



Nazarene Theological Seminary

1700 E Meyer Blvd • Kansas City, MO 64131 • 816/268-5400

BIB790 Theology of Creation Fall- Block, 2011

Essential Information

Please refer to the following resources for information essential for the successful completion of courses and degree programs at Nazarene Theological Seminary. Links to these resources are available in the Essential Information section at

<http://support.nts.edu>.

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

Instructor Information

Professor: Joseph Coleson, Ph.D.

Email: jecoleson@nts.edu

Office Hours: Tues, 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

(except 10:20-11:20 a.m.)

Thurs, 1:00-4:00 p.m.

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 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, 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 to persons, and in ways, we may not 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.

Degree/Program Objectives Addressed in this Course

This course addresses aspects of the following NTS Degree/Program Objectives:

- M.Div. Objective 2: The articulation of the knowledge of God through prayerful, scholarly study and a deepening understanding of the Christian Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.
- MACE Objective 1: Appropriate and enhance the student’s ecclesial understanding of the Word of God, the heritage of the faith, the doctrines of the church, and the fellowship of believers, sufficiently to enable him/her to deepen a personal commitment to God and the Church and to inform a passionate, vital, and redemptive ministry.
- MAICS Objective 4: Graduates will articulate, communicate, and contextualize the essential affirmations of the Christian faith in a cross-cultural setting.
- MA(TS) General Academic Track Objective 1: Students will develop a comprehensive knowledge of the major theological disciplines and their interrelationships.

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, particularly in literature, music, and painting
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.”

(All course reading, all in-class discussion, and all weekly essay assignments will contribute to meeting all course objectives. In advanced courses such as this one, doing the work of comprehensive biblical/theological analysis and synthesis, it is not possible to say, “This activity meets this objective, but not this one,” or, “We have met this objective completely; now let’s go on to the next one.” All contributes to all.)

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 . . . 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
- (This list may seem excessive; our purpose is not to claim expertise in every area of theological education. Rather, we hope to suggest the central importance and pervasive influence of creation themes for Christian theology and praxis. 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

- Coleson, Joseph** (ed.). *Care of Creation*. Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-89827-451-6. Amazon price (03/21/11): \$11.69.
- Fretheim, Terence E.** *God and World in the Old Testament*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005. ISBN: 978-0-687-34296-1. Amazon price (03/21/11): \$19.95.
- Walton, John H.** *The Lost World of Genesis One*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-8308-3704-5. Amazon price (03/21/11): \$9.70.

Course Outline – Reading, Discussion, Essays

- Sept. 13** – Course organization; overview, Genesis 1
- Sept. 20** – Overview, Genesis 2; Essay #1
- Sept. 27** – *Enuma Elish*, etc.; Walton’s text; Essay #2
- Oct. 4** – Walton’s text; Essay #3
- Oct. 11** – Fretheim, chapters 1-3; Essay #4
- Oct. 18** – Reading and Research Week
- Oct. 25** – Fretheim, chapters 4-6; Essay #5

- Nov. 1** – Fretheim, chapters 7-8, Conclusion; Essay #6
- Nov. 8** – Coleson, Part 1; Essay #7
- Nov. 15** – Coleson, Part 2; Essay #8
- Nov. 22** – Coleson, Part 3; Essay #9
- Nov. 29** – Twain, Tolkien, Lewis, et al.; Essay #10

- Dec. 6** – Preaching/teaching Creation/Redemption/Restoration; Essay #11
- Dec. 13** – Creation/Eschaton; Essay #12

Course Assignments

Twelve weekly essays, six hundred (600) words minimum each, will be assigned. For each student, the ten essays earning the highest grades will count toward the course grade. To be eligible for consideration for a grade of A, an essay will:

1. Address an issue arising from the week’s assigned reading in the course text(s)
2. Include material gleaned from personal perusal of at least one primary or secondary non-biblical source referenced in the course text(s)
3. Incorporate discussion of at least one biblical reference or pericope
4. Exhibit the high standards expected in graduate-level academic writing.

(Because of the nature of the weekly essay assignments, all written assignments will contribute to fulfillment of all expected course outcomes. All course reading, all in-class discussion, and all weekly essay assignments will contribute to meeting all course objectives. In advanced courses such as this one, doing the work of comprehensive biblical/theological analysis and synthesis, it is not possible to say, “This activity meets this objective, but not this one,” or, “We have met this objective completely; now let’s go on to the next one.” All contributes to all.)

Approximate Distribution of Student Learning Hours

	Hours
Face-to-face Class Sessions	39
Online Participation in forums, groups, etc.	0
Reading	60
Writing	40
Other Assignments and Learning Activities	0
Exams & Quizzes	0
TOTAL	139

Method for Submitting Assignments

Weekly essays are to be submitted in the Assignments section of the Moodle course.

Form and Style Expectations

NTS has adopted Turabian's text on form, style, usage, and other writing issues. Written work is expected to conform to best practices, as set forth in Turabian. For convenience, a summary of the most commonly problematic issues in written work presented in the professor's courses over the years is included in Moodle course resources.

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.

Policy Regarding Late Work

Essays submitted late cannot earn a grade higher than B+. Essays will not be accepted more than two weeks late.

Additional Costs

No course costs beyond NTS tuition and fees, and course textbooks, are expected.

Course Grading

The ten essays contributing to the course grade will be weighted at ten percent (10%), each. Assuming consistent class attendance and submission of ten weekly essays of graduate-level quality, the student may expect to earn a course grade of A or B. An essay earning a grade of C+ or lower may be rewritten and resubmitted within two weeks of the grade's posting; resubmitted essays may earn a grade of B, but not higher.

In accordance with the provisions of the 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 accommodations 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 that have been beneficial for the student in the past.

Class Attendance

Maximum benefit from this course will require consistent class attendance. If you will be absent from a class session, please notify the professor as soon as possible. Absences

equivalent to two full class sessions will bar a student from earning a grade of A for the course. Absences equivalent to four full class sessions will result in failing the course.

Daily attendance records must be reported for those obtaining V.A. and Department of Education benefits. Students needing such verification are responsible to notify the professor early in the course.

Course Calendar

Date	Week	Assignment
9/13	1	None
9/20	2	Essay #1
9/27	3	Essay #2
10/4	4	Essay #3
10/11	5	Essay #4
10/18	6	Reading & Research Week
10/25	7	Essay #5
11/1	8	Essay #6
11/8	9	Essay #7
11/15	10	Essay #8
11/22	11	Essay #9
11/29	12	Essay #10
12/6	13	Essay #11
12/13	14	Essay #12