



Nazarene Theological Seminary

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BIB790/890 Theology of Creation [Module] Summer, 2010

Essential Information

Please refer to the following resources for information essential to the successful completion of courses and degree programs at Nazarene Theological Seminary. Links to these resources are available at http://support.nts.edu/index.php/Essential_Information. Additional technical support information can be found at <http://support.nts.edu>.

- NTS Mission Statement & Purpose
- Master of Divinity and M.A. Programs Objectives
- Tips for online learning success
- NTS library services
- Online technical requirements and Moodle support information
- NTS Student Handbook, including statements on quality of work, plagiarism, and academic probation
- *A Handbook for Inclusive Language*

Instructor Information

Professor: Joseph Coleson, Ph.D.
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Catalog Description

(As this course carries a Seminar in Biblical Studies course number, this description does not actually appear in NTS' *Academic Catalog*.)

A study across Christian Scripture of the biblical theology of creation, with particular emphasis on the beginning and foundational text, Genesis 1-2, then on to themes of God's re-creative work, and of human responsibility/ies within the framework of God's redemption and renewal of all creation.

Course Narrative & Rationale

Creation narratives and ideas exercise an ubiquitous appeal upon the human mind and heart, "believers" and "non-believers" alike. They address what have been called the "universal questions": Who am I?/Who are we?; Where did I/we come from?; even, "Where am I/are we going?" Thinking about origins fascinates you; it fascinates me; it fascinates virtually everyone we ever will meet. If you are in a ministry context, and have not encountered questions of origins, wait a bit. You will.

Not only are these topics fascinating; they are crucial. Let me lay out a set of statements that, for some, may seem too extreme: 1.) If we in Christian ministry get our theology of origins right, we will get much else right, some of it almost "automatically"; if we get origins wrong, we will get

everything else wrong, also--or at least, if we get it right, usually it will be for the wrong reasons; 2.) If our reasons for holding to the “right” conclusions (read “Christian orthodoxy”) on issues subsequent to the affirmation, “Maker of heaven and earth,” in the Creed are not based in a sound theology of Creation, not only will we diminish the good we otherwise may have done, we will do harm--harm to persons, and harm in ways--we never will realize until it is too late to heal; 3.) Ultimately, *all* sound Christian thinking rests upon a sound understanding of origins.

My hope for this course is that, by the time we have finished, you will affirm (at a minimum) that these assertions are not as far out as they may have seemed on first reading. One more thing, *apropos* the descriptor “fascinating”; some of our reading and discussion texts for this course will rank with the most delightful you ever have experienced.

Course Outcomes

In this course, the student should/will:

1. Read and become familiar with important biblical texts bearing on origins themes;
2. Read and become familiar with the most important ancient Near Eastern origins texts bearing upon our interpretations of biblical origins texts;
3. Encounter a few of the countless “sub-creations” (Tolkien’s word) on creation themes--in various literary fields, in music, in painting, and in other fields of artistic endeavor;
4. Understand and practice articulating the central theological intentions of Genesis 1-2;
5. Understand and practice articulating God’s re-creation/renewal/restoration as the eschatological *telos* of which revelation speaks, and toward which all creation looks with eager anticipation (Rom 8:18-25);
6. Practice informed discussion of origins issues in an irenic spirit;
7. Formulate a “Rule of Life” for living Christianly in God’s creation-journeying-toward-the-*telos* or, if you prefer, “home to Eden-in-the-New-Jerusalem.”

Church of the Nazarene COSAC Competencies

This course is designed to aid those in process toward ordination in the Church of the Nazarene in their development of (at least) the following COSAC competencies:

- CN 1 Ability to identify the literary structure and the main story line of the OT
- CN 2 Ability to identify the books of the OT by genre
- CN 7 Ability to describe the major theological concepts of the OT
- CN 14 Ability to identify and describe the major theological concepts of the NT
- CN 16 Ability to identify the steps of historical, literary, and theological analysis used in exegesis
- CN 17 Ability to exegete a passage of Scripture using the steps listed above
- CN 19 Ability to identify and explain the main characteristics of the nature of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Human Person, Sin , Salvation, the Christian Life, the Church and Sacraments, and Eschatology
- CN 21 Ability to demonstrate understanding of the sources of theological reflection, its historical development, and its contemporary expressions
- CN 22 Ability to articulate the distinctive characteristics of Wesleyan theology
- CN 23 Ability to identify and explain the Doctrine of Holiness from a Wesleyan perspective
- CP 1 Ability to communicate publicly through multiple methods (oral, written, media, etc.) with clarity and creativity for the sake of fostering meaning
- CP 2 Ability to write clearly and in a grammatically correct manner in the modes of discourse used in the ministry
- CP 3 Ability to speak coherently and cogently in the modes of discourse appropriate for the various ministry contexts

- CP 10 Ability to synthesize, analyze, reason logically for discernment, assessment, and problem solving, and to live with ambiguity
 - CP 11 Ability to analyze the validity of arguments and to identify their presuppositions and consequences
 - CP 13 Ability to offer spiritual counsel
 - CP 20 Ability to envision Christian education most appropriate for a local church and to assure the development and empowerment of those serving in it
 - CP 22 Ability to prepare, organize, and deliver biblically sound sermons using appropriate techniques and skills in culturally appropriate ways
 - CP 23 Ability to develop and utilize existing ministry forms . . . , doctrinal teaching/preaching . . . by which individuals, families, and congregations may be formed into Christlikeness
 - CH 2 Ability to discern and make theologically based ethical decisions in the midst of complex and/or paradoxical contexts
 - CH 3 Ability to teach and model sexual purity
 - CH 4 Ability to understand and apply the ethical dimensions of spiritual leadership in the church
 - CH 10 Ability to demonstrate a realistic self-understanding including personal strengths, gifts, weaknesses, and areas of needed growth
 - CH 11 Ability to maintain the practice of Sabbath and healthy self-care
 - CH 12 Ability to practice faithful stewardship of personal relations including gender relationships, marriage and family, personal finance, and professional conduct
- (We could, with more or less ease, relate this course to the remaining COSAC outcomes, as well.)

Similarly, the course will aid students in process toward ordination in other denominations.

Required Texts & Course Materials

- Coleson, Joseph (ed.). *Care of Creation*. Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2010.
ISBN: 978-0-89827-451-6 List price: \$14.99. (Available late May, 2010.)
- Fretheim, Terence E. *God and World in the Old Testament*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005.
ISBN: 978-0-687-34296-1 Amazon price (03/22/10): \$20.69.
- Walton, John H. *The Lost World of Genesis One*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009.
ISBN: 978-0-8308-3704-5 Amazon price (03/22/10): \$10.88.

Projected Schedule of In-module Lecture/Discussion Subjects

- May 17 (Mon) - Gen 1: Twain v. Walton; material ontology; functional ontology; phenomenology
- May 18 (Tue) - Gen 1, continued: Fretheim, chapters 1 and 2
- May 19 (Wed) - Gen 2: gender and stewardship - to serve and keep, to leave and cleave
- May 20 (Thu) - Gen 3: The Great Disaster; Fretheim, chapter 3
- May 21 (Fri) - Creation themes through the Hebrew Scriptures: Fretheim, chs. 4-8, conclusion.

- May 24 (Mon) - Creation Themes in the *Brit Hadasha* (New Covenant)
- May 25 (Tue) - Creation, re-creation, eschatological *telos*
- May 26 (Wed) - Creation and eschaton in the church
- May 27 (Thu) - Creation and eschaton in the broader community

Course Assignments

Pre-module Assignments:

1. Read Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*.
(This assignment will contribute toward fulfillment of course outcomes 1, 2, 4, 6, 7.)

2. Read Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*.
(This assignment will contribute toward fulfillment of course outcomes 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7.)
3. Read 250 pages of non-expository, non-commentary writing on creation, creation themes, etc.: narrative fiction, poetry--anything that is not commentary on biblical or other texts. Lewis's Narnia chronicles and space trilogy, Tolkien's Middle Earth saga, some of Mark Twain's writing on Antediluvian themes, some kinds of science fiction, and a great many others, are eligible. Alternatively, you may view fictional creation stories in film/video/DVR formats, totaling ten hours of viewing, or you may mix and match: e.g., watch five hours and read 125 pages. Please bring a list of your reading and/or viewing to our first class session.
(This assignment will contribute toward fulfillment of course outcomes 1, 3, 4, 5, 7.)

In-module Assignments:

1. Due Monday, May 17: 600-word essay setting forth Walton's "functional ontology" of Genesis 1. "Setting forth," here, means defining his functional ontology over against a material ontology (as Walton does), and summarizing or briefly discussing one or more implications.
(This assignment will contribute toward fulfillment of course outcomes 1, 2, 4, 6.)
 2. Due Wednesday, May 19: 600-word essay; topic TBA.
(This assignment will contribute toward fulfillment of the several course outcomes.)
 3. Due Friday, May 21: 600-word essay; topic TBA.
(This assignment will contribute toward fulfillment of the several course outcomes.)
 4. Due Monday, May 24: 600-word essay; topic TBA.
(This assignment will contribute toward fulfillment of the several course outcomes.)
 5. Due Tuesday, May 25: 600-word essay; topic TBA.
(This assignment will contribute toward fulfillment of the several course outcomes.)
 6. Dues Thursday, May 27: 600-word essay; topic TBA.
(This assignment will contribute toward fulfillment of the several course outcomes.)
- ***Any two assignments, after the first one, may be submitted on or before Monday, June 14, without prejudice.

Post-module Assignments:

1. Due Monday, June 14: Any assignment not submitted by the initial due date, above.
2. Due Monday, July 12: Final extended theological essay; details TBA.
(This assignment will contribute toward fulfillment of course outcomes 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7.)

Course Desiderata

Approximate Distribution of Student Learning Hours

	pre-module hours	module hours	post-module hours
Face-to-face Class Sessions		38	
Online Participation in forums, groups, etc.	0		10
Reading	33	2	8
Writing	0	16	33
TOTAL	33	56	51

Method for Submitting Assignments

The normal location for submission of written assignments is NTS Moodle, Theology of Creation (BIB790DM-SU10), under the respective "topics" where the assignments appear.

Form and Style Expectations

The faculty of NTS have adopted *A Manual of Style for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* by Kate L. Turabian as the standard reference work from which writing decisions are to be made when fulfilling assignments for written course work. You should consult first the latest (7th) edition of Turabian on any and all questions pertaining to written assignments for this course, though, strictly speaking, most will not be “research” assignments.

Inclusive Language

NTS is committed to the equality of women and men. Recognizing that people have often used the English language in ways that imply the exclusion or inferiority of women, NTS urges students, faculty, and staff to avoid sexist language in public discourse, in classroom discussions, and in their writings. All written work presented to meet course requirements must use gender inclusive language.

Policies Regarding Class Attendance and Late Work

Class attendance is a vital part of a modular course; every class session equals approximately a week-and-a-half of class in a block or hourly format. In this course, any absence without legitimate extenuation will be taken seriously. Absence(s) totaling more than one class session almost certainly will result in a lowering of the course grade otherwise earned.

Because of the intensive schedule of class sessions within a modular format, one or two of the short essays assigned during the module--*except for the first one, due May 17*--may be submitted as late as June 14, at the student’s discretion, and without penalty. All others are due at or before the beginning of the class session on the stated due date, and will not be accepted late.

Course Grading

The professor follows the course grading protocols found on pages 40-41 of the *NTS Academic Catalog, 2009-2010*. Only the six in-module assignments and the longer post-module extended essay will factor into the course grade. The six in-module assignments will total sixty percent of the course grade; the post-module extended essay will total forty percent of the course grade. The lone caveat here is that excessive absence from class during the course module will lower the course grade, as noted in the policy immediately above.

N.B. In accordance with provisions of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act of 1973, NTS is committed to providing students with disabilities the opportunity to participate and benefit from its programs and activities. Accordingly, NTS will make reasonable modifications to its programs and activities to accommodate otherwise qualified students with disabilities, unless such modifications would impose an undue burden on the operation of the particular program or activity or would fundamentally alter the nature or purpose of the program or activity. Students needing accommodation should contact the Office of the Registrar. They also should contact the instructor no later than the end of the first class session to discuss learning needs, and adaptive strategies which have benefitted them in the past.