



Southern Methodist University

Perkins Regional Course of Study School

Theological Heritage I - 122

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Welcome!

I am excited that you have chosen to journey through this introductory course in Christian theology. During our time together we will focus on fundamental theological categories, significant voices within the tradition, and concrete ways to apply theological reflection. The readings and assignments will invite you to engage in thoughtful reflection and dialogue intended to help you achieve a deeper understanding of the underpinnings of the Christian tradition. I hope you will find the readings and the pre-class assignments to be captivating, compelling, and challenging as you endeavor to broaden your theological understanding and deepen your faith. I am looking forward to our time together!

Sincerely,

David Luckey
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Course Description

This course introduces the student to theological reflection in the Wesleyan tradition. Basic terms, tasks, and methods of Christian theology will be introduced. Representative classical themes will be defined and illustrated. The course provides a foundation for further historical and theological study.

Students will be able to:

1. Examine their understanding of faith, sin, salvation, grace, and the place of doctrine in the life of the Church.
2. Use and understand classical theological terms and themes.
3. Critically consider the sources of theological reflection, including scripture, tradition, experience and reason.
4. Reflect theologically as a resource for pastoral ministry.

Required Texts

1. Saint Augustine, *The Confessions*. Maria Boulding, Trans. (ISBN-13: 978-1565481541)
2. Ted A. Campbell, *Methodist Doctrine: The Essentials* Revised Edition (Nashville: Abington Press, 2011). (ISBN-13: 978-1426727016)
3. Justo Gonzales and Zaida Perez. *An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Nashville: Abington Press, 2002). (ISBN-13: 978-0687095735)
4. Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). (ISBN-13: 978-0195147070)

Course Requirements

- *Pre-class Assignment* - The completion of three short essays (6-9 pages total). (See below for complete details regarding this assignment). These preliminary theological reflections will inform the student's participation throughout the course. **Submission Deadline: June 24, 2024.**
- *Oral Presentation* - Individual preparation of one supplementary reading article in précis (summary) form presented orally in class (the first week). Articles will be assigned during the first class session. In addition, the student should prepare three questions based on the reading and present them for class discussion.
- *Active Class Participation* - For the *classroom portion*, students are expected to attend all class sessions, complete daily assigned readings before class, engage in thoughtful dialogue, and respectfully listen to and consider the various perspectives presented. For the *online*

portion of the course, students are expected to complete the daily readings, post a weekly response on the Discussion Board (DB) by Thursday at 8:00pm, and respond to at least one colleague's post by Friday at 8:00pm.

Grading

Pre-class Assignment	30%
Oral Presentation	30%
Class Participation	20%
Discussion Board	20%

Grade Scale:

A = 90-100, B = 80-89, C = 70-79, D = 60-69, F = 59 or below

Written assignments, presentations, and class discussions should reflect student engagement with the content of the course. Assignments will be graded based on both content and form.

Rubric for Pre-Class Essays

Exemplary Scholarship 100 to 90 pts

A-level writing contains a clear thesis that disciplines the entire essay. It offers a coherent and sophisticated argument that demonstrates significant engagement with the details of the material and concepts under consideration. It contains no significant errors of interpretation, or misreadings of the texts and key ideas. It is well structured and uses concepts and language correctly and clearly.

Good Scholarship 89 to 80 pts

B-level writing contains a somewhat clear thesis that disciplines the essay. It provides a fairly coherent argument that demonstrates engagement with the material, but may lack sophistication. It may contain minor errors of interpretation, but none that seriously detract from the writer's argument. It is somewhat well structured and coherent, but contains minor errors in the use of concepts and language.

Fair Scholarship 79 to 70 pts

C-level writing contains an unspecific thesis that fails to discipline the essay. Relatively insignificant aspects of the argument may be stressed, demonstrating lack of engagement with the material, and/or misinterpretations. It has a weak structure, lacks clarity, and contains grammatical or stylistic errors.

Poor Scholarship 69-60 pts

D-level writing offers an unclear and incoherent thesis, or none at all, and an argument that shows relatively little to no evidence of engagement with the material under consideration. It contains significant errors of interpretation, and is difficult for the reader to follow. It is virtually void of structure, and contains numerous grammatical and/or stylistic errors, or contains such severe grammar and syntax errors that it makes no coherent argument.

Pre-class Assignment (Due Date: June 24, 2024)

1. St. Augustine (354-430 C.E.) remains one of the most influential Christian theologians in church history. Conduct a close reading of Augustine's *The Confessions* and write a thesis driven essay addressing the following questions (2-3 pages in length):
 - a. Summarize Augustine's major concern(s) or central claim(s) in *The Confessions*. Of what, if anything, is Augustine trying to convince you? In other words, what is Augustine trying to accomplish with this text? How is he doing it?
 - b. According to Augustine, what is the purpose or objective of Christian theology? And *how* should Christians pursue theological inquiry? Be specific and make sure to cite examples (with page numbers) from the book.
 - c. Finally, critically engage Augustine's theology. Do you agree or disagree with Augustine? Explain your position with well-grounded reasons.
2. This course assumes that faithful Christian ministry requires an adequate understanding of the ways in which sin has impacted our personal, intellectual, ecclesial, and social life. The legacy of racism in the United States is one concrete example. We will therefore explore this issue by engaging the text *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*, by Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith. Read the Intro, chapters 1, 4, 5, 8, and the Conclusion. Write an essay that addresses the following prompts (2-3 pages in length):
 - a. Briefly summarize the authors' central argument regarding the problem of race in America. Explain what the authors describe as "color blindness" (chapter 4), "racialized economic inequality" (chapter 5), and "structural racism" (chapter 8). What conclusions do they leave us with?
 - b. What did you *think* about the argument? Explain.
 - c. Reflecting on your context and experience, how have the racial dynamics addressed in this book shaped the social environment in your place of ministry? Describe the ways in which racism affects your congregation. How has the church failed or succeeded in responding to this reality?
 - d. Finally, what new insights or challenges emerged from your reading? How can theological reflection and Christian practices serve as resources to faithfully address the racial divisions and patterns of thought in our church and society?

3. Read Ted A. Campbell's *Methodist Doctrine: The Essentials*. Write an essay responding to the following prompts (2-3 pages in length):
 - a. Describe in your own words Campbell's view of the Methodist theological tradition. What are its key tenets? What role does John Wesley play? In what way should "origins" and Scripture guide our theological reflection?
 - b. According to Campbell, what is the difference between theology and doctrine? Why is that distinction important? Do you agree? Explain.

Format

- The assignment should take no more than 9 pages (no fewer than 6).
- Remember, this assignment calls for essays. Work to synthesize the information and convey it in narrative form (i.e. do not simply create an outline or list of bullet points). Furthermore, seek to appropriate proper literary conventions including an introduction, thesis statement, clearly articulated supporting arguments, proper use of grammar and syntax, correct spelling (use spell check), and a comprehensive conclusion.
- **Avoid plagiarism!** If you use someone else's ideas cite your sources! Quotations should be clearly marked and sources must be noted, but work hard to interpret the material in your own voice.
- All papers should be double-spaced, typed with one-inch margins and 12 point Times New Roman font.
- Use *footnotes* to refer to books and pages you relied on for each of the above (please use *Chicago Manual of Style - Turabian*). Please use your own words to describe each view.
- Students should use inclusive language in their papers when referring to both God and humans (e.g. instead of "God himself" use "God Godself." Instead of "mankind" use "humankind," "humanity," "human beings," or "persons," etc.)

Submission Instructions

Pre-class assignments must be submitted by uploading Microsoft Word or PDF documents to Perkins Course of Study School's learning management system (LMS), called "Canvas." Video tutorials on how to upload documents to Canvas are available on Perkins COSS web site. Perkins COSS staff are available to assist students learn to upload their pre-class assignments to Canvas.

Important Note:

According to Course of Study School guidelines, submission of all pre-class assignments by the first day of class is required in order to attend the class. Students who do not have pre-class assignments completed by the first day of class will be required to withdraw from the course without a refund.