



Creation and Creationism (THEO 6312)
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Time: Tuesdays/Thursdays, 8:00-9:20am, Fall 2022
Location: TBD



William Blake, *The Four and Twenty Elders Casting Their Crowns Before the Divine Throne* (ca. 1805-5)

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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 course is a study of the doctrine of creation. The course will investigate biblical foundations, survey the historical developments, analyze the relationship of the doctrine to other significant doctrines such as the doctrine of God and providence, and explore the impact of the doctrine on the development of science as a discipline. The course will also survey current theories of creation, from process theism to evangelical methods of interpreting the opening chapters of Genesis.¹

¹ This semester, we will not focus on the development of science, and our attention on interpreting Genesis 1-2 will focus on the theological significance of the text more than questions about age of the earth, etc.

Apart from the doctrines of the Trinity and Christ, no other doctrine than creation has more wide-ranging implications for the Christian faith. Even the doctrines of soteriology and eschatology are shaped by what Christians confess about creation. Redemption and consummation alike presuppose something or someone redeemed and consummated as the creature they are. As the first of God's external works, creation is thus the presupposition for what we say about all God's other works. Nor is any other doctrine more relevant to so many of our everyday challenges, both individually and socially, perennially and contemporarily. Whether it's vaunted philosophical debates about realism and nominalism, the challenges of environmental change and decay, the nature of causality, the meaning of life, or the nature and purpose of sexual difference—these are all grounded in what one believes about what and where we are. Life, the universe, and everything all boils down to whether we are “creatures” and what this means. As with all theology, Christian teaching arises from contemplating the God of the gospel, who alone heals our

III. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. *Understanding.* By the end of the course, the student should:

- Be able to understand 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. TEXTBOOKS

1. Petrus van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, vol. 3, *The Works of God and the Fall of Man*, trans. Todd M. Rester (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2021).
2. Andrew Davison, *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
3. Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram (The Literal Meaning of Genesis)*, books I-V²
 - *De civitate dei (The City of God)*, books XI-XII [PDF on Canvas]
4. J. Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex* (Wilmington, DE: ISI, 2014).
5. Additional readings available online or on Canvas:
 - Annie Dillard, "Seeing," in *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (New York: Harper's Magazine Press, 1974), 14-34.
 - Robert Sokolowski, "Creation and Christian Understanding," in *God and Creation: An Ecumenical Symposium*, ed. David B. Burrell and Bernard McGinn (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 179-192.
 - Johann Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces IX*, chapters III (on God's foreknowledge, §§16-46) and IX (on God's *concursus*, §§86-106).
 - Faith Glavey Pawl, "Human Superiority, Divine Providence, and the Animal Good: A Thomistic Defense of Creaturely Hierarchy," in *The Christian Doctrine of*

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.

² There are two available translations of this work: one in the "Ancient Christian Writers" series (vol 41, translated by John Hammond Taylor) and the other in the "Works of St Augustine" series (vol I/13, translated by Edmund Hill). Either of them will do. The professor will be using the "Works of St Augustine" version, *On Genesis* (New City Press, 2004). Whatever version you use, please observe the standard citation format so that we can all follow along during discussion (e.g. *De genesi ad litteram* I.5.10, etc).

Humanity: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics, eds. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders (Zondervan, 2018), 41-60.

V. COURSE TEACHING METHODOLOGY

This course is an advanced graduate elective, consisting of seminar-style discussions of advanced readings led by the professor and supplementary lectures on various topics. Careful, attentive reading of the course texts is vital. A central portion of the class will entail reading half of Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram* together and discussing it.

VI. ASSESSMENT (COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION OF GRADE)

VI.1. *Assignments*

1. Augustine Commentary: 30 %
2. Research Paper: 50%
3. Reading and Participation: 20%

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

1. **Augustine Commentary.** Theology demands joyful and serious intellectual work, which is cultivated around the reading of and critical interaction with texts. This is one of the principal ways we partake of a tradition larger than ourselves. This assignment gives you the chance to read a classic of the Christian tradition carefully and slowly enough to glean its essential arguments and learn from them. You are required to read the first five books of Augustine of Hippo's famous *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, his most notable commentary on the opening chapters of Genesis, as well as books 11-12 of *The City of God*. These texts provide valuable insight into the ways Christians have read Genesis 1, as well as the theological-philosophical and religious stakes in the doctrine of creation. We will discuss the readings of *De Genesi* in class together. As we prepare for these meetings, please take careful, detailed notes on the text. Here are some guidelines.

a. Instructions for Reading. Among other matters, ask yourself the following questions as you read:

(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 the text?
- > 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?

b. Instructions for Report. Rather than a straightforward précis, your "report" will be more like a careful, commentatorial exposition and analysis of what you have read. Here you will focus on one salient aspect of Augustine's doctrine of creation that piques your interest. You will then provide an exposition of this theme throughout the assigned texts from Augustine, by delineating the meaning and significance of what Augustine says about your theme, and providing in conclusion a tentative evaluation of its value for contemporary reflection on the doctrine of creation. While your exposition should employ appropriate research of secondary sources, the majority of your attention should be on a careful first-hand engagement with Augustine's texts (the primary sources). Keep the following in mind:

- (a) It will be impossible to provide a good exposition of your chosen theme unless you have spent time outlining Augustine's larger arguments, so that you know how your theme plays into those larger arguments. You need to understand the broader contexts, in other words.
- (b) Highlight how the theme you have selected is related to other significant themes, how he supports it exegetically, philosophically, and theologically. What is the theme *doing*?
- (c) Keep an eye on the religious significance of this theme, for Augustine. What difference does this make for one's "worldview" or for how Christians live?
- (d) Using your findings, formulate a thesis that you want to argue from Augustine's texts and use that as your organizing principle.
- (e) Use Times New Roman, 12pt font, with single spacing.
- (f) Your report should be around 3000 words, give or take 10% (include word count on the title page).
- (g) With your report, include a digital copy of your notes on the texts.

c. Due Date. This assignment will be due on Sept 30.

2. Research Paper. The primary assignment in this class, and half your grade. Papers should focus on some aspect of the doctrine of creation. All papers must be well-researched, set forth a clearly articulated thesis, substantiate it, and defend it against the prominent of possible objections. The professor must either assign or approve your topic.

a. Proposal. Before writing your essay, you will submit a proposal that includes a first draft of the following:

- i. A primary paragraph of 300-500 words that: states your proposed topic, why you want to pursue, and how you intend to explore it.
- ii. A projected outline with headings and brief descriptions of what materials/discussions you suspect they will include.

iii. A working bibliography of at least eight sources. Choose your sources carefully and ensure that you have enough primary sources to prevent your paper from simply being a book report.

b. Final Draft. Building off of your preliminary research for your proposal, and the feedback you receive from me and your classmates, you will write a final draft. The final draft will be graded for its clarity of argument and expression, careful reading of sources, judicious selection of materials, and academic rigor. This should be a final, not first draft. Write it with sufficient time for review and editing so that you may iron out grammatical and argumentative infelicities.

c. Additional Instructions:

i. You should use between 8-15 sources (which you've actually read carefully) for your paper. No more, no less. You won't need more than that if you select the right sources and engage them deeply. 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.

ii. Your paper should be: 3500 to 4000 words (include word count on title page), double-spaced, Times New Roman font in 12-pt, and (more or less) in accordance with the Style Guide. Footnotes contribute to your total word count.

iii. You may not recycle anything you've previously written and put it into your paper. Papers must be entirely new, written from the ground up, and specifically for this class. That said, you are allowed to build off your research on Augustine - though you cannot recycle your report in your research paper.

iv. 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).

d. Due Date: The Proposal is due on Oct 27; the Final Draft is due on Dec 2.

3. **Reading and Participation.** At the end of the term, you will submit a statement on Canvas detailing what reading you have and have not finished attentively. Instructions will be available on Canvas. This will be combined with an assessment of your participation in our seminar discussions. Your overall reading and participation grade will also take account of your notes. At the end of the term, you will submit a statement detailing what reading you have and have not finished attentively.

a. Notes. You must take notes of some kind on the readings from Augustine, Maastricht, and Davison. I do not anticipate they will always be adequate, much less perfect or exhaustive, or even how your professor takes notes. But unless you take notes, our collective seminar discussions will become very quiet and dull. Take notes, write down questions that come to mind about things you don't understand, things that excite you, or things with which you disagree. These will help us create lively discussion. Generally, notes should focus on the author's main argument, looking at how they are justifying their stances theologically and exegetically, identifying the main features of the text in question. Or notes may simply be a running commentary on the text that helps you engage in class discussion. You may be asked for some of these notes in lieu of a final exam.

b. Due Date. This assignment is 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.

VII. 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.

3. ***Attendance Policy.*** 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.

4. ***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](#).

5. **Technology.**³ 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.
- 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).

VIII. ESTIMATED LECTURE OUTLINE AND READING SCHEDULE

Key

PM: van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology* (PM 1 = ch. 1)

AD: Davison, *Participation in God*

DG: Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*

CD: Augustine, *The City of God*

JB: Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex*

Blue/green: projected lecture (blue), projected seminar (green)

	Date	Topic	Assignments Due
1	Aug 16 Aug 18	Introduction: Forgetting and Remembering the Creator	Dillard PDF Sokolowski PDF AD, “Introduction”
2	Aug 22 Aug 25	I. Recollection: Augustine’s Theology of Creation	DG I (8/22) DG II (8/25)
3	Aug 30 Sept 1	Augustine’s Theology of Creation	DG III (8/30) DG IV (9/1)
4	Sept 6	Augustine’s Theology of Creation	DG V (9/6)

³ I have adapted and expanded this section mostly from Prof. Alan Jacobs at Baylor University.

	Sept 8		CD XI-XII (9/8)
5	Sept 13	II. “Great beauty has been wakened into song”: The Beginning a. The Creator’s Goodness	PM, “Preface”, PM 1
	Sept 15		PM 5
6	Sept 20	b. Creation <i>ex nihilo</i> c. Creation’s telos	AD 1-3
	Sept 22		AD 4-5
7	Sept 27	c. Metaphysical and Religious Significance of Creation d. Inhabiting a World of Song	AD 7
	Sept 29		AD 8
	Oct 3-7	Fall Break – No Class	
8	Oct 11	III. Distinguishing & Decorating: Creation and Creatures a. Theological Significance of the Hexameron b. The Metaphysics of Creatures	PM 6
	Oct 13		AD 6
9	Oct 18	c. The Goodness of Creation d. Angelic Creatures	PM 7
	Oct 20		PM 8
10	Oct 25	e. Human Creatures as Microcosm f. The <i>Gestalten</i> of Human Life	PM 9
	Oct 27		PM 10
11	Nov 1	IV. Providence a. Three Forms of Providence b. Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom	PM 11; Gerhard PDF
	Nov 3		AD 9-10
12	Nov 8	V. Living the Created Life a. Creaturely Life I: From and Upon the Earth b. Creaturely Life II: Resonance and Harmony	AD 13-15
	Nov 10		AD, Conclusion

13	Nov 15 Nov 17	Reading and Research Days (Professor at Conference)	AD 11-12 JB
	Nov 21-25	Thanksgiving Break – No Class	
14	Nov 29	c. The Royal, Priestly, and Prophetic Tasks of Human Creatures	Pawl PDF

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

IX. SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY / RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, vol. III/1, *The Doctrine of Creation* §§40-42. Study Edition (London: T&T Clark, 2010).⁴
- Berkouwer, G. C. *The Providence of God*. Studies in Dogmatics (Eerdmans, 1952).
- Blowers, Paul M. *Drama of the Divine Economy: Creator and Creation in Early Christian Theology and Piety* (Oxford University Press, 2012).
- Bonino, Serge-Thomas. *Angels and Demons: A Catholic Introduction* (Catholic University of America Press, 2016).
- Francis (Pope), *Praise Be to You - Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015).
- Fulkerson, Geoffrey, and Joel Thomas Chopp, eds. *Science and the Doctrine of Creation: The Approaches of Ten Modern Theologians*. IVP Academic, 2021.
- Florovsky, Georges. "Creation and Createdness," *The Patristic Witness of Georges Florovsky: Essential Theological Writings*, ed. Brandon Gallaher and Paul Ladouceur (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 33-63.
- Kleinig, John W. *Wonderfully Made: A Protestant Theology of the Body* (Lexham, 2021).
- Levering, Matthew. *Engaging the Doctrine of Creation: Cosmos, Creatures, and the Wise and Good Creator*. Baker Academic, 2017.
- McFarland, Ian A. *From Nothing: A Theology of Creation* (WJK, 2014).
- O'Callaghan, Paul. *God's Gift of the Universe: An Introduction to Creation Theology* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2022).
- Oliver, Simon. *Creation: A Guide for the Perplexed*. T&T Clark, 2017.
- Schmitz, Kenneth. *The Gift: Creation* (Marquette University Press, 1982).
- Sokolowski, Robert. *The God of Faith and Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982, 1995)

⁴ Available through the NOBTS Library as an E-book:
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=964268&site=ehost-live>

John Paul II (Pope). Catechesis on Creation (Jan 8, 1986 – August 6, 1986):

<https://inters.org/Teachings-from-John-Paul-II>

Webster, John. “The Dignity of Creatures,” *God Without Measure*, vol. 2 (Bloomsbury, 2016).

_____. “Trinity and Creation,” in *God Without Measure*, vol. 1 (Bloomsbury, 2016).

_____. “‘Love is also a Lover of Life’: *Creatio ex nihilo* and Creaturely Goodness,” in *God Without Measure*, vol. 1 (Bloomsbury, 2016).

_____. “*Non ex aequo*: God’s Relation to Creation,” in *God Without Measure*, vol. 1 (Bloomsbury, 2016).

_____. “On the Theology of Providence,” in *God Without Measure*, vol. 1 (Bloomsbury, 2016).

Wirzba, Norman. *This Sacred Life: Humanity’s Place in a Wounded World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

Wood, Donald. “Maker of Heaven and Earth,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 14.4 (2012): 381-395.