



**Systematic Theology 1 (THEO 5300)**  
**New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary**  
**Time: Thursdays, 2:00-4:50 PM, Fall 2020**  
**Location: HSC 211 (NOLA2U Live)**



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## I. MISSION AND RATIONALE

NOBTS and Leavell College prepare servants of Christ to walk with Him, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

To this end, this course introduces students to several core themes in systematic theology: the nature and means of divine teaching, the blessed Trinity, creation and creatures, sin, and Christology. We will focus our attention on the scriptural foundations, systematic interrelations, and conceptual intelligibility of these doctrines, looking at how they inform one another and stem from what Christians confess about Jesus Christ. All of this is undertaken in light of what God reveals to us in Holy Scripture, with an eye on how other Christians throughout history have read these same texts. As with all theology, Christian teaching arises from contemplating the God of the gospel, who alone heals our wayward minds and quiets our heart's desires. The ultimate reason for this course, then, is that it offers us a means of orienting our faith, hope, and love to their proper object.

## II. OUR CORE VALUES

*Doctrinal Integrity* – Knowing that the Bible is the Word of God, we believe it, teach it, proclaim it, and submit to it. The doctrinal statements used in our evaluations are our Articles of Religious Belief and the Baptist Faith and Message Statement.

*Spiritual Vitality* – We are a worshiping community, with both personal spirituality and gathering together as a Seminary for the praise and adoration of God and instruction in His Word.

*Mission Focus* – We are not here merely to get an education or to give one. We are here to change the world by fulfilling the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries.

*Characteristic Excellence* – What we do, we do to the utmost of our abilities and resources as a testimony to the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

*Servant Leadership* – We follow the model of Jesus and exert leadership and influence through the nurture and encouragement of those around us.

The Core Value for this academic year is *Mission Focus*.

## III. INTENDED OUTCOMES

### 1. *Knowledge and Understanding*

- Be able to understand the nature of theology and the doctrines of Scripture, God, creation, humanity, sin, and the person of Christ.
- Students should be able to apply theology by integrating these doctrines into a coherent, comprehensive, and consistent Christian worldview.
- Students should be able to communicate these doctrines in the particular ministry calling and context of the learner.

### 2. *Other: Transferable skills*

- Students should show a capacity for attentive and reflective reading of ancient and modern texts.
- Students should demonstrate a capacity to analyze concepts and arguments.
- Students should demonstrate an ability to formulate arguments and articulate critical judgments, both orally and in writing.
- Students should demonstrate an ability to engage in and profit from group discussion.

## IV. TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

As an introductory course, class time will consist primarily of lectures, accompanied by short discussion of the day's assigned reading if and when applicable or necessary. Students are expected to arrive at class that day ready to discuss the reading responsibly and critically, if called upon.

## V. COURSE GUIDELINES

a. **Academic Misconduct.** Education is about forming you in Christian virtue. Losing sight of this will tempt you towards any number of poor choices, like academic misconduct. It is your responsibility to know what academic misconduct includes, like [plagiarism](#), for example. Students should familiarize themselves thoroughly with the school's policies, ignorance of which is no excuse. Any help you receive on your assignments will count as misconduct, unless authorized explicitly by your professor in writing.

b. **Technology.**<sup>1</sup> Digital devices are prohibited in the classroom (laptops, tablets, phones of any sort, recording devices, etc). This guideline might appear draconian, but it exists strictly for the benefit of everyone involved. Though many may feel that their use of technology makes them better, more efficient scholars, the [best research](#) says that [it does not](#). In fact, studies show that it significantly impairs your learning and [the learning of others around you](#). Taking notes by hand [improves recall](#) and apprehension, as does [reading on paper and not on screens](#). During class, phones will be completely silenced. Even then, if you are dependent on your smartphone, its mere presence – even if powered off – [has been proven to diminish your cognitive capacities](#). All that to say, we will use our short time together to practice a little asceticism (or luddism if you prefer). Computers are obviously allowed for students attending class remotely, but only to connect to class.

\* In accordance with this stipulation, you are required to have physical copies of the course texts; e-books are not allowed.

\* Students should use standard tools (pen and paper) for notetaking, even when attending lectures remotely through a computer.

\* Recording is prohibited, as is sharing course content through any platform (like social media).

c. **Assignments and Attendance.** Assignments and attendance are not optional: to pass, students must complete all assignments, register no more than one *unexcused* absence (the professor will excuse reasonable absences), and miss no more than 9 hours of the class meetings. *These are minimum expectations, and do not guarantee a passing grade.*

\* If you are taking this course as a NOLA2U Live student, the course on the New Orleans campus will be connected synchronously via Web conferencing with Internet students. These courses will require weekly attendance at the stated class meeting times. Technical issues will not be considered a valid reason for missing a class session.

d. **Writing.** If you need help, and the odds are that you will, please visit the [Writing Center](#). A copy of the approved NOBTS Style Guide can be found online at [the Writing Center's page on the seminary website](#).

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<sup>1</sup> I have adapted and expanded this section mostly from Prof. Alan Jacobs at Baylor University.

## VI. COURSE TEXTS

### V.1. *Required Books*

1. Millard Erickson. *Christian Theology*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed (Baker Academic, 2013)
2. Gilles Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God* (The Catholic University of America Press, 2011).
3. Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*. Popular Patristics Series 23 (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002).

### V.2. *Additional Readings Provided by Professor*

1. Selections from Heinrich Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals (Latin-English)*. Edited by Peter Hünermann. 43<sup>rd</sup> edition (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2012).
  - a. Read the following: Nicene Creed (325); Constantinopolitan Creed (381); Letters between Cyril and Nestorius around Council of Ephesus: session 1, a-d (431); Chalcedonian Creed (451); Constantinople III: session 13, session 18 (681).
2. Cyril of Alexandria, *Scholia on the Incarnation of the Only Begotten*, from John McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy: Its History, Theology, and Texts* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 294-335.

### V.3. *Professor's Recommended Reading List*

Herman Bavinck. *Reformed Dogmatics*, vols. 1-4 (Baker Academic, 2003-2008).

Herman Bavinck. *The Wonderful Works of God* (Westminster Seminary Press, 2019).

Scott Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and its Interpretation* (T&T Clark, 2011).

Mark Jones, *God Is: A Devotional Guide to the Attributes of God* (Crossway, 2017).

Peter van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, vols. 1-2 (Reformation Heritage Books, 2017-2019)

Fred Sanders, *The Triune God* (Zondervan, 2016).

Stephen R. Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity* (IVP, 2012).

Robert Sokolowski, *The God of Faith and Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology* (Catholic University of America Press, 1995).

Simon Oliver, *Creation: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Bloomsbury, 2017)

Murray, John. *The Imputation of Adam's Sin* (P&R Publishing, 1977).

Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Crossway, 2016)

Athanasius of Alexandria, *On the Incarnation*. Popular Patristics Series 44B (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012).

Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*. Popular Patristics Series 13 (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995).

## VII. ASSESSMENT

### VI.1. *Assignments*

- a. Précis: 35 %
- b. Embedded Assignment: 5%
- c. Position Paper: 40%.
- d. Course Notes: 10%
- e. Reading Report: 10%

a. ***Reading and Précis Packet.*** Theology demands joyful and serious intellectual work, which is cultivated around the reading of and critical interaction with texts. Your principal task in this course is to discover and/or cultivate some of the virtues that enable you to read better. The course assignments must be read in their entirety and in such a manner that you are prepared to discuss them intelligently if called upon. To this end, you are required to write précis on selected assigned readings from Gregory of Nazianzus' classic "theological orations" on the Trinity and Christ. The précis should focus on the argument Gregory makes in each chapter, with an eye trained especially on how he reads Scripture and supports his larger argument exegetically, philosophically, and doctrinally.

**i. Instructions for Reading.** Among other matters, ask yourself the following questions as you read Gregory's *Oration*s:

(1) Argument:

- > What is the chief claim being made and how is it constructed as well as supported?
- > What are the main questions to which the author's arguments are intended as answers?
- > What are the highs and lows of the argument?
- > What objections could be raised against the author and how might they respond?

(2) Interpretation

- > Identify areas of the argument that are ambiguous or difficult; what are the most charitable and just ways of understanding these portions?
- > Identify any the larger context(s) for the argument; how do these bear upon its intelligibility? What's in the background? Who are the author's interlocutors?

(3) Claims

- > Where does the argument succeed and where does it fail?
- > What are some unexplored/unarticulated consequences of the argument?

**ii. Instructions for Précis.** You will write a précis for each of Gregory's five "theological orations" (*Oration*s 27-31). Your first précis will be on *Oration* 27 and we will all discuss it in class on **Sept 10**; the professor will walk through his own précis with you so that you can contrast your précis with his and calibrate your approach accordingly. All five précis of *Oration*s 27-31, along with your concluding reflection, will be submitted in one packet, in lieu of a mid-term examination. This will be due on **Oct 9**. For the précis:

- (a) Outline the author's argument and demonstrate your understanding of the lines of reasoning and how they contribute to the overall point being made (try not to quote the reading too much; use your own words). Please summarize what you take to be the author's main thesis/point and how they support this. See *instructions for reading* above.

- (b) Highlight how all the sections of the chapter flow together to form one coherent argument about the topic at hand.
- (c) If applicable, offer some brief comments on the strengths or weaknesses of the argument and, to the extent you can, on the pastoral implications of the argument.
- (d) Use Times New Roman, 12pt font, with single spacing.
- (e) Each précis should be 800-1500 words (include word count at the beginning of each précis).
- (f) After all five précis are completed, your précis packet should conclude with a short reflection (1500 words) on four or five of the major themes in the *Orations*.

b. **Embedded Assignment.** All students enrolled in Systematic Theology 1 have a common “Embedded Assignment” used for evaluating the school’s projected Student Learning Outcomes.

**i. Instructions.**

- (a) Use Erickson, *Christian Theology* ch. 6 and three to four other sources (books, essays, commentaries on Romans 1:18-32, etc), briefly explain your understanding of the doctrine of general revelation, highlighting the differences between general and special revelation. Your professor strongly recommends Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, chapters 9-12 (or Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God*, chs. 3-6).
- (b) What impact does the doctrine of general revelation have on your understanding of missions and evangelism?
- (c) Describe how the doctrine of general revelation can affect your communication of the Gospel.
- (d) This assignment should be 800-1200 words in length. Strive to be concise, accurate, and readable.
- (e) The assignment is due on **Sept 17** at midnight.

**ii. Rubric.** The following rubric will be used to evaluate the Embedded Assignment.

DOMAIN	LEVEL	INADEQUATE (0 PTS)	BASIC (1 PT)	COMPETENT (2 PTS)	GOOD (3 PTS)	EXCELLENT (4PTS)
UNDERSTANDING	Able to understand the doctrinal topic.					
APPLICATION	Able to apply knowledge by relating it to the broader Christian worldview.					
COMMUNICATION	Able to communicate the doctrine to a ministry					

	audience.					
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c. **Position paper.** Seminary is one of the few occasions you will have to explore any number of theological questions in some depth, both so that you understand the faith and arrive at some convictions (however open to improvement these may be). This course requires you to write a position paper, which addresses one of the doctrines covered in this course.

This assignment is designed to facilitate and improve your ability to think theologically and communicate a coherent argument with the written word. To this end, you will submit a **proposal (Oct 30)** so that you receive some evaluation and guidance before writing the **paper (Dec 14)**, in an effort to improve the overall quality of your essay and to teach you some valuable lessons about research and planning. You are responsible for reading the following handouts, provided by your professor on Blackboard: *Writing Position Papers*, *Toulmin Argument*, and *Paper Proposal Template*.

i. **Instructions for Proposals (due Oct 30).** Proposals will include the following elements:

- (a) Title Page
- (b) First paragraph of your paper, which should include a clear thesis statement, a methodology, and a preview of the sections of your paper.
- (c) Short outline of your paper, consisting of the headings and subheadings to the sections you plan on writing, with a one or two-sentence description of what you plan on writing under that heading.
- (d) Full bibliography, with one or two sentences on why you have selected this source for your essay.

ii. **Instructions for Papers (due Dec 14).** Papers must include the following elements:

- (a) **Issue:** Unceremoniously state what the paper is about and precisely what you intend to argue, as well as how you will argue it.
- (b) **Various positions:** Papers are position papers, evaluating two to four different positions on the issue, and then arguing for one of those views. You are responsible to describe the views you discuss carefully and charitably, interacting with *primary sources* (see *Writing Position Papers* handout).
- (c) **Support for your position:** When setting forth the position you believe is most responsible exegetically and therefore theologically, you are to present an argument (see *Toulmin* handout).
- (d) **Objections to your position:** Part of a good argument is foreseeing and addressing potential objections. You should present two of the strongest objections to your position, one at a time, and offer a rebuttal to each.

iii. **Additional Instructions.**

- (a) **Bibliography.** You should use between 8-15 sources for your paper. No more, no less. I am happy to recommend a book/article or two here and there when I can see that you are working hard, but I will not do your research for you. If you don't know how to research, go to the library and ask them to teach you.
- (b) **Length.** Your paper should be: 2400 to 2900 words (include word count on title page), double-spaced, Times New Roman font in 12-pt, and in accordance with the school's style manual. Footnotes contribute to your total word count, but title page and bibliography do not.

- (c) **Yes, that's misconduct.** You may *not* recycle anything you've previously written and put it into your position paper. Papers must be entirely new, written from the ground up, and *specifically for this class*.
- (d) **Abstract.** Every paper must have an abstract of 100-150 words, presented on a separate page between your title page and the beginning of your essay. If you find yourself unable to present the point of your paper concisely, then you don't know your own argument (indeed, you might not have one).
- (e) **Topic.** Your paper topic must be approved by your professor in writing, unless you choose to select from the potential topics below:
  - What is the relationship between Scripture and tradition?
  - In what does general revelation consist? Is there such a thing as "natural theology," and if so, what are its limits and uses?
  - What is the nature of Scripture's [choose one: authority/sufficiency/clarity/truthfulness]? What is it and what is it not?
  - What is Scripture's inspiration and how should we understand it?
  - Can God suffer, and what would that mean?
  - Are there relations of authority and submission within the Trinity?
  - Is the Son eternally begotten from the Father? Is this doctrine important?
  - Is creation *ex nihilo* biblical and true?
  - How should we understand the idea of "permission" in divine providence?
  - Is there a divine *concursum*, and if so, what does it look like?
  - How is sin transmitted?
  - What is original sin?
  - What does it mean to say that God's creation is good, and is this goodness affected by the fall?
  - In what does the image of God consist?
  - Would Christ have become incarnate if Adam and Eve hadn't fallen into sin?
  - Is it necessary, biblically and theologically, to affirm the virgin birth? Why?
  - Does Christ have two wills, or one will?
  - When the Son becomes incarnate, does he empty himself of certain divine attributes? Engage the debate over Kenoticism.
  - Could Christ have sinned? How should we understand that Christ was tempted?

c. **Course Notes.** In lieu of a final exam testing comprehension of significant ideas and concepts that emerge in the course lectures, you will submit a scanned copy of the notes you have taken on the lectures. This is chiefly a matter of accountability; I want to see that you have laid aside distractions, practiced attentiveness, engaged the material, and tried your best to take notes for future reference. Dates of lectures should be clearly designated. A scanned copy of your handwritten notes is due on [Dec 14].

d. **Reading Report.** At the end of the term, you will submit a statement detailing what reading you have and have not finished attentively. Due on [Dec 14].

## VI.2. Grading Scale

The grading scale will follow institutional guidelines.



*Nota bene:*

- Late submissions will be docked five percent every day they are late. Please submit assignments on time. Mysterious ‘problems’ with an internet connection, busyness with outside responsibilities and assignments in other courses, a penchant for perfectionism, and so on, are not excuses.
- There will not be any extra credit. Neither will there be any extension of paper length/due date, save for truly extenuating circumstances.
- Since this is an introductory course, your professor (and grader[s], if any there be) errs in your favor when assigning grades. If, nevertheless, you feel that I have erred entirely in assigning your grade: (a) wait at least one week before taking action, and give your paper a careful re-read to see if you feel the same way; (b) keep in mind that if I reconsider your grade, that can cut both ways (I may discover that I, or the grader, was *too* generous the first time around); (c) as specifically as possible, set down an argument in writing as to why your grade should be reconsidered.

**VII. ESTIMATED COURSE OUTLINE AND ASSIGNED READINGS**

**Key**

CT: Erickson, *Christian Theology* (CT 1 = *Christian Theology*, chapter 1)

GN: Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ* (GN Or. 27 = Nazianzen, *Oration 27*).

Emery: Gilles Emery, *The Trinity* (Emery 1 = chapter 1)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading(s) Due</b>
<b>Week 1</b> Aug 27	Introduction & Syllabus I.1. Divine Teaching	Syllabus CT 1-3
<b>Week 2</b> Sept 3	I.1. Divine Teaching	CT 4-7
<b>Week 3</b> Sept 10	I.2. Holy Scripture	CT 8-10
<b>Week 4</b> Sept 17	II.1. Knowledge of God II.2. God’s Unity	CT 11-13
<b>Week 5</b> Sept 24	II.2. God’s Unity II.3. The Holy Trinity	Emery 1-3 Denzinger PDF <sup>2</sup>
<b>Week 6</b> Oct 1	II.3. The Holy Trinity	Emery 4-6

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<sup>2</sup> Nicene Creed (325); Constantinopolitan Creed (381)

<b>Week 7</b> Oct 8	III.1. Creator and Creation	CT 15-17
<b>Week 8</b> Oct 15	III.2. Creation and Government III.3. Human Creatures	CT 18-20
<b>Oct 19-23</b>	<b>Fall Break</b>	
<b>Week 9</b> Oct 29	III.3. Human Creatures	CT 21-24
<b>Week 10</b> Nov 5	III.4. The Rebellion of Creatures	CT 25-27
<b>Week 11</b> Nov 12	IV.1. The One Lord Christ: Framework and Tasks of Christology	CT 28-30
<b>Week 12</b> Nov 19	IV.2. Christ's Pre-existence & Pro-existence	CT 31-34
<b>Nov 23-27</b>	<b>Thanksgiving Week</b>	
<b>Week 13</b> Dec 3	IV.2. Christ's Pre-existence & Pro-existence IV.3. Christological Metaphysics	Cyril PDF Denziger PDF <sup>3</sup>
<b>Week 14</b> Dec 10	IV.3. Christological Metaphysics	

**\*\*The professor reserves the right to alter the syllabus at his discretion\*\***

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<sup>3</sup> Letters between Cyril and Nestorius around Council of Ephesus: session 1, a-d (431); Chalcedonian Creed (451); Constantinople III: session 13, session 18 (681)