

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
THED 511 CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY
July 20, 27 – August 3, 10, and 15, 2006
6:00 – 10:00 p.m.

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COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Students who take this course will gain a working understanding of the major areas of Christian belief, providing them with the foundation for sound theological thinking, the ability to explain and defend the Christian faith, and the practical application of their faith to daily Christian living. The course is the preparation for additional systematic theology courses in the student's program.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course you should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a clear understanding of the major beliefs of the Christian faith and the biblical basis for them.
2. Identify key historical developments in the formation of Christian theology and the important thinkers who shaped these developments, and analyze how various expressions of Christian faith have resulted from these developments.
3. Integrate the use of theological concepts, and the specialized language of theological study, in your effort to explain and defend the Christian faith.
4. Connect your understanding of sound Christian theology to practical Christian living and issues facing the Church today.
5. Design relevant tools/resources to assist you in the process of communicating sound Christian theology to others.
6. Evaluate various resources (texts, curriculum, etc.), and judge their effectiveness in teaching Christian theology to contemporary audiences.

COURSE METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this course is not to merely present a set of facts, but to equip students with the tools necessary to think critically from a Christian perspective. To this end, class sessions will combine lecture, discussion, interviews, interactive exercises, case studies, examinations, and other instructional techniques. Regular and vigorous student participation is expected.

COURSE TEXTBOOK

Erickson, Millard J., *Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI; Baker Book House, 1985. (1247 pp)

The Bible, in a modern translation.

RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS

Grenz, Stanley J., David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling. *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999.

McGrath, Alister E., ed. *The Christian Theology Reader*. Cambridge, MA; Blackwell, 1995.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attend class regularly.** Regular and vigorous student participation is a key component to a successful academic experience. The class atmosphere is to be personal and collegial. When appropriate, questions, comments, and discussion are both welcome and expected, with the understanding that they are part of the learning process in a group setting. In respect to others, it is assumed that cell phones, pagers, etc. will remain off in the classroom. (AGTS's degree completion attendance policy will be followed.)
2. **Complete weekly scheduled reading.** The nature of the Degree Completion Program requires that class sessions move through a significant amount of material in a relatively short period of time. Consequently, to maximize our time together, diligent preparation will be expected of each student. Students are required to follow the schedule below. Students should complete the reading prior to the class session, since the class experience will complement the reading assignments. (*3 credit option will read approximately 1000 pages*)
chapters due:

Week 1:	1, 3-5, 7-11
Week 2:	12-19
Week 3:	21-24, 26-29
Week 4:	32-38, 40-41
Week 5:	43-59
3. **Prepare weekly sermon outline, lesson plan, or case study.** Beginning with the second session, you will submit one lesson plan, sermon outline, *or* case study (depending on your needs and preferences), that corresponds to material covered during the previous week's class session and reading. (For those choosing the case study option, the case study will be distributed at the end of each class session.) The goal of the lesson/sermon/case study is to produce something practical and suitable for your own use. Care should be given to present sound Christian theology in a manner that clearly communicates the concept, as well as demonstrates the relevance and application for the Church today. Each lesson/sermon/case study should be approximately 2-3 pages in length. For lessons and sermons, be sure to identify the intended target audience and context.
4. **Complete a final project.** Each student will design a final project that assists them in integrating materials from the course in their personal context. Each project should be the equivalent of at least 15 pages, and should demonstrate thoughtful and thorough research. The project should be well-written, and free from grammatical error. Project options include:

- *Multimedia project*: Using the course as a starting point, develop a brief multimedia presentation (PowerPoint/Video/Music/Web-based, etc.) designed to effectively and relevantly communicate an aspect of Christian theology to a specified target audience. A written manuscript should accompany the electronic presentation.
- *Respond to a Postmodern challenge of systematic theology*. Select a theological issue currently being challenged/stretched by Postmodernism and provide a written response. Examples could include: Crisis-event vs. process view of salvation; view of Scripture and acceptable grounds for its interpretation (i.e. personal experiential interpretation vs. strict hermeneutical rules of interpretation), etc. This response should outline the major variant views, then provide a balanced, well-researched response.
- *Complete a theological critique of a major feature film*. Examples could include *The Lord of the Rings*, *the Matrix*, *The Passion of the Christ*, etc. The object of this exercise is to demonstrate the ability to think critically and reflect theologically on elements within contemporary society, then be able to present a well-reasoned response in an attempt to present theology in a meaningful and relevant manner for contemporary society. This critique should reveal how identifying and capitalizing on theological themes found in film can serve as an effective strategy for evangelism and/or discipleship.
- *Internet Project*: research sound Christian theological resources available via the Internet and prepare a written summary of your findings. This report should include recommendations and implications for the Church today.
- *Sermons/Lessons*: using insights gained from the course, write a series of at least four manuscript messages designed to clearly communicate sound theological understanding. These messages should be contextualized and relevant to a specified target audience.
- *Research paper*: prepare a well researched paper on some aspect of Christian theology pertinent to the course that would be helpful to you.
- *Self-designed project*: Students have the option of proposing a customized final project. The proposal must be submitted in written form, and the professor's permission must be secured in advance.

COURSE GRADING

	<i>Pts</i>	<i>% of Grade</i>
1. Class participation and attendance	100	10%
2. Assigned reading (1000 pages)	200	20%
3. Weekly sermons/lessons/case studies (4@75pts. ea.)	300	30%
4. Final Project	400	40%

Note: Grade will be deducted for late work.

OFFICE HOURS

Should you need assistance outside of normal class hours, I can be reached during the week at my office. My office number is 268-1000. My home number is 889-5123.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

An extensive supplemental bibliography will be distributed on the first day of class.

Christian Theology Case Studies

Each week you will respond to a case study that pertains to some aspect of that week's topic. As you write, remember that this is a conversation with a real person. Your response should not sound like you've taken it directly from a systematic theology book. You should find connecting points (bridges) to pull them in and help them see your perspective. Try to use relevant analogies, illustrations, etc. The paper should have a logical flow of thought, yet don't speak over their heads. It may be helpful to create a real-life scenario to address (example: a co-worker over lunch; a young person who visited your youth group once, etc.).

Week 1: Revelation

An unbelieving friend knows you read your Bible every day and asks you: "So why do you read the Bible, anyway? Why waste your time on a book over 2000 years old? What relevance does it have to the 21st Century? Besides, isn't it full of mistakes? How can you really know that the Bible is true? Even if it is true, who is to say that it's the only truth? Aren't there lots of good and true things contained in the holy books of other religions? What makes the Bible any different?"

Write your response.

Issues to Address:

1. What is the relevance of a 2000 year-old book for today?
2. Does the Bible contain "mistakes"?
3. Is the Bible the only truth?
4. What makes the Bible different from the holy books of other religions?

Week 2: Sinful Human Nature

An unbelieving friend knows you are a Christian and asks you: "How can the Bible say that all people are essentially evil? How can you be so pessimistic about others? I think that most people are basically good—after all, they mean well and are just trying to do the best that they can. In fact, I know many non-Christians who behave better than some Christians."

Write your response.

Issues to Address:

1. Does the Bible teach that people are essentially evil?
2. Aren't people basically good, trying to do what's right?
3. Is the Biblical teaching that human nature is evil pessimistic?

Week 3: Salvation

An unbelieving friend knows you are a Christian and asks you: "What I don't understand is how a loving God could send anyone to hell. I mean, I'm trying to live a good life and be a good person. I'm doing the best I can. Are you telling me that if I don't accept Christ as my savior that he's going to send me to hell? What about the millions of devout people around the world (Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, etc.)-good people faithfully practicing their religion-are you saying that God is going to send them all to hell?"

Write your response.

Issues to Address:

1. Does the Bible teach that God sends people to hell?
2. Does the Bible teach that Jesus is the only way to heaven?
3. Can enough good intentions/work get someone to heaven?
4. What about devout people from other religions?

Week 4 The Holy Spirit

You are on staff at a local Assembly of God Church. Recently there has been some discussion among the staff as to how the church can most effectively reach postmodern young people, specifically when it comes to the demonstration of spiritual gifts within the corporate worship service.

Opinions are divided.

Some are concerned that emphasis on the supernatural gifts (speaking in tongues, prophecies, etc.) isn't really relevant for non-Christians. Worse yet, they might scare off people who don't understand what's going on. Maybe the gifts should be reserved for services geared just for believers.

Other staff members, however, feel that spiritual gifts are the perfect avenue for reaching this experiential generation. Let them see firsthand that God is alive and active today. In addition, they are concerned about the long-term ramifications of failing to allow and nurture the free reign of the Spirit in their worship.

You have been asked to help bring the staff to a consensus, and present a proposal to the board. Give your conclusions for how the church should address the demonstration of spiritual gifts within the worship service.