



Systematic Theology 1 (THEO 5300 Online)
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Fall 2022



Dr. Tyler R. Wittman
Assistant Professor of
Theology

Office: Dodd 208
Email: twittman@nobts.edu

Office hours by appointment

Teaching Assistant:
Mr. Conner Hinton

I. MISSION STATEMENT

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

II. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This first course in systematic theology introduces the student to the methodology of the study of theology (Prolegomena) and the doctrines of revelation, God, humanity, and the person of Christ. The biblical foundation and the relevant historical developments are considered in construction of a Christian understanding of each doctrine.

III. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. *Understanding.* By the end of the course, the student should:
 - Be able to understand theological method and the doctrines covered in their biblical foundations, historically significant moments, and systematic relations.

- Be able to communicate these doctrines in their particular ministry calling and context of the learner.

2. 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. EMBEDDED ASSIGNMENT

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

1. Instructions.

- (a) Using the relevant chapters from your main text, as well as 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.
- (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 **Aug 29**.

2. 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.					

V. TEXTBOOKS

There are two Reading Tracks for this course, one more introductory and the other more intermediate. Choose only one and stick with it. You may not change reading tracks or switch back and forth between them. Note: you are encouraged to have physical copies of the course texts; e-books are discouraged because they inhibit reading comprehension.

1. **Introductory.** *This text is for those who want a more introductory experience with their reading.*
 - i. Herman Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God* (Westminster Seminary Press, 2019).
 - ii. 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).
 - iii. Scott R. Swain, *The Trinity: An Introduction* (Crossway, 2020).
 - iv. Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Eerdmans, 1986).
 - v. R. B. Jamieson and Tyler R. Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning: Trinitarian and Christological Rules for Exegesis* (Baker Academic, 2022).
2. **Intermediate.** *This text is for those who want to delve much deeper, but the reading is also more challenging. Most students are capable of reading this text, but there is a learning curve. Students who desire to pursue further studies, such as a Ph.D., should seriously consider this option.*
 - i. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vols. 1-3 (Baker Academic, 2003-2006).
 - ii. 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).

VI. COURSE TEACHING METHODOLOGY

As an introductory course in an online format, this course will give only as much as students are willing to put into it. The primary methods are guided readings along with recorded lectures, meant to work together to help orient students to the main articles of the Christian faith.

VII. ASSESSMENT (COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION OF GRADE)

VI.1. Assignments

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| a. Précis Packet: 50 % | Due date: Oct 14 |
| b. Embedded Assignment: 10% | Due date: Aug 29 |
| c. Position Forum: 10% | Due dates: see below |
| d. Weekly Quizzes: 20% | Due dates: weekly |
| e. Reading Report: 10% | Due date: Dec 2 |

*** All assignments should be submitted on Canvas in Word document or PDF form, in their respective assignment portals. ***

a. **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 cultivate some of the virtues that enable you to learn with justice and charity. This assignment instills these virtues by giving you the chance to read a classic of the Christian tradition carefully and slowly enough to reproduce its essential arguments. You are required to write précis on each of Gregory of Nazianzus' famous five "theological orations," concerning the Trinity and Christ. These orations were somewhere in between a sermon and a lecture, but they were given in a church setting with a diverse audience (many of whom were Gregory's "opponents"). They are concerned with what it means to do theology and what a true theologian should and can say about the Holy Trinity and our Lord Jesus Christ. Your précis packet will include a concluding reflection where you interact critically and analytically with what Gregory "the Theologian" says. This is your biggest and likely most challenging assignment in this course.

Your précis should focus on the argument Gregory makes in each oration, with an eye trained especially on how he reads Scripture and supports his larger argument(s) exegetically, philosophically, and doctrinally.

i. Instructions for Reading. Among other matters, ask yourself the following questions as you read Gregory's *Orations* (as well as all of your assignments):

(1) Argument:

- > What is the chief claim being made and how is it constructed as well as supported?
- > What kind of arguments or people is the author responding to, from what you can gather in his writing?
- > What are the main questions to which the author's arguments are intended as answers?
- > What are some of the secondary things the author wants the readers to pick up? How do those secondary things support or take away from the primary things in the argument?
- > 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" (*Orations* 27-31). Your first précis will be on *Oration 27* and it will be due on **Sept 5**; the professor will upload a video where he walks through his own précis with you so that you can contrast your précis with his and calibrate your approach to writing a précis accordingly. This will be a chance to grade your first précis without getting a grade on it – a way of popping open the hood and making necessary repairs before continuing on your journey. For the précis:

- (a) Outline the author’s argument step-by-step, 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 oration flow together to form one coherent argument about the topic at hand.
- (c) Feel free to offer some brief comments on the strengths or weaknesses of the argument in footnotes.
- (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). Your overall word count on your five précis alone will be anywhere from 4,000 to 7,500 words.

iii. Instructions for Concluding Reflection. After all five précis are completed, your précis packet should conclude with a deep, theological reflection (2000-3000 words). This will require you to rope in your other course readings, as well as any additional research (books and articles on Gregory, for example, or the themes he talks about). Do not provide your mere impressions of the text (e.g. “I really enjoyed reading this” or “Gregory really loved Jesus”), but interact with it critically and analytically, drawing out the significance and meaning of the themes and responding to them. Reflect on the following three central themes in the *Orationes* (though you don’t have to give each theme equal consideration, don’t neglect any of them):

- (a) Reflect on what Gregory says about the nature of theology, what it’s about and who should practice it, why, and how. Don’t limit yourself to the first oration.
- (b) Reflect on what Gregory says about the Trinity and Christ’s two natures. Using Gregory and your other readings, write out your understanding of the basics of the doctrines of the Trinity and the person of Christ.
- (c) Reflect on how Gregory reads the Bible: now just what his interpretation is, but how his interpretation works (*Biblical Reasoning*, chs. 4-8 will give you helpful categories here). Do you find him convincing at certain points, unconvincing at others? Why? What does Gregory’s orations have to teach us about reading the Bible?

iv. Due date: All five précis of *Orationes* 27-31, along with your concluding reflection, will be submitted in one packet. When you add your concluding reflection to your five précis, your total précis packet should come in anywhere from 6000 to 10,500 words. This will be due on **Oct 14**.

b. Embedded Assignment. See section IV above.

c. Position forum. In the second half of the semester, students will be split into groups of four to five for a “position forum” on a select topic. Each participant will be required to research one view on this issue and act as if it is their personal view. Participants will post an argument (800 words) for their assigned view to the rest of the group; then the other participants will all respond (300 words) to that argument from the perspective of the view they have researched. Think of this like your “embedded assignment,” but done in conversation with colleagues. Initial posts will be due on **Nov 11**; all responses will be due by **Dec 2**.

c. Weekly Quizzes. Students should watch all the lectures the professor makes available. Almost every week, two to three short lectures will be made available; students are required to watch all of them. You will be given a quiz each week on Friday, to be taken *after* you complete

that week's assignments; you should be able to gather the appropriate answers from the lectures and your readings. You may use your *notes* from lectures and readings, but nothing else.

d. **Reading Report.** At the end of the term, you will submit a statement detailing what reading track you chose and what reading from that track you have and have not finished attentively. Instructions will be available on Canvas. Due on **Dec 2**.

VI.2. Grades

- The grading scale will follow institutional guidelines.
- 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 assignment 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.

VIII. COURSE GUIDELINES

1. *Academic Misconduct.*

- a. **Plagiarism on Written Assignments.** NOBTS has a *no tolerance* policy for plagiarism. Plagiarism in certain cases may result in expulsion from the seminary. Consult the NOBTS Student Handbook for definitions, penalties, and policies associated with plagiarism.
- b. **Professor's advice.** The best advice for avoiding academic misconduct in all its forms is to love learning more than "grades." Be open and honest, ask questions if you're in doubt about whether something is plagiarism or not, do your own work, and take no shortcuts.

2. **Technical Assistance.** For assistance with any matters related to technology, please consult ITC (504-816-8180) or the following email addresses, where relevant:

- a. Selfserve@nobts.edu. Email for technical questions/support requests with the Selfserve.nobts.edu site (Access to online registration, financial account, online transcript, etc.)
- b. Canvas.NOBTS.com. Click on the "Help" button for technical questions/support requests regarding the NOBTS Canvas System. You can also email questions to Canvas@nobts.edu.
- c. ITCSupport@nobts.edu. Email for general technical questions/support requests.
- d. www.NOBTS.edu/itc/ – Provides general NOBTS technical help information.

3. **Assignments.** Assignments are not optional: to pass, students must complete all assignments.

4. **Attendance Policy.** [choose 1]

- a. Traditional and NOLA2U Classes: Students are expected to attend and participate in the class sessions. Any student missing more than nine hours may receive an automatic grade of “F” for the course. Three tardies will count as one absence.
 - b. Intensive and Weekend Hybrid Classes: Students are expected to attend and participate in the class sessions. Because of the nature of the intensive, students who miss any portion of the class may receive a grade of “F” for the course.
 - c. Other Hybrid Classes: Students are expected to attend and participate in the class sessions. Because of the nature of the hybrid, students who miss more than four hours may receive a grade of “F” for the course.
 - d. Online and Mentoring Classes: Students are expected to engage regularly with course content through the learning management system and other course delivery methods. Students who fail to participate consistently in course activities may receive a grade of “F” for the course.
5. **Writing.** NOBTS maintains a [Writing Center](#) designed to improve English writing at the graduate level. Students can receive writing guides, tips, and valuable information to help in becoming a better writer. A copy of the approved NOBTS Style Guide can be found in the course Canvas shell, or can be located online at [the Writing Center’s page on the seminary website](#).
6. **Technology.**¹ Except in online or distance courses, digital devices are prohibited in the classroom (laptops, tablets, phones of any sort, recording devices, etc). This guideline might appear draconian, but it’s for your benefit. Though many may feel that their use of technology makes them better, more efficient learners, 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 technological asceticism.
- a. Students should use standard tools (pen and paper) for notetaking, even when attending lectures remotely through a computer.
 - b. Recording is prohibited, as is sharing course content through any platform (like social media).

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

IX. ESTIMATED LECTURE OUTLINE AND READING SCHEDULE

Key

WW: Bavinck, *Wonderful Works of God* (WW 1 = ch. 1)

RD: Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* (RD 1:14 = vol. 1, ch. 14)

BR: Jamieson and Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning*

GI: Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*

SW: Swain, *The Trinity*

Date	Topic	Readings: Option 1	Readings: Option 2
Week 1 Aug 15	I.1. Theology's Nature and Tasks	Syllabus WW 1-3 BR 1	Syllabus RD 1:10 ²
Week 2 Aug 21	I.2. Revelation: Divine Teaching	WW 4-8	RD 1:11-12
Week 3 Aug 29	I.3. Holy Scripture	BR 2-3	RD 1:13-14
Week 4 Sept 5	II.1. God's Unity	WW 9 BR 4	RD 2:2-3
Week 5 Sept 12	II.1. God's Unity	WW 10 BR 5	RD 2:4-5
Week 6 Sept 19	II.2. The Holy Trinity	SW 1-4 BR 6	RD 2:6
Week 7 Sept 26	II.2. The Holy Trinity	SW 5-8	RD 2:8

² Also recommended, but not required: RD 1, pp. 26-46; BR 1-3.

Oct 3-7	Fall Break		
Week 8 Oct 10	III.1. Creation	WW 11-12	RD 2:12
Week 9 Oct 17	III.2. Providence	AH 14	RD 2:13
Week 10 Oct 24	III.3. Humanity	AH 5-8	RD 2:14
Week 11 Oct 31	III.4. Sin	AH 9-12	RD 3:2
Week 12 Nov 7	IV.1. The One Lord Christ: Pre-existence and Pro-existence	WW 13-14	RD 3:3
Week 13 Nov 14	IV.1. The One Lord Christ: Pre-existence and Pro-existence	WW 15-16	RD 3:4
Nov 21-25	Thanksgiving Break		
Week 14 Nov 28	IV.2. The One Lord Christ: Christological Metaphysics	BR 7-9	RD 3:6 ³

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

³ This is a longer, very important chapter. Make time for it.

X. SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY / RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

- Butner, Jr. Glen, *Trinitarian Dogmatics: Exploring the Grammar of the Christian Doctrine of God* (Baker Academic, 2022).
- Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*. Popular Patristics Series 13 (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995).
- Duby, Steven J. *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism: Biblical Christology in Light of the Doctrine of God* (Baker Academic, 2022)
- Emery, Gilles. *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Teaching on the Triune God* (Catholic University of America Press)
- Holmes, Stephen R. *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity* (IVP, 2012).
- Jones, Mark. *God Is: A Devotional Guide to the Attributes of God* (Crossway, 2017).
- Kleinig, John W. *Wonderfully Made: A Protestant Theology of the Body* (Lexham Press, 2021).
- Peter van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, vols. 1-3 (Reformation Heritage Books, 2017-2021)
- McCall, Thomas H. *Against God and Nature: The Doctrine of Sin* (Crossway, 2019)
- McFarland, Ian A. *From Nothing: A Theology of Creation* (WJK, 2014).
- Murray, John. *The Imputation of Adam's Sin* (P&R Publishing, 1977).
- Sanders, Fred. *The Triune God* (Zondervan, 2016)
- Sokolowski, Robert. *The God of Faith and Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology* (Catholic University of America Press, 1995).
- Swain, Scott R. *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and its Interpretation* (T&T Clark, 2011).
- Oliver, Simon. *Creation: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Bloomsbury, 2017)
- Wellum, Stephen J. *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Crossway, 2016)