

Course Syllabus

KNT1101HS REFORMED THEOLOGY IN DIALOGUE

Knox College

Toronto School of Theology

Winter 2021

Instructor Information

Instructor: John Vissers, Principal and Professor of Historical Theology

Office Location: Academic Wing, Knox College

Telephone: (416) 978-4511

E-mail: john.vissers@utoronto.ca

Office Hours: by appointment

Teaching Assistant: TBC

Course Identification

Course Number: KNT1101HS

Course Name: Reformed Theology in Dialogue

Course Format: Knox College via ZOOM CLASSROOM

Class Time: Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. (18:30 – 20:30)

Prerequisites: None. This course is a core foundational requirement in the M.Div., MTS, MPS programs.

Auditing: By special permission of the instructor only.

Course Description

This course is an introduction to Christian theology in the Reformed Protestant tradition.

A such, it is intended to introduce students to the central categories of Christian theology as these loci have been developed in what the Christian tradition has called Systematic Theology or sometimes referred to as Dogmatic Theology. The course will focus on how major doctrinal themes have developed and been articulated in the tradition that emerged from the 16th century Reformation, especially its Calvinist trajectory, and set this perspective in dialogue with other perspectives in theology, for example: Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and other Protestant traditions.

The course also considers how these themes find expression in contemporary (e.g. feminist, liberation, postcolonial, and ecumenical) theologies. Theological themes are explored in relation to its classical formulation as well as with reference to modern (and postmodern and decolonial) reassessments of the classical tradition in the cultural and global context of the Christian churches in the 21st century.

As an introduction to Systematic Theology in the Reformed Tradition this course focuses on the following major doctrinal themes:

- the nature and method of theology (thinking and talking about God)
- the meaning of revelation (the self-disclosure of God) and the place of Holy Scripture in the Christian tradition (the 'Word' of God)
- the doctrine of God - focusing on the Trinity (the being of God), the doctrine of creation (God's work), providence and evil (theodicy)
- the nature of being human (theological anthropology and hamartiology)
- the person and work of Christ (Christology),
- the person and work of the Holy Spirit (pneumatology),
- salvation and the Christian life (soteriology),
- the church (ecclesiology)
- the future and the meaning of Christian hope (eschatology).

"It is simple, but true, to say that theology has only one, single problem: God. We are theologians for the sake of God; if we are not, then we ought not to call our-selves theologians at all. God is our dignity. God is our agony. God is our hope."

(J. Moltmann, "Theology in the Project of the Modern World," in *A Passion for God's Reign* (ed. M. Volf, Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans, 1998)

Course Learning Outcomes

Systematic theology (dogmatics) is the critical and constructive exploration of Christian doctrines and their implications for the faith and practice of the Christian movement in its diverse ecclesial and global expressions. Through a program of lectures and discussions, as well as engagement with a series of theological readings, this course is intended to assist you in understanding the theological foundations of the Christian tradition and to begin to explore the meaning of that tradition critically and constructively, in preparation for various practices of Christian ministry in church and society, and/or further study. The course is a survey course in the basic degree program with the following learning outcomes:

Religious Heritage Outcomes, examples...

- able to define Systematic Theology and situate it within the theological tradition of the Christian church
- able to discuss the nature, shape and content of major Christian doctrinal themes and symbols as a basis for further theological reflection and exploration
- able to describe and analyse the basic tenets of Reformed Theology in relation to the wider Christian ecumenical theological tradition

Cultural Context Outcomes, examples...

- able to identify and describe the apologetic, kerygmatic, and liberationist (post-colonial) functions of theology in the contemporary context
- begin to reflect critically and constructively on the significance and function of Christian doctrine in the light of Scripture, tradition and the contemporary context
- begin to reflect critically and constructively on the mission of the church in the contemporary context in relation to the church's creedal and doctrinal tradition

Personal Spiritual Formation Outcomes, examples...

- acquire basic skills in the areas of oral, written and conceptual analysis of the Christian tradition
- begin to work on the relation between Christian doctrine and moral action
- able to identify and describe the traditional Reformed understanding of *pietas*.
- begin to develop an ability to identify one's own theological presuppositions, critically reflect upon them, and constructively work out one's own theological position

Capacity for Ministry Outcomes, examples...

- begin to reflect upon the meaning of Christian theology for the practice of ministry and leadership in the church and world
- develop an appreciation for a diversity of theological and ecclesiastical traditions and the way they shape the practice of ministry
- begin to integrate (to make consistent interconnections) and communicate Reformed theology in relation to the practice of ministry and the mission of the church

Course Resources

Required Course Texts

- Rigby, Cynthia L. *Holding Faith: A Practical Introduction to Christian Doctrine*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2018 (372 pages)
- McGrath, Alister E. (ed.). *Theology: The Basic Readings*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2012 (225 pages)

Recommended Course Texts

- Barth, Karl. *Dogmatics in Outline*. Harper and Row, 1959. (155 pages)
- Kerr, Hugh T. (editor). *Calvin's Institutes: A New Compend*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989 (180 pages)
- Migliore, Daniel, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 3rd Edition, 2014 (471 pages)

Course Website

This course uses Quercus for its course website. To access it, go to the U of T Quercus login page and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged into Quercus using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you will find the link to the website for all your Quercus based courses. (Your course registration with ACORN gives you access to the course website Quercus). Students who have trouble accessing should consult Quercus information or ask the Teaching Assistant for further help.

Course Requirements

1. Attendance and participation. In order to gain a thorough introduction to the discipline of Christian theology through interaction with the instructor, the course material and other students, your full involvement during the course is expected. Class sessions will consist of lectures and discussions led by the instructor and the teaching assistant. Students should attend all classes, and must attend at least 80% of classes to be eligible for credit, i.e not more than two absences. Participation is worth 10% of the final grade based on a student participation self-evaluation. The instructor reserves the right to adjust this self-evaluation.

2. Thoughtful and careful completion of the required readings. All students are expected to obtain and/or have access to the course texts and complete the weekly readings. Readings may be done ahead of class, but are scheduled to follow the class. The book by Rigby provides the basic outline of the loci. The McGrath book provides primary text readings following roughly the same outline.

3. Primary Text Analysis Papers: Students will submit four theological analysis papers. These papers are based on the course readings and focus on a short primary text of a theologian in the historic Reformed Protestant tradition, in McGrath. The theological analysis papers will be graded at 10% each for a total of 40% of the course grade. You should write not more than 1000 words (3 – 4 pages, double spaced, 12 point-font) on each text.

These papers are not research essays. They are designed as an exercise in summative and critical thinking. The goal is to demonstrate your understanding of the text and offer some critical reflection and analysis by raising questions. You should try to offer a concise summary exposition. Set out the theological issue(s) under consideration. Raise critical questions. Identify the significance of the question for Christian faith and life in the world today. McGrath provides introductions and concluding reflections to assist you. These papers should represent your thinking based on your reading of the text under consideration. Don't just talk about theology, do theology!

Karl Barth on revelation and the Word of God (McGrath, 12-14)

DUE: Tuesday, January 19, 2021

Jürgen Moltmann on the suffering of God (McGrath, 35-37)

DUE: Tuesday, February 2, 2021

Jonathan Edwards on the beauty of creation (McGrath, 52-54)

DUE: Tuesday, February 23, 2021

F.D.E. Schleiermacher on Christ as redeemer (McGrath, 96-98)

DUE: Tuesday, March 9, 2021

4. Contemporary Theological Paper: Students will write one paper on a contemporary theological trend and its significance for Reformed Theology. This paper is worth 20% of the course grade and should be 1500 – 2000 words (6-8 pages) double-spaced and typed, 12 point font. This paper provides an opportunity to explore a theological trend, trajectory, issue, or movement that may be of interest to you and engage with it in terms of this course. This is Reformed theology “in dialogue.” It also allows you to examine diverse expressions of Reformed theology today. The paper will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Does the student clearly and accurately define and describe the theology under consideration?
- Does the student identify the key ideas and themes, and/or the key theological thinkers in the theology under consideration?
- Does the student critically assess the theology under consideration (i.e. discuss issues, pose questions, identify strengths & weaknesses, problems and promise)?
- Does the student demonstrate why this theology is important and significant, especially for Christian faith and practice today?
- Does the student relate the theology under consideration to Reformed theology, i.e. how it impacts the Reformed tradition, why it matters, how Reformed theology might agree or disagree, what might be at stake, etc.?

In summary, this paper should do three things: First, define and describe. Second, explain and exposit. Third, engage and assess. Students may choose, for example, from among the following:

- Latin American Liberation Theology
- Feminist Theology or Womanist Theology or Mujerista Theology
- African Theology or African American (Black) Theology
- Asian Theology or Asian American Theology
- Postcolonial Theology
- Indigenous Theology (First Nations)
- Queer Theology
- Hispanic Theology
- Pentecostal/Charismatic Theology

DUE: Tuesday, March 30, 2021

5. Final Take-Home Examination. The examination is designed to be written in two hours. Students will have 24 hours to complete it. It will be distributed on Tuesday, April 6 at 8:30 am. and due by 8:30 am the next day, Wednesday, April 7. 30 p.m. The exam is worth 30% of the Final Grade.

Course Grading and Evaluation

Participation	10%
Theological Text Analysis Papers	40%
Contemporary Theology Paper	20%
Final Examination	30%

The course will be graded according to the grade scheme of the TST and Knox College basic degree handbooks:

A ⁺	90 - 100	Profound and Creative
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A	85 - 89	Outstanding
A ⁻	80 - 84	Excellent: clear evidence of original thinking, of analytic and synthetic ability; sound critical evaluations, broad knowledge base.
B ⁺	77 - 79	Very good
B	73 - 76	Good: good critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues, good familiarity with the literature
B ⁻	70 - 72	Satisfactory: adequate critical capacity and analytic ability; some understanding of relevant issues and with the literature
FZ	0 - 69	Failure: failure to meet the above criteria

COURSE POLICIES

Handbooks: Policies for courses are contained in the TST Basic Degree Handbook (You can find the TST Basic Degree Handbook at <http://www.tst.edu/content/handbooks> and the Knox Student Handbook (You can find the content of the Knox College Student Handbook under Academic Policies on the Knox College website. In particular note:

Accessibility. Students with a disability or health consideration, whether temporary or permanent, are entitled to accommodation. Students in conjoint degree programs must register at the University of Toronto's Accessibility Services offices; information is available at <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/>. The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

Plagiarism. Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to his or her head of college or delegate according to the TST *Basic Degree Handbook* and the Graduate program Handbooks and the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*. Students should also read the document "Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing" published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges.

Other academic offences. TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto Code of *Behaviour on Academic Matters*

Back-up copies. Please make back-up copies of essays before handing them in.

Late Policy: Basic Degree students are expected to hand in assignments by the date given in the course outline. Please check the Late Policy in the Knox College Student Handbook and the TST Basic Degree Handbook. The absolute deadline for the course is the examination day scheduled for the course or the last day of exam week for the semester in which the course is taught, whichever is sooner. This penalty is not applied to students with documented medical or compassionate difficulties or exceptional reasons (e.g., a death in the family or a serious illness); students facing such difficulties are late papers will be accepted for this course except for the reasons and according to the policy stated in the Knox College Student Handbook.

Completion of Course work: all course work (including any late work) must be completed by the end of term, the due date is the Tuesday of examination week. Only in the case of illness (with a note from a doctor), bereavement or other unusual circumstances will an extension be considered and this must be authorized by the Academic Dean and reported to the Basic Degree Committee and the Faculty of Knox College.

Style Guidelines for Papers: The reference style used in all courses at Knox College is the Chicago style as summarized in *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, by Kate L. Turabian.

Email assignments: Weekly assignments are to be submitted by email directly to the Teaching Assistant with a copy to the Instructor.

Inclusive Language: It is the policy of Knox College that inclusive language should be used in all class discussions, class presentations, and written assignments.

Consultation: Please do not hesitate to consult with me about any questions you may have.

Obligation to check email & Quercus.: The course instructor may send out important course information by email. To that end, all students in conjoint programs are required to have a valid University of Toronto email address. Students must have set up their utoronto email address which is entered in the ACORN system. Information is available on the Quercus site. The course instructor will not be able to help you with this. 416-978-HELP and the Help Desk at the Information Commons can answer questions you may have about your UTORid and password. *Students should check utoronto email regularly* for messages about the course.

Forwarding your utoronto.ca email to a Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Hotmail, Gmail or Yahoo accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that emails from your course instructor may end up in your spam or junk mail folder.

Email communication with the course instructor. The instructor aims to respond to email communications from students in a timely manner. *All email communications from students in conjoint programs must be sent from a utoronto email address.* Email communications from other email addresses are not secure, and also the instructor cannot readily identify them as being legitimate emails from students. The instructor is not obliged to respond to email from non-utoronto addresses for students in conjoint programs. Students in non-conjoint programs should only use the email address they have provided to their college of registration.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Tuesday, January 5

Theme: The Nature and Task of Theology (Prolegomena)

Required Reading: Rigby, xvii-xxxv; McGrath, xviii-xxiv

Recommended Reading: Migliore, 1-20

Week 2: Tuesday, January 12

Theme: The Doctrine of Revelation

Required Reading: Rigby, 3-29; McGrath, 1-26

Recommended Reading: Migliore, 21-45; Barth, 9-34

Week 3: Tuesday, January 19

Theme: The Doctrine of Scripture

Required Reading: Rigby, 31-68

Recommended Reading: Migliore, 46-65; Calvin/Kerr, 17-33

Paper on Barth Due

Week 4: Tuesday, January 26

Theme: The Doctrine of God

Required Reading: McGrath, 27-46

Reading: Migliore, 66-69, 85-95; Calvin/Kerr, 34-35; Barth, 35-49

Week 5: Tuesday, February 2

Theme: The Doctrine of the Trinity

Required Reading: Rigby, 107-137; McGrath, 128-147.

Recommended Reading: Migliore, 70-85; Calvin/Kerr, 36-40.

Paper on Moltmann Due

Week 6: Tuesday, February 9

Theme: Creation and Providence

Required Reading: Rigby, 141-167; McGrath, 47-66

Recommended Reading: Migliore, 96-142; Calvin/Kerr, 41-43, 48-51; Barth, 50-64

READING WEEK: February 15 – 20 (No Class Tuesday, February 16)

Week 7: Tuesday, February 23

Theme: The Doctrine of Humanity (Theological Anthropology)

Required Reading: Rigby, 169-185

Recommended Reading: Migliore, 143-167; Calvin/Kerr, 44-47; 55-62

Paper on Edwards Due

Week 8: Tuesday, March 2

Theme: The Doctrine of the Incarnation (Christology)

Required Reading: Rigby, 71-105; McGrath, 67-87

Recommended Reading: Migliore, 168-187; Calvin/Kerr, 72-74; Barth, 65-100

Week 9: Tuesday, March 9

Theme: The Doctrine of the Atonement (Soteriology)

Required Reading: Rigby, 185-201; McGrath, 88-107

Required Reading: Migliore, 187-204; Calvin/ Kerr, 75-80; Barth, 101-136

Paper on Schleiermacher Due

Week 10: Tuesday, March 16

Theme: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life (Pneumatology)

Required Reading: Rigby, 285-303; McGrath, 108-127

Recommended Reading: Migliore, 232-258; Calvin/Kerr, 83-90, 113-119; Barth, 137-140, 149-152

Week 11: Tuesday, March 23

Theme: The Doctrine of the Church (Ecclesiology)

Required Reading: Rigby, 205-229; McGrath, 148-167

Required Reading: Migliore, 259-313; Calvin/Kerr, 129-137; Barth, 141-148

Week 12: Tuesday, March 30

Theme: Christian Hope (Eschatology)

Required Reading: Rigby, 259-284; McGrath, 188-207

Required Reading: Migliore, 347-373; Calvin/Kerr, 120-126; Barth, 153-155

Paper on Contemporary Theology Due

Examination Week: Tuesday, April 6

Take-Home Examination