



# THEOLOGICAL METHOD

On Campus Meetings: Fridays 8-11, 1-5(1/30, 2/27, 3/20, 5/1)  
Weekly Online Meetings TBA



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*“These Jews were more receptive than those in Thessalonica, for they welcomed the message very eagerly and examined the scriptures every day to see whether these things were so.”*  
Acts 17:11 (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**

Students will read contemporary theologies and books about theological method to discover the purposes of the authors and the theological methods employed in pursuit of those purposes.

## **Core Value Focus**

The primary core value of the Seminary addressed in this course is Doctrinal Integrity. The primary key competency in ministry addressed is Christian Theological Heritage. Spiritual Vitality is the Core Value Focus of the 2014-2015 Academic Year.

## **Course Objectives**

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.

## **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 instructors 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) provides the confessional framework for the course.

### Required Monographs

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

Diller, Kevin. *Theology's Epistemological Dilemma: How Karl Barth and Alvin Plantinga Provide a Unified Response*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2014.

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

Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014.

### Required Articles (Provided by Professors)

Gunton, Colin E. "“Truth, the Daughter of Time?”: Revelation, Church, and Tradition.” In *A Brief Theology of Revelation*, 83-104. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995.

Lindbeck, George A. “The Postcritical Canonical Interpretation: Three Modes of Retrieval.” In *Theological Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Brevard Childs*, ed. Christopher Seitz and Kathryn Green-McCreight, 26-51. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Sawyer, M. James. “Doctrinal Taxonomy: Are All Doctrines of Equal Importance?” In *The Survivor's Guide to Theology*, 143-76. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.

Thiselton, Anthony C. “Knowledge, Myth, and Corporate Memory.” In *Believing in the Church: The Corporate Nature of Faith*. A Report by the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England, 45-78. Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 1981.

Webster, John. “Hermeneutics in Modern Theology: Some Doctrinal Reflections.” In *Word and Church: Essays in Church Dogmatics*, 47-86. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2006.

Yeago, David S. “The New Testament and Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis.” In *Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Stephen E. Fowl, 87-100. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1997.

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\*Out of print, but available on Kindle.

## Course Requirements

### **1. Reading Reports (30%)**

Each student will write four (4) reading reports (3-5 pages, single-spaced), including discussion questions, on assigned readings and present them to the seminar and lead in discussing the assigned reading. Include a brief summary, but emphasize critical response.

### **2. Reading in Theological Method (5%)**

Students are required to read one (1) of the texts from the bibliography throughout the course of the semester. No formal response or review will be required, but each student is to inform the professors in writing which text was read by the end of the semester. Significant and recommended texts appear in bold in the bibliography.

### **3. Research Papers (40%)**

Each student will write a research paper on a topic agreed upon by the professor and the student. (Papers should be not more than 30 double-spaced pages in length, with footnotes and conform to Turabian style.)

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.
  2. Clarity and Coherence: Balance; thoroughness; organization; logical development; overall sense of the paper.
  3. Research: Bibliography; type and variety of sources (primary, secondary, monographs, journal articles, etc.); most bibliographic entries should be accompanied by footnote citations.
  4. Analysis and Evaluation: Going beyond the mere reporting of facts to include explanation, interpretation, analysis of material; evaluation of strengths and weakness of a person; demonstration that you have thought about the material that you have researched. Give strong and insightful introduction and conclusion.
- 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.

Students will present their paper in class but need not read the papers verbatim, as every student is expected to read every paper prior to the class session. Rather, presenters should describe the research process, hit the highlights of the paper, and any additional information they learned researching their papers.

#### **4. Formal Response (15%)**

Each student will write a formal response that summarizes, analyzes, and critiques a paper by another student. Formal responses should also address form and style issues, particularly consistent grammatical and/or stylistic problems throughout the paper. An errata table or section is preferred.

#### **5. Personal Perspective (5%)**

Each student will write a brief reflection paper summarizing their feelings about the course, the readings, and issues related to theological method. Students can feel free to write personally and subjectively on the matter.

• Reading Reports (4)	30%
• Reading in Theological Method	5%
• Research Paper	50%
• Formal Response	10%
• Personal Perspective	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>THEO9410 Spring 2015 Reading and Assignments Schedule</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic Assignments</b>	<b>Presenters / Topic</b>	
<b>1/30</b>  <b>On-Campus Meeting</b>	Introduction  Clark, <i>To Know and Love God</i>	<b>Clark, chs. 1-2</b>	
		<b>Clark, chs. 3-4</b>	
		<b>Clark, chs. 5-6</b>	
		<b>Clark, chs. 7, 12</b>	
<b>2/6</b>	Clark, <i>To Know and Love God</i>	<b>Clark, chs. 8-9</b>	
		<b>Clark, chs. 10-11</b>	
<b>2/13</b>	Articles: Scripture, Tradition, Reason	<b>Gunton article</b>	
		<b>Thiselton article</b>	
<b>2/20</b>	McGrath, <i>Science of God</i>	<b>McGrath, chs. 1-2</b>	
		<b>McGrath, chs. 3-4</b>	
<b>2/27</b>  <b>On-Campus Meeting</b>	Vanhoozer, <i>Faith Speaking Understanding</i>	<b>Vanhoozer, chs. 1-2</b>	
		<b>Vanhoozer, chs. 3-4</b>	
		<b>Vanhoozer, chs. 5-6</b>	
		<b>Vanhoozer, chs. 7-8</b>	
<b>3/6</b>	Articles: Development and Taxonomy	<b>Yeago article</b>	
		<b>Sawyer article</b>	
<b>3/13</b>	Articles: Hermeneutics and Theology	<b>Lindbeck article</b>	
		<b>Webster article</b>	
<b>3/20</b>  <b>On-Campus Meeting</b>	Diller, <i>Theology's Epistemological Dilemma</i>	<b>Diller, chs. 1-2</b>	
		<b>Diller, chs. 3-4</b>	
		<b>Diller, chs. 5-6</b>	
		<b>Diller, chs. 7-8</b>	
		<b>Diller, chs. 9, postscript</b>	
<b>3/27</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b> “...give him rest from days of trouble. . .” (Psalm 94:13)		
<b>4/3</b>		<b>Research Paper #1</b>	
		<b>Formal Response #1</b>	
<b>4/10</b>  <b>No Class</b>	<b>GREER-HEARD / SOUTHWEST REGIONAL ETS</b>		
<b>4/17</b>		<b>Research Paper #2</b>	

<b>THEO9410 Spring 2015 Reading and Assignments Schedule</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic Assignments</b>	<b>Presenters / Topic</b>	
		<b>Formal Response #2</b>	
<b>4/24</b>		<b>Research Paper #3</b>	
		<b>Formal Response #3</b>	
<b>5/1  On-Campus Meeting</b>	<b>Personal Reflections Due</b>	<b>Research Paper #4</b>	
		<b>Formal Response #4</b>	
		<b>Research Paper #5</b>	
		<b>Formal Response #5</b>	
		<b>Research Paper #6</b>	
		<b>Formal Response #6</b>	

### ADDITIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

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