

# THEO6300 Theological Method

NEW ORLEANS BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
DIVISION OF THEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL STUDIES  
SPRING 2017



ANSWERING GOD'S CALL

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### Mission Statement

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.

### 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 **characteristic excellence**, which we define as our desire that "everything we do to be characterized by offering the utmost of our abilities and resources as a testimony to the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

### 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 advanced, seminar-style course in systematic theology introduces students to key issues in theological prolegomena and to a variety of methods employed by contemporary theologians. Students will read and offer critical analysis of seminal works in modern and contemporary theology and theological method from diverse cultural and theological perspectives.

### Student Learning Outcomes

1. To alert students to the decisions which must be made in writing theology.
2. To acquaint students with the methods and purposes of some contemporary theologians and systems of theology.
3. To encourage students to reflect upon their purposes in studying theology and upon methods which they might employ in writing theology.

### 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

Clark, David K. *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010.

Sawyer, M. James. *The Survivor's Guide to Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006 or Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016. (Either edition, including the much cheaper Kindle version, will suffice.)

### Selected Review Texts for TM Presentations (Assigned In-Class) Students Request One Text by 2/07

Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, no. 1. The Doctrine of the Word of God, §1-7, *The Word of God as the Criterion of Dogmatics*, Study Edition 1. Translated by G. W. Bromiley, G. T. Thomson, and Harold Knight. London: T&T Clark, 2010.

Dulles, Avery. *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System*. Rev. ed. New York: Crossroad, 1995.

Grenz, Stanley J. & Franke, John R. *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Society*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001.

Gutierrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*. Rev. ed. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988.

Hick, John H. *An Interpretation of Religion*. Rev. ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

Lonergan, Bernard. *Method in Theology*. Rev. ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990.

McFague, Sallie. *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1987.

McGrath, Alister E. *The Science of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.

Moltmann, Jürgen. *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000.

Newman, John Henry. *An Essay on the Development of Doctrine*. 2d ed. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989 [1878].

Phillips, D. Z. *Religion without Explanation*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1976.

Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, translated and edited by Richard Crouter. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Smith, J. A. K. *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology*. Baker Academic, 2004.

Taylor, Mark C. *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Tillich, Paul. *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973.

Tracy, David. *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*. New York: Crossroad, 1998.

van Huysteen, J. Wentzel. *Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Doctrine*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005.

Wright, N. T. *The New Testament and the People of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.

### Course Teaching Methodology

The course will involve the following methodologies:

Lectures from the professor, student-led discussions, and research presentations.

### Course Requirements

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

Students are expected to participate in classroom discussion and to read **all required materials** prior to class attendance. *Students will be required to hand in a reading report at the end of the semester.*

#### 2. Reading Reports (30%)

Each student will write two (2) single-spaced reading reports based on assigned **required** reading materials. These reports are to be 3-5 pages in length including discussion questions. Students will present them to the class and lead in a discussion based on the assigned reading.

#### 3. Book Review and Theological Method Presentation (40%)

Each student will read and prepare a critical book review based on one of the **selected review texts** listed above. Students will provide **hard copies** of the book review for other members in the seminar, as well as a brief annotated bibliography of the author's key works. Each student will prepare and deliver a brief, 30-minute presentation about the methodology of the theologian whose work they read.

Theological Method Presentations about these theologians should address:

- Brief, significant biographical details (e.g., their historical context and influences)
- Seminal works (and a brief description of the text reviewed)
- His/her understanding of the theological task (contextualization, church, academy)
- His/her understanding of revelation and authority in theology
- His/her theory of truth
- His/her understanding of religious language
- His/her understanding of other religious traditions

These book reviews should be 4-6 single-spaced pages in length and should include a bibliographic entry,

brief biographical data about the author (including dates, degrees, theological tradition, academic positions held, research interests, and significant works), a **brief** summary of the book's argument and contents, and **critical analysis**.

A few questions to consider while reading these monographs: What is the main purpose or thesis of this book? To whom is this book written? Did the author(s) fulfill his or her purpose? What are some of the author's working assumptions (e.g., his or her denominational background, field of research, or view of Scripture)? Does the author provide strong biblical, philosophical, and historical support for his or her positions? Are there any points of contact between this book/writer and other texts read during the course of the semester? How might the content of this book affect ministry in the local church or ministry within your particular calling? Are there any ideas that changed your particular way of thinking on the subject matter at hand? Would you recommend this book to someone else?

- **"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, and exhibit a proficient grasp of grammar, spelling, and style.
- **"B" papers (85-92)** clearly state the book's thesis, show an attempt to understand the book on its own terms and critically reflect on the issues at hand, make arguments, and show sufficiency in grammar, spelling, and style.
- **"C" papers (77-84)** state the book's thesis, present the content of the book, raise preliminary critical questions for further evaluation, limit evaluation to approval or disapproval of the author's arguments, and make repeated mistakes in grammar, spelling, and style.
- **"D" (70-76) and "F" (0-69) papers** lack evidence of grasping the book's thesis and content, limit evaluation to preformed judgments without serious consideration of the book's ideas, contain major grammatical, spelling, and stylistic errors, and demonstrate little or no attempt to proofread.

#### 4. Final Exam (20%)

Each student will take a comprehensive final exam related to the content of the course. Students will be tested for their knowledge of the larger issues in theological method, as well as their ability to practice theological method and justify the use of their method.

#### **Evaluation of Grades**

The student's grade will be computed as follows:

|  |      |
|--|------|
| 1. Attendance and Course Participation             | 10%  |
| 2. Reading Reports (2x)                            | 30%  |
| 3. Book Review and Theological Method Presentation | 40%  |
| 4. Final Exam                                      | 20%  |
|  | 100% |

#### **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.

[Other items may be included, such as: expectations for reading assignments, policy on late assignments, academic honesty, classroom demeanor, extra credit]

### 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.

Students who submit their book review papers to the Writing Center a week before their due date will receive a ten-point bonus on their paper grade. Students must show proof of this by attaching the email from the Writing Center.

### 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.

### Course Schedule

| Date | Topic  | Assignment/Presenter(s)   |
|------|--|---|
| 1/24 | Introduction to the Course   |   |
| 1/31 | The Nature of the Theological Task   | Clark, chs. 1, 7 _____<br>Sawyer, chs. 1-2 _____  |
| 2/07 | Authority in Theology  | Clark, ch. 2 _____<br>Sawyer, chs. 4, 5 _____   |
| 2/14 | Epistemology and Theology  | Clark, chs. 4, 9 _____<br>Clark, chs. 11, 12 _____<br>Sawyer, ch. 3 (also see ch. 18) _____ |
| 2/21 | Theology and Contextualization   | Clark, chs. , 3, 10 _____<br>Sawyer, ch. 6 _____  |
| 2/28 | The Branches of Theology   | Clark, ch. 5 _____<br>Sawyer, ch. 7 _____   |
| 3/07 | Interdisciplinary Theology   | Clark, chs. 6, 8 _____  |
| 3/14 | <b>SPRING BREAK</b><br><i>“...give him rest from days of trouble...” (Psalm 94:13)</i> |   |
| 3/21 | Theological Traditions: Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran                             | Sawyer, chs. 8-10 _____   |
| 3/28 | Theological Traditions: Calvinism, Arminianism, Dispensationalism                      | Sawyer, chs. 11-13 _____  |
| 4/04 | Theological Traditions: Liberalism, Neo-orthodoxy, Liberation Theology                 | Sawyer, chs. 14-16 _____  |

| Date | Topic                            | Assignment/Presenter(s)          |
|------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 4/11 | Theological Method Presentations | 1. _____<br>2. _____             |
| 4/18 | Theological Method Presentations | 1. _____<br>2. _____<br>3. _____ |
| 4/25 | Theological Method Presentations | 1. _____<br>2. _____             |
| 5/02 | Theological Method Presentations | 1. _____<br>2. _____<br>3. _____ |
| 5/09 |                                  |                                  |

### Selected Bibliography

Baillie, John. *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1956.

Barr, James. *The Bible in the Modern World*. London: SCM, 1973.

———. *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999.

Bartlett, David L. *The Shape of Scriptural Authority*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983.

Barton, John, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Brown, David. *Discipleship and Imagination: Christian Tradition and Truth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

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Cunningham, Mary Kathleen. *What Is Theological Exegesis? Interpretation and Use of Scripture in Barth's Doctrine of Election*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1995.

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

Doriani, Daniel M. *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2001.

Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.

Feuerbach, Ludwig. *The Essence of Christianity*. 2d ed. Translated by George Elliot [Marian Evans]. London: Trübner & Company, 1881.

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Gabler, Johann P. "An Oration on the Proper Distinction between Biblical and

- Dogmatic Theology and the Specific Objectives of Each." In *The Flowering of Old Testament Theology: A Reader in Twentieth-Century Old Testament Theology, 1930-1990*, ed. Ben C. Ollenburger, E. A. Martens, and Gerhard F. Hasel, 493-502. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992.
- Goldingay, John. *Models for Interpretation of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Grenz, Stanley J., and John R. Franke. *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001.
- Grenz, Stanley J., and Roger E. Olson. *20th-Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992.
- . *Who Needs Theology? An Invitation to the Study of God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996.
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