



THEO6300 Theological Method
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Theological and Historical Studies
Spring 2020
Fridays 8:00-10:50 a.m.

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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 the 2019-20 academic year is **spiritual vitality**.

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: Christian Theological Heritage, Biblical Exposition, and Disciple Making.

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.

Textbooks

Cole, Graham A. *Faithful Theology: An Introduction*. Short Studies in Systematic Theology. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020.

Kreider, Glenn R. and Michael J. Szigel. *A Practical Primer on Theological Method: Table Manners for Discussing God, His Works, and His Ways*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019.

Porter, Stanley E. and Steven M. Stuebaker, eds. *Evangelical Theological Method: Five Views*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2018.

Veeneman, Mary. *Introducing Theological Method: A Survey of Contemporary Theologians and Approaches*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017.

Course Teaching Methodology

The course will involve the following methodologies: lectures, reading, paper-writing, and student-led discussion and 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 below. 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 Grade

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. <u>Final Exam</u>	<u>20%</u>
	100%

Technical Assistance

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

1. Selfserve@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the Selfserve.nobts.edu site (Access to online registration, financial account, online transcript, etc.)
2. BlackboardHelpDesk@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the NOBTS Blackboard Learning Management System NOBTS.Blackboard.com.
3. ITCSupport@nobts.edu - Email for general technical questions/support requests.
4. 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 zero-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.

Selected Review Texts for TM Presentations (Assigned In-Class)

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.

Bavinck, H. *Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 1: Prolegomena*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003.

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.

- Lindbeck, George. *The Nature of Doctrine*. Louisville: WJK, 1984.
- Loneragan, 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].
- 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.
- 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.
- van Til, Cornelius. *Introduction to Systematic Theology: Prolegomena and the Doctrines of Revelation, Scripture, and God*. P&R, 2007.
- 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 Schedule (to be finalized first week of class)

Date	Topic	Assignments
1/23	Introduction to the Course	Read Syllabus
1/30	The Nature of Theology	Read Cole
2/6	The Nature of Theology	Read Cole
2/13	The Nature of Doctrine	Lecture Day
2/20	Major Figures in Christian Theology	Read Veeneman
2/27	Major Figures in Christian Theology	Read Veeneman
3/5	Revelation and Authority	Read Kreider and Svigel
3/12	Revelation and Authority	Read Kreider and Svigel
3/16-3/20	Spring Break “...give him rest from days of trouble...” (Psalm 94:13)	
3/26	Revelation and Authority	Read Kreider and Svigel
4/2	Contemporary Evangelical Theological Method	Read Porter and Studebaker
4/8	Contemporary Evangelical Theological Method	Read Porter and Studebaker
4/15	Book Reviews & Theologian Presentations	
4/22	Book Reviews & Theologian Presentations	
4/29	Book Reviews & Theologian Presentations	
5/6		Course Reflections

Selected Bibliography

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- Barr, James. *The Bible in the Modern World*. London: SCM, 1973.
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- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, no. 1. Translated by G. W. Bromiley, G. T. Thomson, and Harold Knight. London: T&T Clark, 2010.
- 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.
- . *Tradition and Imagination: Revelation and Change*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Clark, David K. *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010.
- 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.
- Dorani, Daniel M. *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2001.
- Dulles, Avery. *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System*. Rev. ed. New York: Crossroad, 1995.
- 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.
- Frei, Hans. *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.
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- Funk, Robert W. *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God: The Problem of Language in the New Testament and Contemporary Theology*. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.
- 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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- Guarino, Thomas G. *The Foundations of Systematic Theology*. London: T&T Clark, 2005.
- Gunton, Colin. *A Brief Theology of Revelation*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995.
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- Gutierrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*. Rev. ed. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988.

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