

**COURSE SYLLABUS: *DRAFT* January 2018**  
**KNT1101HS REFORMED THEOLOGY IN DIALOGUE**  
**(Introduction to Reformed Theology)**

**KNOX COLLEGE, TORONTO SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY**  
**Mondays at 11:00 a.m., Winter Term 2018**

***Instructor Information***

Instructor: John Vissers, Principal and Professor of Historical Theology

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***Course Identification***

Course Number: KNT1101HS

Course Name: Reformed Theology in Dialogue

Course Location: Knox College, Room 4

Class Time: Monday, 11:10 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Prerequisites: None (except regular admission to the college and an openness and eagerness to think about God). This course is a core requirement in the M.Div., MTS, MRE, and MPS programs.

Auditing: It is assumed that all students will be taking this course for credit. However, by special permission of the instructor auditors are permitted.

***Course Description***

“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.”  
 (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))

“Theology is the study of God. The study of God is simply to be enjoyed for its own incomparable subject, the One most beautiful, most worthy to be praised. Life with God delights in its very acts of thinking, reading, praying, and communing with the One most worthy to be beheld, pondered and studied...for joy in its object.”

(Thomas C. Oden, *A Change of Heart: A Personal and Theological Memoir*, InterVarsity Press, 2014, 147)

This course introduces 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 these major doctrinal themes have been articulated in the *Reformed Protestant tradition*, and set this perspective in dialogue with other perspectives in theology, for example: Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, various Protestant traditions, contemporary (e.g. feminist, postcolonial), and ecumenical. Each theological theme will be 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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), 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), 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), and the meaning of Christian hope (eschatology).

### ***Course 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> 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)
- *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1646) (WCF), Free Presbyterian Publications, 1994; available online in various sources, including the website of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, [www.presbyterian.ca](http://www.presbyterian.ca)
- *Living Faith: A Statement of Christian Belief* (LF), The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1984; available from the Resource Centre at National Office of The Presbyterian Church in Canada in English, French, and Korean; also available online at [www.presbyterian.ca](http://www.presbyterian.ca)
- Kerr, Hugh T. (editor). *Calvin's Institutes: A New Compend*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989 (180 pages)
- McGrath, Alister E. (ed.). *Theology: The Basic Readings*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2012 (225 pages)

## Recommended Course Texts

- *The Heidelberg Catechism* (1563), available in *The Book of Confessions* of The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1966; and available online in various sources.
- *A Catechism for Today*, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 2006; available online under resources at [www.presbyterian.ca](http://www.presbyterian.ca)
- *Confessing the Faith Today: The Nature and Function of Subordinate Standards*, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 2009; available online under resources at [www.presbyterian.ca](http://www.presbyterian.ca)
- *Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation*, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1955; available online under resources at [www.presbyterian.ca](http://www.presbyterian.ca)

## Course Website

This course uses Blackboard for its course website. To access it, go to the U of T portal login page at <http://portal.utoronto.ca> and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to the portal using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you will find the link to the website for all your Blackboard-based courses. (Your course registration with ROSI gives you access to the course website at Blackboard). Note also the information at <http://www.portalinfo.utoronto.ca/content/information-students>.

## 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. Students must attend at least 80% of classes to be eligible for credit, i.e not more than two unexcused 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 Migliore provides the basic outline of the loci. The McGrath book and the Calvin/Kerr book provide primary text readings following the same outline. The WCF and Living Faith set out the same doctrinal themes in a confessional format.

3. **Theological Analysis Papers:** Students will submit eight brief theological analysis papers. These papers are based on the course readings and focus on a question or a primary text. Students will choose **eight out of ten** questions and write papers based on the weekly question or primary text. These must be handed in at the next class. The first paper is due at the beginning of class on Week 2 (January 15) and so forth, with the last paper being due at the last class (Week 12, April 2). No late papers will be accepted; therefore you cannot go back and do an earlier paper if you miss. Please notify the TA the two weeks that you choose not to submit a paper.

The theological analysis papers will be graded for a total of 40% of the course grade. You should write 300 – 500 words (2 – 3 pages, double spaced, 12 point-font) on the question/s posed. Show that you have used both the course lecture and the readings for the week to answer the question. These papers are not intended to be research essays. They are designed as an exercise in summative and critical thinking. You should try to answer the questions clearly and precisely or in the case of a primary text offer an 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. These papers should represent your thinking. Don't just talk about theology, do theology!

4. **Examinations:** There will be a mid-term test (examination) on Monday, February 13 at 11:10 a.m. (one hour only). There will be a regular class in the second hour that day. There will be a final examination (2 hours) based on the content of the required readings, class lectures, and written assignments. Date: TBD.

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

Participation	10%
Theological Analysis Papers	40% (8 X 5%)
Mid-Term Examination	20%
Final Examination	30%

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**

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 <http://www.knox.utoronto.ca/life-at-knox/policies/> . In particular note:

**Late Policy:** No 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 Director of Academic Programs 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. You can find a good summary of this style at:  
[http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian\\_citationguide.html](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html)

**Email assignments:** Weekly assignments may be submitted either by email or by hard copy directly to the Teaching Assistant, Gord Brown: [gord.brown@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:gord.brown@mail.utoronto.ca)

**Plagiarism Policy:** See TST Basic Degree Handbook. **Please familiarise yourself with this policy as there are very serious academic consequences for violating this policy.**

**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.

**STUDENTS MUST HAVE A VALID UOFT EMAIL ADDRESS AND CHECK THEIR MAILBOX REGULARLY. FAILURE TO DO SO MAY CAUSE STUDENTS TO MISS IMPORTANT COURSE INFORMATION**

## ***COURSE CALENDAR:***

### **Week 1: Monday, January 8**

**Theme: Introduction to Christian Theology**

1st hour : What is theology? (The Nature and Task of Theology)

2<sup>nd</sup> hour : How is theology done? (Theological Method)

Required Reading: Migliore, 1-20; Living Faith, Chapter 1; McGrath, 1-26.

Theological Analysis Question: Identify the three methods of asking theological questions set out by Migliore. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each method? Which do you prefer? Why? **OR** Write a critical reflection on “Augustine of Hippo on theology and secular philosophy” (McGrath, 3-5).

### **Week 2: Monday, January 15**

**Theme: The Doctrine of Revelation**

1<sup>st</sup> hour: What is revelation?

2<sup>nd</sup> hour: Holy Scripture

Required Reading: Migliore, 21-65; WCF, Chapter 1; LF, Chapter 5; Calvin (Kerr), 17-33.

Theological Analysis Question: Identify Avery Dulles’ five models of revelation as set out by Migliore. How does each imagine the way in which God reveals Godself? Which do you prefer? Why? **OR** write a critical reflection of Calvin on “The Knowledge of God revealed in Scripture” (Calvin/Kerr, 28-33).

### **Week 3: Monday, January 22**

**Theme: The Doctrine of God**

1st hour: The Being of God

2<sup>nd</sup> hour: The Perfections of God

Required Reading: Migliore, 66-69, 85-90; WCF, Chapter 2.1, 2.2; McGrath, 27-46; Calvin (Kerr) 34-35.

Theological Analysis Question: Define the following terms: analogy of being, analogy of faith, way of negation, way of eminence, and way of causality. How does each give us knowledge of God? Which do you prefer? Why? **OR** write a critical reflection of Elizabeth A. Johnson “on female analogies for God” (McGrath, 41-43).

**Week 4: Monday, January 29****Theme: The Doctrine of the Trinity**

1<sup>st</sup> hour: The Classical Formulation of Trinitarian Faith

2<sup>nd</sup> hour: The Trinity in Contemporary Theological Thought

Required Reading: Migliore, 70-85; WCF, Chapter 2.3, LF, 1.5, 1.6; Calvin/Kerr, 36-40; McGrath, 128-147.

Theological Analysis Question: Define the following terms: economic Trinity and immanent Trinity. What is the significance of this distinction for knowledge of God? Which do you prefer as a basis for a doctrine of God? Why? **OR** Write a critical reflection of Catherine Mowry LaCugna “on the Trinity and the Christian life” (McGrath, 145-147).

**Week 5: Monday, February 5****Theme: The Doctrine of Creation and Providence**

1<sup>st</sup> hour: The Good Creation

2<sup>nd</sup> hour: Providence and the Problem of Evil

Required Reading: Migliore, 96-142; WCF, Chapters 4 and 5; LF, Chapter 2.1; McGrath, 47-66; Calvin/Kerr, 41-43, 48-51.

No theological analysis paper assigned for the coming week due to Mid-Term.

**Week 6: Monday, February 12****Theme: Theological Anthropology ( Doctrine of Humanity)**

1<sup>st</sup> hour: Mid-Term Examination

2<sup>nd</sup> hour: The Image of God and the Doctrine of Sin

Required Reading: Migliore, 143-167; WCF, Chapter 6 & 7; LF, 2.2-2.5; Calvin/Kerr, 44-47; 55-62.

Theological Analysis Question: What does Calvin mean by the Image of God? **OR** What does Calvin mean by Total Depravity? Choose one of these doctrines, define and explain its meaning, and pose some critical questions concerning its meaning today.



**READING WEEK: February 19 – 23 (No Class February 19)**

**Week 7: Monday, February 26**

**Theme: The Person of Jesus Christ (Christology)**

1<sup>st</sup> hour: The Christology of Chalcedon

2<sup>nd</sup> hour: The Quest for the Historical Jesus

Required Reading: Migliore, 168-187; WCF, Chapter 8; LF, 3.1-3.3; McGrath, 67-87; Calvin/Kerr, 72-74.

Theological Analysis Question: Summarize and evaluate either Athanasius of Alexandria “On the Incarnation” (McGrath, 69-71) **OR** Martin Kahler on the “Jesus of History” (McGrath, 72-74).

**Week 8: Monday, March 5**

**Theme: The Work of Christ (Soteriology)**

1<sup>st</sup> hour: Classical Theories of the Atonement

2<sup>nd</sup> hour: The Atonement in Contemporary Theology

Required Reading: Migliore, 187-204; LF, 3.4 & 3.5; McGrath, 88-107; Calvin/Kerr, 75-80.

Theological Analysis Question: Identify and define the threefold office of Christ as set out by John Calvin (Calvin/Kerr, 75-77). How does Migliore correlate this with the three main theories of the atonement? (Migliore 191-192) Do you think this is a helpful way of thinking about the work of Christ? Why or why not?

**Week 9: Monday, March 12**

**Theme: Confessing Jesus Christ in a Global Context**

1<sup>st</sup> hour: Contemporary Christologies

2<sup>nd</sup> hour: Jesus Christ and Religious Pluralism

Required Reading: Migliore, 205-231, 314-346; LF, Chapter 9

Theological Analysis Question: Describe and explain one image of Christ in the global church today and discuss how it functions in a particular context. What might the Reformed churches in Canada learn from such a Christology?

**Week 10: Monday, March 19**

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

1<sup>st</sup> hour: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)

2<sup>nd</sup> hour: The Doctrine of Salvation - Election, Justification, Sanctification, Vocation

Required Reading: Migliore, 232-258; WCF, 3, 9 – 24; LF, 3.6; 4; 6; 8; McGrath, 108-127; Calvin/Kerr, 83-90; 113-119.

Theological Analysis Question: Compare the statement on election and predestination in the Westminster Confession of Faith (Chapter 3) and in Living Faith (Chapter 3.6).

**Week 11: Monday, March 26**

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

1<sup>st</sup> hour: The Marks of the Church

2<sup>nd</sup> hour: The Mission of the Church (G. Brown on Karl Barth's ecclesiology in CD IV: the gathering, upbuilding, and sending of the church)

Required Reading: Migliore, 259-313; WCF, 25-31; LF, 7; McGrath, 148-167; Calvin/Kerr, 129-137.

Theological Analysis Question: Identify the four classical marks of the church and explain what each means in the Reformed tradition **OR** Summarize and evaluate Leonardo Boff on "the reinvention of the church" (McGrath, 165-167).

**Week 12: Monday, April 2**

**Theme: Christian Hope (Eschatology)**

1<sup>st</sup> hour: Christian Hope and Human History

2<sup>nd</sup> hour: Christian Hope and Personal Destiny

Required Reading: Migliore, 347-373; WCF, 32-33; LF, 10; McGrath, 188-207; Calvin/Kerr, 120-126.

**Week 13: Examination Week - Exam Schedule to be confirmed.**

- **A select bibliography for further reading in the Reformed theological tradition will be distributed in class and posted on Blackboard.**