Course Syllabus

KNT3271 – Doctrines of Reconciliation Knox College, Toronto School of Theology Winter 2025

Instructor Information

Instructor: John A. Vissers, Professor of Systematic Theology

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Office Hours: By appointment

Teaching Assistant: TBC

Course Identification

Course Number: Course Code KNT3271HS

Course Format: In person onsite

Course Name: Doctrines of Reconciliation

Course Location: Knox College Academic Wing, Room TBC

Class Times: Tuesdays at 9:00am – 11:00am

Prerequisites: KNT1101 - Reformed Theology in Dialogue (or equivalent)

Course Description

This course explores what Christian theology calls 'soteriology,' i.e., doctrines of salvation. In the Christian tradition, salvation is also described as reconciliation and redemption, and the focus of this course is on the primary texts, teachings, and 'theories' that deal with the Christian doctrine of atonement. How has the Christian church understood the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus the Messiah as a saving or reconciling act? What is reconciliation? How is it accomplished? Why is it necessary? Who is reconciled? What theological models most adequately and appropriately illustrate it? Focussed on Jesus Christ, this is a course on the soteriological meaning of the incarnation and the atonement. Our aim is to examine the internal theological coherence and consistency of these "theories" and their value and importance for today. We will consider the nature of the doctrines of reconciliation through the lens of a Reformed theology which seeks to be ecumenical, evangelical, and catholic; and to explore the meaning and relevance of reconciliation in the contemporary world.

Course Texts

Required:

Migliore, Daniel L. Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology. Fourth Edition, Eerdmans, 2023.

Witt, William and Scandrett, Joel. *Mapping Atonement: The Doctrine of Reconciliation in Christian History and Theology.* Baker Academic, 2023.

Additional articles and excerpts from primary texts will be placed on Quercus for reading and discussion in class.

Recommended

Aulén, Gustav. Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Idea of the Atonement. New York: Macmillan, 1969.

Bartlett, A. Cross Purposes: The Violent Grammar of Christian Atonement. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International. 2001

Brock, Rita Nakashima and Rebecca Parker. *Proverbs of Ashes: Violence, Redemptive Suffering, and the Search for What Saves Us.* Boston: Beacon Press, 2001.

Cone, James H. The Cross and the Lynching Tree. New York: Orbis, 2011.

Fiddes, P. Past Event and Present Salvation, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1989.

Gunton, Colin. *The Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989

Hall, Douglas John. The Cross in our Context: Jesus and the Suffering World. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003.

Johnson, Adam (Editor). T & T Clark Companion to Atonement. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017.

Moffit, David M. Rethinking the Atonement: New Perspectives on Jesus's Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023.

Moltmann, Jürgen. The Crucified God. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.

Ruether, Rosemary Radford. Women and Redemption: A Theological History. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.

Rutledge, Fleming. The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015.

Schmiechan, Peter. Saving Power: Theories of Atonement and the Forms of the Church. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.

Sőlle, D. *Christ the Representative*, SCM Press, 1967.

Song, C.S. Jesus the Crucified People. Lima: C.S.S. Publishing, 2001.

Weaver, J. Denny. The Nonviolent Atonement. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.

Whale, J.S. Victor and Victim: The Christian Doctrine of Redemption, Cambridge University Press, 1960.

Course Website

Quercus: https://q.utoronto.ca/ This course uses Quercus for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT Quercus login page at https://q.utoronto.ca/ and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to Quercus using your UTORid and password, look for the My **Courses** module, where you'll find the link to the website for all your Quercus-based courses. (Your course registration with ACORN gives you access to the course website in Quercus.) Information for students about using Quercus can be found at: https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Tuesday, January 7

Introduction: The Doctrine of Reconciliation in Reformed Dogmatics

Required Reading: Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 8 (WCF available online in various sources, www.presbyterian.ca; Living Faith: A Statement of Christian Belief, Chapter 3 (The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1984; available in English, French, and Korean online at www.presbyterian.ca) A Catechism for Today, Questions 34-51 (The Presbyterian Church in Canada available online at www.presbyterian.ca.)

Week 2: Tuesday, January 14

The Person and Work of Jesus Christ and Reconciliation

Required Reading: Migliore, 178-216 (Ch. 8); Witt/Scandrett, 1-13; (Chapter 8, pp.178-216); Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.15.1-6

Week 3: Tuesday, January 21

Reconciliation: Incarnation and Recapitulation

Required Reading: Witt/Scandrett, 15-37; Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 3.18.7

Week 4: Tuesday, January 28

Reconciliation: Ransom and Christus Victor

Required Reading: Witt/Scandrett, 38-60; Augustine, De Trinitate, Chapter 13

Week 5: Tuesday, February 4

Reconciliation and Satisfaction

Required Reading: Witt/Scandrett, 61-81. Anselm, Cur Deus Homo

Week 6: Tuesday, February 11

Reconciliation and Divine Love.

Required Reading: Witt/Scandrett, 82-100

Week 7: WINTER TERM READING WEEK (No Class on February 18)

Week 8: Tuesday, February 25

Reconciliation and Fittingness.

Required Reading: Witt/Scandrett, 101-125

Week 9: Tuesday, March 4

Reconciliation and Penal Substitution

Required Reading: Witt/Scandrett, 126-152; Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.16 and 2.17.

Week 10: Tuesday, March 11

Reconciliation and Modern Reformed Theology.

Required Reading: Witt/Scandrett, 153-226

Week 11: Tuesday, March 18

Reconciliation in Diverse Global Perspectives

Required Reading: Migliore, 217-244

Week 12: Tuesday, March 25

Reconciliation and the Cosmos

Required Reading: Migliore, 245-265

Week 13: Tuesday, April 1

Reconciliation and the Christian Life

Required Reading: Migliore, 266-293

Week 14: Tuesday, April 8

Examination Week. No Class. Final Papers Due.

Course Requirements

- **1. Attendance and participation**. To achieve a thorough understanding of Reformed soteriology through interaction with the instructor, the course material and other students, your full involvement during the course is required. Class sessions will consist of lectures and discussions. Students must 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. <u>Readings must be done ahead of class; students should be prepared to discuss the readings in class</u>. The total number of pages in the readings for this course is approximately 720 pages, 60 pages per week. Two chapters in the book by Migliore address soteriology in relation to Christology, diverse global theologies of reconciliation, cosmology and ecotheology, and the Christian life. Witt and Scandrett map the development of doctrines of reconciliation in the history of Christian thought. Primary text readings are drawn from a variety of historical and contemporary texts, including PCC materials, and will be used as a basis for discussion in class. Completion of readings weekly is crucial to your learning and your success in the course.
- 3. **Critical Summative Papers/ In class presentations:** all students will submit a brief report on the following doctrines/models/theories of atonement based on the required reading. Each week one student will lead a discussion on it in class. The presentation should be a two-to-three-page review of the document which includes a summary, key issues, and critical questions. These papers are each worth 10% of the final grade. The first paper will be Pass/Fail. Of the remaining six, the lowest mark will be dropped from the final assessment.

January 21: Irenaeus on Recapitulation

January 28: Origen on Ransom

February 4: Anselm on Satisfaction

February 11: Thomas Aquinas on Fittingness

February 25: Abelard on Divine Love

March 4: Calvin on Penal Substitution

March 11: Barth on Reconciliation

4. **Major Theological Essay:** Students will write a major essay on a doctrine of reconciliation. This paper is worth 40% of the course grade and should be 3000 to 4000 words (15 – 20 pages) double-spaced and typed, 12-point font. This paper provides an opportunity to explore one theological doctrine in greater depth. Topics are to be chosen from among the list to be distributed and discussed in class. Please confirm your topic with the instructor. **Due: Tuesday, April 8, 2025.**

Course Grading

Participation	10%
Critical Summative Papers	50%
Theological Essay	40%

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
Α	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
В	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 at https://knox.utoronto.ca/documents).

Class attendance. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner congruent with the vocation they are seeking to enter and in which they desire to give leadership. To that end, it is a regulation of Knox College that a minimum of approximately 80% attendance at courses (10 of 12 weeks) is required for credit; 100% attendance is expected at seminar courses. Habitual lateness for class will be counted as absence.

Teaching and learning are interactive, not passive, activities. Therefore, students may not "attend" an in-person class through unauthorized audio or video streaming or by watching or listening to a recording; instructors are not obligated to record or permitted to stream their inperson classes. Online classes that include a synchronous video component require the same level of attendance as an in-person course, and students may not "attend" by watching or listening to a recording. Online classes that include an asynchronous component require participation in all the activities for each week or module to meet the attendance requirement. Students requiring accommodations to attend class must present medical and/or Accessibility Services documentation that outlines the type and duration of accommodation(s) required.

Class recording. Much of the learning that goes on in the virtual or in-person classroom is founded upon mutual disclosure that takes place between instructor and student, and between students. Parties outside of this learning community have not committed themselves to this relationship of trust. A student without an approved accommodation who wishes to make an audio recording of an in-person class must secure the agreement of the instructor and all classmates; livestreaming and video recordings are not permitted. Online video-streamed classes may be recorded at the discretion of the instructor. Personal recordings may be used only by the student who made the recording; no recording may be reproduced, posted, or distributed without the written permission of the instructor.

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

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 immediately.

Completion of Course work: all course work (including any late work) must be completed by the end of term; the absolute final due date is the Thursday 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. Students facing such difficulties are kindly requested to consult with their faculty adviser or basic degree director, who should make a recommendation on the matter to the instructor and request an SDF. The absolute deadline for obtaining an SDF for the course is the examination day scheduled for the course or the last day of examination week, whichever is sooner. An SDF must be requested from the registrar's office in the student's college of registration no later than the last day of exam week in which the course is taken. The SDF, when approved, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond the conclusion of the following term. If a student has not completed work but has not been granted an SDF, a final mark will be submitted calculating a zero for work not submitted.

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

Course grades. Consistent with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor's college before being posted to ACORN. Grades are not official until they are posted to ACORN. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy found at https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/

<u>secretariat/policies/grading-practices-policy-university-assessment-and-january-26-2012</u>, policies found in the TST conjoint program handbooks, or college grading policy.

Inclusive Language. Knox College has an inclusive language policy, available at https://knox.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Knox-College-Policy Use-of-Language-Policy-and-Glossary 221003.pdf.

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.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as. 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 their head of college or delegate according to the Graduate program Handbook linked from http://www.tst.edu/academic/resources-forms/handbooks and the University of Toronto Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019. A student who plagiarizes in this course will be assumed to have read the document "Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing" published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges:

https://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/library/research/theology/avoiding-plagiarism-in-theological-writing/

Use of Generative AI, e.g., ChatGPT. With the advent of publicly accessible generative AI (GenAI) tools, U of T has been assessing the technological landscape and updating relevant guidelines and protocols as needed. The University will be collecting and sharing the guidelines and protocols as they become available. Additional resources are regarding GenAI usage by faculty, students, researchers, and staff are posted at https://ai.utoronto.ca/. Students may not use generative AI tools like ChatGPT to complete an assignment. All use of online resources must be properly documented.

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

https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019 .

Obligation to check email. At times, the course instructor may decide to send out important course information by email. To that end, all students in conjoint programs are required to have a valid utoronto email address. Students must have set up their utoronto email address which is entered in the ACORN system. Information is available at www.utorid.utoronto.ca. 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 me 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.

A note about "trigger" warnings: You are preparing for vocations (congregational ministry, spiritual care, psychotherapy, teaching, research, etc.) that by their nature present you with stimulating situations, including domestic violence, child sexual abuse, effects of addiction, and other very traumatic events. Your vocational preparation anticipates that you will meet such situations in the real world, that you will not be warned about the nature of the stimulus, and that you have to protect a person from your own reaction to situations that may "trigger" a response in you. Your faculty advisor, the registrar's staff, and the Ecumenical Chaplains can direct you to resources for you to engage in care for your own self. In your studies you will likely not be warned about the kind of "triggering" event that you may encounter.

In this course, if you begin to lose control of your emotions, you may leave with one colleague from the class until you can collect yourself, or you may engage in other practices (journaling, meditation) that allow you to regain control. If you or your colleague are concerned that you cannot regain control or are unduly distressed, you and your colleague should seek assistance from the Knox Registrar's office. Staff there have access to immediate assistance. In the end, your emotional safety is your own responsibility. Please note that in this course we will be addressing questions about violence, suffering, and victimhood in Christian doctrines of reconciliation and atonement.

Consultation: Please do not hesitate to consult the instructor with any questions you have.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes

Soteriology in the Reformed tradition is the critical and constructive exploration of the doctrine of salvation and reconciliation, especially in Presbyterianism, and its implications and applications for the practice of preaching, teaching, and ministerial leadership. 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 reaching the following objectives in your understanding of the theology of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

In respect of knowledge and skills for ordained ministry, these are the top ten outcomes:

- Explain the major models of the atonement as they have developed in the history of the church and been received and articulated in the Reformed tradition
- Situate the primary doctrines of Reformed soteriology within the history of the doctrine of the atonement
- Explain how doctrines of reconciliation have been shaped by historical and cultural contexts
- Explain one's own soteriology: what is reconciliation for you?
- Apply your owned theology of reconciliation to the meaning of the Gospel as good news today, especially for evangelism and social justice
- Demonstrate the ability to utilize an informed biblical and theological understanding of reconciliation in a teaching and preaching ministry within a congregation
- Demonstrate the ability to interact respectfully within a situation where competing theological viewpoints are held
- Able to teach a confirmation class or a class for new Presbyterians on the meaning of the Christian gospel.
- Able to utilize the appropriate resources to prepare for leading worship, preaching, and celebrating the sacraments in a way which reflects the church's understanding of reconciliation
- Able to think critically and utilize resources about the meaning of the Christian faith in relation to the PCC's commitment to truth and reconciliation (TRC Calls to Action)

Basic Degrees – Knox and TST

This course has the following course-level learning outcomes					
	Evaluation				
Religious Heritage Outcomes able to articulate the variety of models/motifs/theories of atonement able to describe major distinctives of Reformed soteriology	Critical Summative Papers Class Participation				
 Cultural Context Outcomes able to identify and describe the ways in which doctrines of reconciliation take shape in diverse cultural global contexts 	Click or tap here to enter text. Critical Summative Papers Theological Essay Class Participation				
 3. Spiritual Formation Outcomes ability and commitment for life-long learning in exploring the meaning of the gospel able to accurately self-assess one's own understanding of reconciliation demonstrate a commitment to engage in spiritual and ethical practices as integral to experiencing the reality of reconciliation 	Critical Summative Papers Theological Essay Class Participation				
A. Capacity for Professional Ministry Outcomes able to reflect critically upon the meaning of soteriology for practice of ministry	Critical Summative Papers Theological Essay Class Participation				

A student successfully completing this course has made progress towards the following Knox College degree program learning outcomes:

Knox College degree program learning outcomes:				
MDiv		MTS		MPS
Interprets Scripture and Christian tradition (Reformed), using a variety of methods, sources, and norms, to preach, teach, write, and to provide care and witness. Evaluation Critical Summative Papers Theological Essay		Demonstrates knowledge at a basic level in various theological disciplines. Evaluation: Critical Summative Papers Theological Essay		Demonstrates knowledge at a basic level in various theological disciplines, in the Reformed or another tradition. [* the student may come from another tradition] Evaluation:
Demonstrates skills in creative, faith-centred, adaptive, and innovative leadership for current and emerging communities of faith. Evaluation: Critical Summative Papers Theological Essay Class Participation		Finds, selects, reads, and appropriately integrates theological information. Evaluation: Critical Summative Papers Theological Essay		Demonstrates knowledge and skills in spiritual care and therapy, grounded in appropriate theories, for professional practice and leadership in community and institutional settings. Click or tap here to enter text.
Enhances the vocational and spiritual development, practices, and well-being of self and others. (See Professional and Critical Competencies.) Evaluation: Class Participation Click or tap here to enter text.		Engages respectfully and constructively in a theological community of scholarship. Evaluation: Class Participation		Demonstrates an appropriate spiritual and professional identity formation in relation to specialized practice. Evaluation: Click or tap here to enter text.

Analyzes and evaluates cultural, and communit contexts to enable communities of faith to participate in God's wo justice in a diverse and changing world. Evaluation: Critical Summative Paper Theological Essay	y rk and	 Writes and speaks in English sufficiently well to engage in theological discourse. Evaluation: Critical Summative Papers Theological Essay Class Participation 	suffici	s and speaks in English ently well to engage in sional practice. ation:	
TST BASIC "DEGREE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS"	CORRESPONDING COURSE GOALS AND OUTCOMES (see college outcomes above)			SPONDING COURSE NTS / ASSIGNMENTS	
EXPECTATIONS: In this cou	urse stud	lents are expected to demonstrat	the follow	ing:	
1. Depth and Breadth of		strate knowledge and critical		Summative Papers	
Knowledge		tanding of the nature, content, an etation of Christian soteriology	Theolog	Theological Essay	
				rticipation	
2. Knowledge of	Ability to articulate what the dominant methodologies are in theology to describe the doctrine of the atonement			Summative Papers	
methodologies			Theolog	ical Essay	
	scholar norms Ability betwee and rel	to critically engage current rship on methods, sources and of Reformed soteriology to evaluate critical distinctions en authoritative primary sources evant secondary sources for the of Reformed soteriology			
3. Application of Knowledge	Ability to employ appropriate methodologies, sources and norms of Reformed soteriology to:		Theolog	Summative Papers ical Essay rticipation	

TST BASIC "DEGREE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS"	CORRESPONDING COURSE GOALS AND OUTCOMES (see college outcomes above)	CORRESPONDING COURSE ELEMENTS / ASSIGNMENTS
	o Engage in respectful dialogue with other ecclesial traditions o Interpret cultural contexts o Communicate theological concepts o Exercise responsible church leadership and able to reflect critically upon one's	
4. Communication Skills	Ability to foster a safe and respectful environment within which to communicate arguments and analyses effectively and collegially, orally and in writing, to a range of different audiences.	Critical Summative Papers Theological Essay Class Participation
5. Awareness of Limits of Knowledge	Awareness of limits of knowledge in the methods, sources, and articulated norms of Christian soteriology • Respectful engagement with sociocultural influences, perspectives of other Christian or other spiritual traditions, and contributions of other scholarly disciplines.	Critical Summative Papers Theological Essay Class Participation
6. Autonomy and Professional Capacity	Ability to develop and evaluate strategies for ongoing professional development to advance theological knowledge for collaborative teamwork, effective decision-making, moral integrity, academic integrity, and spiritual sensibilities required for specialized leadership.	Class Participation