

## Syllabus, TS 7460, Major Guided Readings: Theology

Providence Theological Seminary, Fall 2010

Instructor: Rev. Dr. Tim Perry

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Office Hours: Mondays 8:30-11:30am; Wednesdays and Thursdays 11:10-2:00. No appointment is necessary.

### I. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course consists of guided readings in historical and systematic theology as well as related topics, to the end that the student's understanding of key Christian doctrines and their pastoral function be strengthened and solidified. (3 credits)

### II. PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

You will work alone on the assigned work, but I am available to meet for discussion of questions that arise in the course of your study.

#### A. Reading

You *must* read the following texts:

For the Doctrine of God:

Torrance, T. F. *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being, Three Persons*. Edinburgh: T& T Clark, 1996.

For the Doctrine of Creation:

McKim, Donald K., ed. *Calvin's Institutes: Abridged Edition*. Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. (Book I *only*—"The Knowledge of God the Creator") \*Please note that other editions will work as well.

Barth, Karl. *Dogmatics in Outline*. *Dogmatics in Outline*, trans. G.T. Thomson. New York: Harper & Row, 1959, pp. 50-64.

For the Doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ:

Torrance, T.F. *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*. Ed. Robert T. Walker. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2008.

Torrance, T. F. *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*. Ed. Robert T. Walker. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2009.

For the Doctrine of the Church and Christian Life:

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together*. New York: Harper & Row, 1954.  
Barth, Karl. *Prayer: 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*. Ed. Don Saliers. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002. (Please read the essays by Hesselink, Migliore, and McKim)

For Christianity among the Religions:

Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Geneva: WCC Publications: 1989.

#### B. Précis

You should write a one to two page single spaced précis—i.e., a summary, in your own words—of each of the assigned texts. For longer readings like that of Torrance’s *Doctrine of God*, I expect the précis to be longer, approximately two pages. But for the shorter readings like that of Bonhoeffer’s *Life Together* or the excerpts from Calvin or Barth, I expect the précis to be shorter, approximately one page. Note that the point of this exercise is to demonstrate not only your understanding of the text using your own words, but also your capacity to articulate its basic contents in as concise and cogent a manner as possible. Please see pg. 3 of the syllabus for instructions on how to write a précis. Note that your précis will not be graded with a letter/number grade: rather, each précis will receive a Pass/Fail grade.

#### C. Theological Paper

You will produce a twelve-fifteen page double-spaced theological essay covering all of the above doctrines, using only the course readings and Holy Scripture as your source material. Your task in this essay will be to articulate not only your *own* understanding of the basic meaning and function of each of the above doctrines but also to articulate their relationship to one another.

This paper should be typed, 12-point, Times New Roman, double-spaced with 1 inch margins all around, footnotes (Turabian style), title page and bibliography, stapled in the upper-left hand corner.

The paper is due at least *four days prior to the scheduled oral exam*.

#### D. Oral Examination

The oral examination will be a half hour oral exam based on a discussion of your theological paper. You should be prepared to discuss your views and to support them.

A *date* should be arranged with me for a time no less than a week after you have given me your paper.

### III. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

#### 1. Matters of Style & Documentation

Your theological essays must be written in a style consistent with the model set out by Kate L. Turabian in her work *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*. Though there are many formatting/footnoting systems, Turabian's *A Manual for Writers* is the *only* system allowed for use in this class. Should you require tips and illustrations as to what Turabian formatting looks like, please consult Michael Gilmour's "What do I have to do to get an 'A' on my Paper?: Paper Writing Tips and an Illustration of Turabian Formatting." It is available in this reserve section of the library and online at: <http://prov.ca/library/turabppr.pdf>

Written work ought to be free of spelling mistakes, punctuated correctly, and adhere to basic rules of grammar. It is expected that written work will be submitted in a clear, straight-forward style of academic prose. For accuracy in all things grammatical, please consult John Seely, *Everyday Grammar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); and for clarity in expressing one's ideas in one's writing, please consult William Strunk, Jr., *The Elements of Style*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1999) or other similar guides.

#### 2. Plagiarism and Honesty

Plagiarism is a common problem in higher education. Note that Providence College & Seminary's *Student Handbook* defines plagiarism as "taking and using the thoughts, ideas, and writings, and other creative works of another person, persons, and passing them off as one's own. A scholar who does so is intellectually dishonest. Scholars should give credit to give credit explicitly and clearly to ideas, thoughts, and writings of another." See pg. 16f of *The Student Handbook*. Penalties for plagiarism may include repeating the assignment, failing the assignment, or failing the course.

### IV. EVALUATION

Theological Essay 60%  
Oral Examination 40%

In addition to any requirement deadlines that may be assigned by the course instructor, all students are expected to complete all course requirements within one year from date of registration. The exact registration date and final due date can be confirmed with the Registrar's Office. Should additional time be required beyond the year allowed, up to four one-month extensions may be requested from the Registrar's Office at a cost of \$100 each. If a student exceeds both the allowed year and the maximum extension period, the student must request a grade of "IN" from the PTS Academic Committee and will need to re-register for the course in order to receive credit.

## V. GRADING

The following is an explanation of the letter grading system to be used in the course:

- A Excellent (90-100%)
- B Good (80-89%)
- C Fair (70-79%)
- D Passing (60-69%)
- F Failure (0-59%)

Marking is always difficult. Marks represent an evaluation of actual work—not good intentions, inherent ability, intelligence, personal or moral or spiritual qualities. I am *always* willing to discuss a grade on a paper or project. Please note that your paper will only receive a number grade, not a letter grade.

## VI. HOW TO WRITE A PRÉCIS

A *précis* is a concise summary of a text. The following are some guidelines and suggestions for writing a good *précis*.

- a. Put yourself in the author's place. Your job is entirely descriptive, not critical. Imagine that you are the author and must say the same thing but in far fewer words. (A *précis* is one form of writing in which originality is *not* a virtue.)
- b. The author's name should not appear within the *précis*, since you are speaking *for*, not *about*, the author. Likewise, quotation marks never appear in a *précis*, since by definition the entire content is paraphrase, or indirect quotation. A *précis* is therefore one genre in which plagiarism is impossible (unless you crib someone else's *précis*!). A good *précis* is nevertheless a *paraphrase in one's own words*, not a pastiche of quotations.
- c. The *précis* should be a miniature version of the original. It should therefore have the same *structure*, though in a greatly compressed form. A good rule of thumb is to try reducing each section of original text to a paragraph of *précis*, and each original paragraph to a sentence of two in the *précis*. (If the resulting *précis* is too long, however, you will need to compress even further.) Section numbers or subtitles may be included in the *précis*; this practice aids the reader in comparing the *précis* to the original. (But if there are *too* many of them, they become distracting; use good judgment!)
- d. At each point in the original text ask yourself what the author's main point is. Then state it briefly and directly, shorn of elaboration, examples, and supporting arguments. Go directly to the next major point, making clear the transition between them.

e. Your précis should be readable and make sense to someone unfamiliar with the original. Aim for a flowing and coherent summary rather than a list of unrelated statements.