

## Course Syllabus

### KNT1101HS REFORMED THEOLOGY IN DIALOGUE

Knox College, Toronto School of Theology

Winter 2023

*"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 ourselves theologians at all. God is our dignity. God is our agony. God is our hope."*

Jürgen Moltmann

#### ***Instructor Information***

---

Instructor: John Vissers, Professor of Historical Theology

Office Location: Academic Wing, Knox College

E-mail: [john.vissers@utoronto.ca](mailto:john.vissers@utoronto.ca)

Office Hours: by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Jonathan Cleland, Ph.D. Student

E-mail: [jon.cleland@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:jon.cleland@mail.utoronto.ca)

#### ***Course Identification***

---

Course Number: KNT1101HS

Course Name: Reformed Theology in Dialogue

Course Format: Knox College (Room TBA)

Class Time: Tuesdays, 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. (1400-1600) EST

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

## ***Course Description***

---

***This course is an introduction to Christian theology in the Reformed tradition.*** It introduces students to the central categories of Christian theology as these loci have been developed by Reformed Christians in the history of the Christian tradition. This discipline is called Systematic Theology or Christian Dogmatics.

The course will focus on theological themes that emerged in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation, especially its Calvinist trajectory; set within the context of the history of the Christian tradition; and in dialogue with other Christian traditions, such as Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and various Protestant theologies.

The course also considers how some of these themes find expression in contemporary theologies (e.g. feminist, liberation, postcolonial, ecumenical, etc.) and are being reconstructed with reference to modern, postmodern, and decolonial reassessments of the classical tradition in the 21<sup>st</sup> century global context of the Christian churches. The course surveys 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).

## ***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

- Migliore, Daniel. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 3rd Edition, 2014 (471 pages)
- Woodley, Randy S. *Indigenous Theology and the Western Worldview: A Decolonized Approach to Christian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2022 (141 pages)

### Recommended Course Texts

- Barth, Karl. *Dogmatics in Outline*. Harper and Row, 1959. (155 pages)
- McGrath, Alister E. (ed.). *Theology: The Basic Readings*, Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 3rd Edition, 2018 (252 pages)
- Kerr, Hugh T. (editor). *Calvin's Institutes: A New Compend*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989 (180 pages)
- Rigby, Cynthia L. *Holding Faith: A Practical Introduction to Christian Doctrine*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2018 (372 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 text and complete the weekly readings. Readings should be done ahead of class, and students should be prepared to discuss the reading in class. The book by Migliore provides the basic outline of the doctrinal themes week by week. The text by Woodely provides a critical assessment of Western thought by an Indigenous theologian. Completion of readings weekly is critical to your learning and your success in the course. The course is designed as a survey, and we will not have time in class to cover all aspects of each doctrinal theme.

**3. Critical Reflection Papers (on primary theological texts):** Students will submit three primary analysis papers in the first half of the course. These papers are based on the course readings and focus on a short primary text of a theologian in the Reformed Protestant tradition: Calvin, Barth, and Moltmann. The papers will be graded at 10% each for a total of 30% of the course grade. You should write about 800 – 1000 words (3 – 4 pages, double spaced, 12 point-font) on each text. These papers are not research essays. They are designed as exercises in summative and critical thinking. The goal is to demonstrate your understanding of the text and offer critical analysis and reflection. You should 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 today. McGrath provides introductions and concluding reflections for the Barth and Moltmann texts 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!

**Write on ONE of the following two readings for the Calvin assignment**

**Option 1:** John Calvin on the Knowledge of God (Kerr, 17–20, on Quercus)

According to Calvin, how is the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves related? What is piety? What is religion? Do you think we can know God? **OR**

**Option 2:** John Calvin on the nature of faith (McGrath 9–11, on Quercus)

According to Calvin, what is faith? What is the purpose of faith? In what sense is faith based on a knowledge of God? **Due: Tuesday, January 17, 2023**

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

According to Barth, what is revelation? What is the threefold form of the Word of God? Do you think God speaks in this way? **DUE: Tuesday, January 31, 2023**

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

What does Moltmann mean by the suffering of God? Do you think God suffers? Why or why not? **DUE: Tuesday, February 14, 2023**

4. **Book Review:** Students are required to write a review of the class text *Indigenous Theology and the Western Worldview: A Decolonized Approach to Christian Doctrine* by Randy S. Woodley. This book will be read and discussed from Week 3 to Week 7 of the course and the review is due Week 8. The review should be 1000 – 1500 words (4-6 pages), double-spaced and typed, 12 point font, and formatted as a proper book review (i.e. with title, author, publisher, page number, etc.). The review should contain a summary of the main ideas of the book, a discussion of their significance for Reformed theology and the church, and your own critical assessment of the ideas and their significance. The review is worth 20% of the course grade. **Due: Tuesday, March 7, 2023.**

5. **Research Essay:** Students will write a paper on one doctrinal theme in Reformed theology or on a contemporary approach to Christian theology related to Reformed theology. This paper is worth 40% of the course grade and should be 2400 – 3000 words (12 – 15 pages) double-spaced and typed, 12 point font. This paper provides an opportunity to explore a theological doctrine in greater depth, or investigate a trend, trajectory, issue, or movement that may be of interest to you and engage with it in terms of this course. It provides an opportunity to examine historic and diverse expressions of Reformed theology. 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 from among the following. Please confirm your topic with the TA. If you wish to choose another topic, please consult with the Instructor. **DUE: Tuesday, April 4, 2023**

- Predestination in the theology of John Calvin
- The Trinity in the theology of Jürgen Moltmann
- The Church in the theology of Karl Barth
- Salvation in Liberation Theology
- Christology in Feminist Theology
- Pneumatology in African Theology
- Theological Anthropology in LGBTQI + Theology

## ***Course Grading and Evaluation***

---

Participation	10%
Primary Text Analysis Papers	30%
Book Review	20%
Research Essay	40%

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

A <sup>+</sup>	90 – 100	Profound and Creative
A	85 – 89	Outstanding
A <sup>-</sup>	80 – 84	Excellent: clear evidence of original thinking, of analytic and synthetic ability; sound critical evaluations, broad knowledge base.
B <sup>+</sup>	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 <sup>-</sup>	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 at <https://knox.utoronto.ca/documents>).

**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 keep back-up copies of all essays that have been submitted online.

**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); when facing such difficulties students must consult the Instructor or the Teaching Assistant immediately.

**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.

**Upload assignments:** All assignments are to be uploaded either as .pdf or .docx files onto Quercus.

**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 the Instructor or the Teaching Assistant with any questions you 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 10**

**Theme: The Nature and Task of Theology**

Required Reading: Migliore, 1–20 (Chapter 1: The Task of Theology)

### **Week 2: Tuesday, January 17**

**Theme: The Meaning of Revelation**

Required Reading: Migliore, 21–45 (Chapter 2: The Meaning of Revelation)

**Paper on Calvin due.**

### **Week 3: Tuesday, January 24**

**Theme: The Authority of Holy Scripture**

Required Reading: Migliore, 46–65 (Chapter 3: The Authority of Scripture);

Woodley, ix-7 (Preface, Opening Interview)

### **Week 4: Tuesday, January 31**

**Theme: The Doctrine of God**

Required Reading: Migliore, 66–95 (Chapter 4: The Triune God); Woodley, 9-52 (Chapter 1: The Myth of History and Progressive Civilizations) **Paper on Barth due.**

**Week 5: Tuesday, February 7**

**Theme: The Doctrine of Creation**

Required Reading: Migliore, 96–120 (Chapter 5: The Good Creation); Woodley, 53-88 (Chapter 2: Comparing Western and Indigenous Worldviews)

**Week 6: Tuesday, February 14**

**Theme: The Providence of God**

Required Reading: Migliore, 121–142 (Chapter 6: The Providence of God and the Mystery of Evil); Woodley, 89-117 (Chapter 3: Decolonizing Western Christian Theology) **Paper on Moltmann due.**

**READING WEEK: February 20 – 24 (No Class Tuesday, February 21)**

**Week 7: Tuesday, February 28**

**Theme: The Doctrine of Humanity**

Required Reading: Migliore, 143–167 (Chapter 7: Humanity as Creature, Sinner, and New Being in Christ); Woodley, 119-134 (Closing Interview)

**Week 8: Tuesday, March 7**

**Theme: The Doctrine of the Incarnation**

Required Reading: Migliore, 168–187 (Chapter 8: The Person and Work of Jesus Christ) **Book Review of Woodley due.**

**Week 9: Tuesday, March 14**

**Theme: The Doctrine of the Atonement**

Required Reading: Migliore, 205–231 (Chapter 9: Confessing Jesus Christ in Context)

**Week 10: Tuesday, March 21**

**Theme: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life**

Required Reading: Migliore, 232–258 (Chapter 10: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life)

**Week 11: Tuesday, March 28**

**Theme: The Doctrine of the Church (Ecclesiology)**

Required Reading: Migliore, 259–285 (Chapter 11: The New Community)

**Week 12: Tuesday, April 4,**

**Theme: Christian Hope (Eschatology)**

Required Reading: Migliore, 347–373 (Chapter 14: Christian Hope)

**Final Theological Research Essay Due**

**Participation Self-Evaluation Due**