



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

THE 510– Introduction to Christian Theology Online Spring 2009

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 under the Syllabus link in the Blackboard course. Additional information can be found at <http://bbwiki.nts.edu>.

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

Instructor Information

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Catalog Description

This course is a survey of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. Attention will be given to the mastery of a foundational theological construct and the development of a theologically oriented glossary. The course is foundational to the student's ability to work theologically in the fields of Christian education and missiology.

Course Narrative & Rationale

This course intends to provide a basis for further study in Christian theology. Therefore, the course will include a basic theological grammar, a treatment of the fundamental issues confronting the Christian faith, treatment of the major theologians of the Christian tradition, and a basic understanding of the relevance of theology for pastoral ministry. Underlying all of this will be a perspective on theology as a disciplined reflection on the forms of life engendered by Word and Spirit.

Course Outcomes

This course intends to:

- Introduce the basic doctrines that comprise the Christian tradition;
- Introduce the major thinkers in the Christian tradition and their works;
- Provide a basic vocabulary and grammar for the critical evaluation of theological trends for Christian ministry in the contemporary setting;
- Develop student's ability to make theologically informed discernments for Christian ministry, and;
- Provide a basis for further theological education.

Required Texts & Course Materials

Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. Fourth Edition. Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2007.

Theodore Jennings, *Loyalty to God: The Apostles' Creed in Life and Liturgy*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992.

Brent Laytham, ed., *God is Not...: Religious, Nice, "One of Us," an American, a Capitalist*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004.

N.T. Wright, *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 2006.

Stanley Grenz, et. al., *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999.

Course Outline

Because this course is designed to introduce the student to the major doctrines of the Christian tradition, we will follow the 12-fold creedal structure of the Apostles' Creed. Each confession of the Creed will be examined in turn alongside the reading for the corresponding doctrine or idea. In some cases, certain confessions have been combined for the sake of relevance to course readings. For exact details, see course schedule below.

Course Assignments & Requirements

Reading Reflections - 10%: Each student should submit a short but substantial reflection on the assigned reading and lecture. These reflections should not only demonstrate a working understanding of the reading's main points, but should also show that the student has critically evaluated the reading for the contemporary setting. In some cases, the professor will assign specific directions for these reflections, which will be posted in Blackboard. Please begin a new thread in Blackboard each week and post your reading reflection for peer review.

Online Dialogue - 20%: Students are required to engage in substantial dialogue with one another on the topics of the reading reflections. Please post your weekly reading reflection in Blackboard by beginning a discussion thread in the appropriate learning unit. Then, read your classmates' reflections and respond directly to at least 3 other posts. Because the educational process relies heavily upon the exchange of ideas between persons, a response will be defined as "substantial" if it engages the core of the original post. Posts which simply affirm the student's insights without engaging the substance on a dialogical level will not receive full credit.

Criteria for evaluation:

- Degree of insight in questions/comments - 50%,
- Connection of comments/questions to assigned reading - 50%

The points for this assignment will be awarded three times in this course: March 1, April 1 and at the conclusion of the course.

Creedal Memorization - 5%: Each student should memorize the Apostles' Creed in its entirety. On the due date of this assignment, the student should access Blackboard to complete the assignment by typing the creed without the aid of notes or any other source. Evaluation will be based upon the percentage of words correctly matching the creed. Thus, a standardized version of the creed will be available in the corresponding learning unit (Week 2) on Blackboard and at the end of this syllabus. Please use this version for this assignment.

Theological Terminology Quiz - 5%: Because persons must have a basic grasp of theological terminology to effectively understand and evaluate theological statements, a list of terms will be provided in Course Documents. Students should use *A Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* to define each term and commit it to memory. You will be tested over 25 of the listed terms and are expected to not use any kind of book, website or notes to assist in this task. The quiz will be located in the learning unit for week 3 on Blackboard. The quiz will be timed. Please do not use the 'Back' button on your internet browser or navigate to any other webpage during the quiz as these actions will typically result in a technological error and the failure of the quiz.

Theological Case Studies - 20%: Each student will be asked to submit two 5-6 page theological case studies which examine the nature of the doctrines being treated within a contemporary ecclesial setting. Understanding the critical relationship between theology and practice, the student will be asked to evaluate a particular doctrine in light of a service in the student's local congregation.

Theological Case Study #1: This case study will examine the doctrine of resurrection within the context of a Christian Easter worship service.

Theological Case Study #2: This case study will examine the doctrine of the Trinity or the doctrine of the sacraments or the doctrine of the church within the context of a Christian worship service that takes place from April 19-26.

When constructing each theological case study, please use the following format:

1. Description of Service - Name of Church, Order of Worship, etc.
2. Doctrinal Evaluation - Did this doctrine play a role in the worship service? If so, in what ways? If not, why was it not present? How was this doctrine presented in the service? If this doctrine has been controversial in church history, what “side” of the controversy would this presentation of the doctrine have been on? Was the presentation of this doctrine complete and orthodox?
3. Practical Evaluation - What bearing did this doctrine have on the formation and practice of the worship service? After reflecting upon this service and this doctrine, would you have changed anything about the service? If so, what would you have changed and why?
4. Conclusions - Why does the doctrine of resurrection matter for the church today? What implications does this doctrine have for Christian hope? What implications does this doctrine have for Christian ministry?

Theological Case Studies should be submitted via Blackboard under the appropriate learning unit.

Criteria for evaluation:

- Understanding of doctrine - 30%
- Understanding of connection between doctrine and practice - 30%
- Connection to course material - 20%
- Degree of insight of conclusions - 20%

Research paper - 20%: Each graduate student will write a research paper (15 pages) on a topic approved by the professor on or prior to March 2. The topic must reflect a theme associated with Christian theology and engage the thought of at least one major thinker from the following list:

Anselm of Canterbury	Irenaeus
James Arminius	Robert Jenson
Athanasius	Julian of Norwich
Augustine	Vladimir Lossky
Thomas Aquinas	Martin Luther
Karl Barth	Jürgen Moltmann
Basil of Caesarea	Origen
Emil Brunner	Wolfhart Pannenberg
John Calvin	Karl Rahner
Cyril of Alexandria	Friedrich Schleiermacher
Gregory of Nazianzus	Tertullian
Gregory of Nyssa	John Wesley

Criteria for evaluation:

- Grasp of issues - 40%
- Use of appropriate primary and secondary sources - 20%
- Integration of material treated in class - 20%
- Clarity of argument, grammatical issue - 10%

Book Review on *God is Not...* - 10%: In a 10-page review, respond to the overall argument that the authors are making. Do you find Laytham's affirmation of the church as "one, holy, catholic and apostolic" to be in line with the doctrines of the church as you have understood them so far? Why or why not? Do you find the claims of the authors to be consistent and/or compatible with the essential doctrines of the Christian tradition? Understanding that theology influences all areas of Christian life, pay particular attention to the ways in which theology interacts with culture, politics and economics. Do you find this method to be helpful and/or faithful? Why or why not?

Note: This book, described by the authors as "a theological Jerry Springer Show," is designed to provoke thought and may present challenging material. Should you support the claims of the authors or argue against them, you should do so in a manner intellectually consistent with graduate level education, presenting sound arguments for your statements from what you have studied in this course thus far and measuring the authors' claims against the essential doctrines of the Christian tradition.

Criteria for evaluation:

- Grasp of content - 40%
- Grasp of theological issues - 20%
- Connection to material covered in class - 20%
- Force of the argument and writing - 20%

Book Review on *Simply Christian* - 10%:

In a 10-page review, engage the thought of N.T. Wright as presented in this book, highlighting at least one issue that you find illuminating or challenging. After reading this book, what do you now understand the role of theology to be for the Christian community? Does what we say *about* God matter for the ways in which we relate *to* God and one another? Has this book changed your thinking in one way or another about a particular theological issue? If so, what was it and how has your thinking been shaped?

Criteria for evaluation:

- Grasp of content - 40%
- Grasp of theological issues - 20%
- Connection to material covered in class - 20%
- Force of the argument and writing - 20%

Submitting Assignments

All assignments must be submitted through Blackboard in the appropriate learning unit or discussion thread on or before the date listed on the course schedule and must bear a date stamp from Blackboard as such. A note of caution: assignments submitted after 11:59 PM (Central Time) will bear a date stamp for the following day and cannot be counted as 'on time'.

Policy Regarding Late Work

All work submitted late will be reduced by 20%. Any exception to this must be approved by the professor prior to the due date. Normally, the only requests that will be approved will be for illness, death in the family, etc.

Policy on Incompletes

Incomplete standing will be granted in cases of serious illness, bereavement or extraordinary circumstances at no penalty. Incompletes requested for any other purpose will result in a 10% reduction of the final grade. Please see NTS Catalog for additional policies on Incomplete status.

Relevant Academic Policies

- No work will be accepted after **May 8 @ 11:59pm - Central Time.**
- All work must be submitted through the appropriate learning unit or assignment thread set up for this class in Blackboard.
- 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. “In all written work presented to meet course requirements we encourage students to use gender inclusive language.” Gender-exclusive language, should it appear in coursework, will be brought to the student’s attention for future assignments. Repeated appearances may reduce the grade on each particular assignment in which gender-exclusive language appears.
- All grades are open to reasonable and respectful review.
- It is expected that all work turned in for this class reflect the labors of the person whose name appears on the paper. If there is any evidence to the contrary of this the student will receive a zero for the assignment.

Course Grading

A	1000-900
B	899-800
C	799-700
D	699-600
F	599-000

Course Schedule

Week of	Creedal Focus	Topics	Reading	Assignments Due
Feb 2 Week #1		Introduction and History of Christian Doctrine	-Lecture	-Class Introductions (2/3) -Reading Reflection (2/5) -Dialogue (2/6)
Feb 9 Week #2		Introduction and History of Christian Doctrine	-McGrath; 3-98 -Lecture	-Reading Reflection (2/11) -Creedal Memorization (2/13) -Dialogue (2/13)
Feb 16 Week #3		Getting Started: The Sources and Methods of Theology	-McGrath; 101-120 -Jennings; 11-24 -Lecture	-Reading Reflection (2/18) -Dialogue (2/20)
Feb 23 Week #4	"I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of the heavens and the earth;"	Doctrine of God	-McGrath; 203-242 -Jennings; 27-50 -Lecture	-Reading Reflection (2/25) -Terminology Quiz (2/27) -Dialogue (2/27)
March 2 Week #5	"and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord;"	Doctrine of the Person of Christ	-McGrath; 272-304 -Jennings; 63-86 -Lecture	-Reading Reflection (3/4) -Research Paper Topic (3/6) -Dialogue (3/6)
March 9 Week #6	"who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary;"	Doctrine of the Trinity	-McGrath; 243-271 -Lecture	-Reading Reflection (3/11) -Dialogue (3/13)
March 16 Week #7	"suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried;"	Reading and Research	-Wright	
March 23 Week #8	"on the third day he was raised from the dead;"	Doctrine of Resurrection, Faith & History	-McGrath; 305-325 -Jennings; 129-143 -Lecture	-Reading Reflection (3/25) -Book Review, Wright (3/27) -Dialogue (3/27)
March 30 Week #9	"he ascended into the heavens, and sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from where he will come to judge the living and the dead."	Human Nature, Sin and Grace	-McGrath; 360-390 -Lecture	-Reading Reflection (4/1) -Dialogue (4/3)
April 6 Week #10	"I believe in the Holy Spirit;"		-Jennings; 167-179 -Laytham	-Book Review, Laytham (4/11)

			-Lecture	
April 13 Week #11	“in the holy catholic church; the communion of saints;”	Doctrine of the Church	-McGrath; 391-417 -Jennings; 180-192 -Lecture	-Reading Reflection (4/15) -Theological Case Study #1 (4/24) -Dialogue (4/24)
April 20 Week #12	“the forgiveness of sins;”	The Doctrine of Salvation in Christ	-McGrath; 326-359 -Jennings; 200-209	-Reading Reflection (4/22) -Dialogue (4/24) -Research Paper (4/25)
April 27 Week #13		The Doctrine of Sacraments	-McGrath; 419-444	-Reading Reflection (4/29) -Dialogue (5/1) -Theological Case Study #2 (5/1)
May 4 Week #14	“the resurrection of the flesh and eternal life.”	The Last Things: The Christian Hope	-McGrath; 464-485 -Jennings; 210-224	-Reading Reflection (5/6) -Dialogue (5/8)

Selective Resources

Hall, Douglas, *Thinking the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

Gilkey, Langdon, *Message and Existence: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1979.

McGrath, Alister E., *I Believe: Understanding and Applying the Apostles' Creed*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1991.

Micks, Marianne H., *Introduction to Theology*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1964.

Placher, William, ed., *Essentials of Christian Theology*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2003.

Placher, William, *Unapologetic Theology: A Christian Voice in a Pluralistic Conversation*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989.

Rahner, Karl, *The Practice of Faith: A Handbook of Contemporary Spirituality*. Edited by Karl Lehmann and Albert Raffelt. New York: Crossroad, 1986.

Richardson, Alan, *Creeds in the Making: A Short Introduction to the History of Christian Doctrine*. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1969.

Taylor, Richard, Grider, J. Kenneth, and Taylor, Willard H., ed., *Beacon Dictionary of Theology*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1983.

Volf, Miroslav and Bass, Dorothy, *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
Born of the Virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, dead, and buried;

He descended into hades;
The third day He rose from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
And sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
The holy Church universal,
The communion of saints,
The forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body,
And the life everlasting.
Amen.