably, interacting with *primary sources* (see *Writing Position Papers* handout).
 - iii. **Support for your position:** When setting forth the position you believe is most responsible exegetically and therefore theologically, you are to present an argument (see *Toulmin* handout).
 - iv. **Objections to your position:** Part of a good argument is foreseeing and addressing potential objections. You should present two of the strongest objections to your position, one at a time, and offer a rebuttal to each.
 - v. **Additional Instructions.**
 1. **Authorial Stance.**³ This assignment is not a chance for you to air idiosyncratic views or pontificate glibly about the subjects. It is a chance for you to become an intelligent, responsible, and winsome ambassador *for* the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3). You must therefore see it as your job to learn what the church past and present has believed about the subject and to speak *for* the church on that basis. There is room for creativity within confessionalism, but unrestrained theological creativity is a reliable path towards heresy. If you are preparing for ministry, you must grasp the grammar of Holy Scripture (doctrines) *before* you attempt to compose your own statements (prayers, sermons, lessons, etc) in its tongue. Our goal as theologians is not to speak for ourselves or our special interest groups, but to be faithful stewards of the mysteries of God – knowing that they remain *mysteries* and remain *God's*.
 2. **Bibliography.** You should use between 8-15 sources for your paper. No more, no less. I am happy to recommend a book/article or two here and there when I can see that you are working hard, but I will not do your research for you. If you don't know how to research, go to the library and ask them to teach you.
 3. **Length.** Your paper should be: 2400 to 2900 words (include word count on title page), double-spaced, Times New Roman font in 12-pt, and in accordance

³ I have adapted this instruction from Dr. Scott Swain of Reformed Theological Seminary.

with the school's style manual. Footnotes contribute to your total word count, but title page and bibliography do not.

4. **Yes, that's misconduct.** You may *not* recycle anything you've previously written. Papers must be entirely new, written from the ground up, and *specifically for this class*.
 5. **Abstract.** Every paper must have an abstract of 100-150 words, presented on a separate page between your title page and the beginning of your essay. If you find yourself unable to present the point of your paper concisely, then you don't know your own argument (indeed, you might not have one).
 6. **Topic.** Your paper topic must be approved by your professor in writing, unless you choose to select from the potential topics below:
 - a. Is Scripture inerrant, or merely infallible? What's the difference?
 - b. Can someone learn enough from general revelation to respond to the gospel?
 - c. What is the meaning of Scripture's sufficiency? How does it relate to general revelation?
 - d. Is God passible or impassible? Explain what these terms mean and don't mean when defending your understanding.
 - e. Is God immutable/unchanging or does God learn things and change?
 - f. Are there relations of authority and submission within the Trinity?
 - g. What are the roles of angels and demons in the world? What is the nature of spiritual warfare in light of what angels and demons are?
 - h. If God is not the author of evil, then what is the relationship between evil and God's providence?
 - i. How should we understand the idea of "permission" in divine providence?
 - j. How is sin transmitted? In other words, how is it that we are born into sin?
 - k. What is the relationship between fallenness and guilt?
 - l. Is there such a thing as a "sin nature"?
 - m. In what does the image of God consist?
 - n. Would the Son have become incarnate if Adam and Eve hadn't fallen into sin? What is the purpose of the Son's incarnation?
 - o. When the Son becomes incarnate, does he empty himself of certain divine attributes? Engage the debate over Kenoticism.
 - p. Could Christ have sinned? How should we understand that Christ was tempted?
 - q. Does Christ have two wills, or one will?
 - r. Did Christ exercise faith?
4. **Course Notes.** In lieu of a final exam testing comprehension of significant ideas and concepts that emerge in the course lectures, you will submit a scanned copy of the notes you have taken on the lectures. Typically, I will request your scanned notes for two or three dates of my choosing, *so you should write the date of the lecture on your notes*. This is chiefly a matter of accountability; I want to see that you have laid aside distractions, practiced attentiveness, engaged the material, and tried your best to take notes for future reference. Dates of lectures should be clearly designated. A scanned copy of your hand-written notes is due on **[Monday of Finals Week]**.
5. **Reading Report.** At the end of the term, you will submit a statement detailing what reading you have and have not finished attentively. Due on **[Monday of Finals Week]**.

VIII. EVALUATION OF GRADE

1. The grading scale will follow institutional guidelines.
2. Late submissions will be docked five percent every day they are late. Please submit assignments on time. Mysterious ‘problems’ with an internet connection, busyness with outside responsibilities and assignments in other courses, a penchant for perfectionism, and so on, are not excuses.
3. There will not be any extra credit. Neither will there be any extension of paper length/due date, save for truly extenuating circumstances.
4. Since this is an introductory course, your professor (and grader[s], if any there be) errs in your favor when assigning grades. If, nevertheless, you feel that I have erred entirely in assigning your grade, please take the following steps: (a) wait at least one week before taking action, and give your paper a careful re-read to see if you feel the same way; (b) keep in mind that if I reconsider your grade, that can cut both ways (I may discover that I, or the grader, was *too* generous the first time around); (c) as specifically as possible, set down an argument in writing as to why your grade merits reconsideration.

VII. ESTIMATED COURSE OUTLINE AND READING SCHEDULE

Key

CT: Erickson, *Christian Theology* (CT 1 = *Christian Theology*, chapter 1)

GN: Gregory of Nazianzus

Date	Topic	Reading(s) Due
Week 1 Aug 17, 19	Introduction & Syllabus I.1. Divine Teaching	Syllabus CT 1-3
Week 2 Aug 24, 26	I.1. Divine Teaching	CT 4-7
Week 3 Aug 31, Sept 2	I.2. Holy Scripture	CT 8-10
Week 4 Sept 7, 9	II.1. Knowledge of God II.2. God’s Unity	Bray
Week 5 Sept 14, 16	II.2. God’s Unity II.3. The Holy Trinity	Bray/Swain
Week 6 Sept 21, 23	II.3. The Holy Trinity	Swain

Week 7 Sept 28, 30	III.1. Creator and Creation	CT 15-17
Week 8 Oct 5,7	Fall Break	
Week 9 Oct 12, 14	III.2. Creation and Government III.3. Human Creatures	CT 18-20
Week 10 Oct 19, 21	III.3. Human Creatures	CT 21-24
Week 11 Oct 25, 28	III.4. The Rebellion of Creatures	CT 25-27
Week 12 Nov 2, 4	IV.1. The One Lord Christ: Framework and Tasks of Christology	CT 28-30
Week 13 Nov 9, 11	IV.2. Christ's Pre-existence & Pro-existence	CT 31-34
Week 14 Nov 16, 18	IV.2. Christ's Pre-existence & Pro-existence IV.3. Christological Metaphysics	GN (pp. 149-172)
Week 15 Nov 23, 25	Thanksgiving Break	
Week 16 Nov 30	IV.3. Christological Metaphysics	

VIII. SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY

In addition to the required texts and readings listed above, the following are recommended sources.

Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003-2008.

Budziszeksi, J. *On the Meaning of Sex*. Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2014.

Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic, edited by Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain. Baker Academic, 2016.

Emery, Gilles. *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011.

Hoekema, Anthony A. *Created in God's Image*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994.

Holmes, Stephen R. *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2012.

Jones, Mark. *God Is: A Devotional Guide to the Attributes of God*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2017.

Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction, edited by Kelly M. Kapic and Bruce L. McCormack. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012.

McFarland, Ian A. *From Nothing: A Theology of Creation*. Louisville, KY: WJK, 2014.

Murray, John. *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*. P&R Publishing, 1977.

New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic, 2nd ed. Edited by Martin Davie, et al. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016.

The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology, edited by John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Religion Past and Present, edited by Hans Dieter Betz, Don Browning, Bernd Janowski, and Eberhard Jüngel. 14 volumes. Leiden: Brill, 2006-2013.

Sanders, Fred. *The Triune God*. Zondervan, 2016.

Sokolowski, Robert. *The God of Faith and Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology*. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982, 1995.

Swain, Scott. *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and its Interpretation*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2011.

Wellum, Stephen. *The Person of Christ: An Introduction*. Crossway, 2021.