TH 531 Systematic Theology I

Fall Semester 2017
Thursdays: 8:30 am - 12:15 pm

INSTRUCTOR: Randal D. Rauser, PhD
Phone: 780-431-4428
Email: randal.rauser@taylor-edu.ca

DESCRIPTION:

A systematic study of major doctrines of the Christian faith, beginning with the doctrines of God, creation, and the fall. (3 Credits)

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this course, the student should

1. understand the primary sources, tasks and divisions of theology.
2. gain a basic understanding of the basis of revelation in scripture, the mystery of the divine Trinity and God’s providential relation with a fallen creation.
3. value the intimate relationship between orthodoxy (right belief) and orthopraxis (right practice) for pastoral effectiveness and personal holiness.
4. be enabled to serve the church by living correct doctrine integrated into a life of devotion.

TEXTBOOKS:


MOODLE READINGS:


Rauser, Randal. “Can Christians call God ‘Mother’?” randalrauser.com/blog


REQUIREMENTS:

1. **Course Readings** (850 pp.)  
   Assigned readings should be completed to ensure meaningful engagement in threaded forum discussions and adequate preparation for the exam.  
   48 hours

2. **Book Review of Sexton, Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity**  
   Review the contents of the book in approximately 500-750 words and reserve the remaining 250-500 words for critical interaction. Which view of the Trinity did you find to be most persuasive? Why? Did you like the format of the book? Why or why not?  
   (1000-1250 words)  
   Due Date: Oct 26

3. **Annotated Bibliography**  
   This bibliography is intended to provide the core research for your term paper and should include a minimum of 10 academic sources (journal articles and academic books). A maximum of two essays from book collections will be recognized as separate bibliographic entries. (For guidance on the selection of academic resources see the Taylor Research and Writing Guide.) Each annotation should consist of approximately five to six substantial sentences of summary. Please preface the bibliography with your thesis statement. Note: assigned readings can be included on the bibliography but will not count toward the 10 source requirement.  
   Due Date: Nov 2
4. **Term Paper**  
14 hours

This is a research paper on any one of the topics in prolegomena, doctrine of God, creation, providence, theological anthropology, or the fall that is listed at the end of the syllabus. You can choose a topic not on the list but *it must be approved by the professor*. Follow the guidelines of the Taylor Research and Writing Guide in composing your paper, including title page, footnotes and bibliography. If you wish, you may submit an outline or rough draft in advance for critical feedback. (I cannot guarantee that I will be able to provide feedback but I will do so as my schedule permits.)

(2500-3500 words)  
**Due Date: Nov 30**

5. **My Credo (Doctrinal Position) Paper**  
9 hours

In this paper you will summarize your doctrinal position on prolegomena (2 pages), the doctrine of God (2 pages), the doctrine of creation (2 pages) and the fall (2 pages). Include relevant scriptural passages in parenthetical references but footnote any other sources. (However, no other sources are required.) External research is not required for this assignment. Follow the guidelines of the Taylor Research and Writing Guide in formatting your paper.

(2000-2500 words)  
**Due Date: Dec 7**

6. **Final Exam**  
7 hours

**Total: 90 hours**

**HOW TO SUBMIT AN ASSIGNMENT:** Assignments should be emailed to randal.rauser@taylor-edu.ca before midnight on the day they are due to ensure you do not receive a late penalty. Do not submit a hard copy. When you email your assignment it is recommended that you request a read receipt to ensure that your assignment has been received. *You are responsible to ensure that the assignment is received.*

**TITLING YOUR ASSIGNMENT:** Please follow this template for naming assignment documents:

- Annotated bibliography: Last name-Bibliography (e.g. Jones-bibliography)
- Book Review: Last name-Book Review
- Term Paper: Last name-Term Paper
- My Credo: Last name-My Credo
LATE PENALTIES AND PROCEDURES: Assignments must be emailed before 11:59 pm on the day they are due in order to avoid a late penalty. Assignments automatically receive a 5% penalty for every day that they are late. Assignments late more than one week will receive 0%. (Weekends count as one day.) Extensions will not be granted except in the case of a documented personal or medical crisis.

EVALUATION: Class participation 10%
Annotated Bibliography 10%
Book Review 10%
Term Paper 30%
My Credo Paper 20%
Final Exam 20%

FINAL REMARKS:

Research Language. You should employ acceptable research language for your paper which is not too informal yet reads inclusively. Avoid the use of gender specific language (e.g., Do not refer to “man” generically or to “mankind,” “men,” “he”; rather use “humankind,” “humanity,” “person,” etc.)

Plagiarism. Academic honesty and integrity is essential to the academic enterprise and the Seminary community. All written work submitted must be your own. Guidelines for Research Writing defines plagiarism as the failure to give credit where credit is due: “To plagiarize is to give the impression that you have written something original which in fact you have borrowed from another without acknowledging that other person's work” (Guidelines for Research Writing, 2003, Rev 1.2; p. 11). If you borrow ideas or distinctive phrases, or include direct quotations in your written assignments, you must acknowledge your source(s) properly by in-text citation or footnote. It is also wrong to copy another person’s work or to submit an assignment previously handed in for credit in another course. Students guilty of plagiarism may receive a grade of zero for the assignment and may be brought to the attention of the Seminary’s Academic Committee.

Course Withdrawal Policy. After the period for which tuition refunds are available, a “W” will be placed on the transcript of a student who withdraws from any course. Beyond those dates, an “F” will be recorded on the student’s transcript.

Formatting. All studies and papers should be typed and formatted according to the Society of Biblical Literature writing style as outlined in the Seminary’s Guidelines for Research Writing in Religion & Theology (SBL). For the full stylesheet, please refer to Patrick H. Alexander, et al., ed., The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies (Grand Rapids: Hendrickson, 2014) which is in Reading Room.
Moodle Instructions. The course website is at [https://moodle.sfseminary.edu](https://moodle.sfseminary.edu). All registered students will be added to the Moodle site. Readings and course information will be posted at the website and two weekly class sessions will be online.

COURSE OUTLINE WITH READINGS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>READINGS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 7</td>
<td>What is theology?</td>
<td>Grenz, pp. 1-26; Tennent, chapter 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 14</td>
<td>Reason and Revelation</td>
<td>Grenz, pp. 27-42; Rauser, chapter 1; Tennent, chapter 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 21</td>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td>Grenz, chapter 14; Tennent, chapter 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 28</td>
<td>Theology and Language: Is God our Mother?</td>
<td>Rauser, “Can Christians call God Mother?” (online)</td>
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Who is God? What is God like?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oct 5</th>
<th>God and the Divine Attributes Online (Moodle Site)</th>
<th>Smith, “Does Classical Theism Deny God’s Transcendence?” (online)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct 12</td>
<td>Debating the Doctrine of God: Impassibility and Omniscience Online (Moodle site)</td>
<td>Grenz, pp. 77-97; Tennent, chapter 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 19</td>
<td>Modular Week (no class)</td>
<td>No reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 26</td>
<td>The Triune God</td>
<td>Grenz, pp. 53-76; Rauser, chapter 2</td>
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How does God relate to creation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nov 2</th>
<th>Creation and Providence</th>
<th>Grenz, pp. 98-124; 213-242;Rauser, chapter 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov 9</td>
<td>Providence and the Decree</td>
<td>Michael, “Divine Providence or Good Luck?” (online)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 16</td>
<td>Providence and Evil</td>
<td>No reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 23</td>
<td>Creation, Science, and Evolution</td>
<td>Lamoureux, “Was Adam a real person?” (online); Giberson, “Scientific Fundamentalism and its cultural impact” (online)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What are human beings?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page References</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov 30</td>
<td>Doctrine of Humankind</td>
<td>Grenz, pp. 125-180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 7</td>
<td>The Fall</td>
<td>Grenz, pp. 181-212; Tennent, chapter 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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BIBLIOGRAPHY:

General Works


**Prolegomena and Bibliology**


**Nature and Person of God**


**Providence and Creation**


**Humanity and Sin**


**Selected Internet Resources**

Though the Internet is an invaluable resource, it is often very difficult to discern credible information. Hence, the following web resources are provided as (generally) reliable sources for background reading. The only sources listed here which are acceptable as research are starred “**” as peer-reviewed online journals.

**http://www.arsdisputandi.org/**

An online journal of philosophy of religion which frequently delves into theological issues.
http://www.christianitytoday.com/books/
Books and Culture is an excellent cultural review from a Christian perspective which often includes theological pieces.

http://www.ccel.org/
The “Christian Classics Ethereal Library” is an excellent collection of classic Christian works made available to the general public.

http://www.christianitytoday.com/ctmag/
Christianity Today is the leading magazine of evangelical Christians, and occasionally has useful theological articles.

http://www.desiringgod.org/
Reformed pastor and theologian John Piper’s website includes a variety of his sermons and published writings in the “online library.”

http://www.firstthings.com/
First Things is an excellent Christian journal in a range of areas including popular culture, ethics, and theology.

**http://journalofanalytictheology.com/jat/index.php/jat
The Journal of Analytic Theology is an excellent online peer-reviewed journal.

http://www.leaderu.com/
“Leadership University” makes available a number of articles in numerous areas including theology.

http://www.monergism.com
An excellent source of Reformed thought ranging over a broad expanse of topics.

http://www.newadvent.org/
A Catholic website which includes the “Catholic Encyclopedia” and Thomas Aquinas’ Summa Theologiae.

http://www.onlinetrinity.com/
A list of links to various articles on the Trinity.

http://www.quodlibet.net/
An online journal of Christian theology and philosophy.

http://www.reformed.org
This is an important website of Reformed theology and apologetics.

http://theologytoday.ptsem.edu/
This site allows you to search online and access articles from Theology Today.

http://www.vatican.va/
A wealth of information is available at this, the Roman Catholic Church’s homepage
24 Paper Topics

Prolegomena

1. Critique or defend one of the philosophical arguments for God’s existence.
2. Defend or critique the use of natural theology.
3. Explore the relationship between general revelation and salvation (inclusivism vs. exclusivism).
4. Defend a particular theology of the world religions.
5. Defend a particular theory of biblical inspiration.
7. Critique or defend the use of female language with reference to God.

Doctrine of God

8. Defend a particular theory of one of the divine attributes (eternity, omnipotence, omniscience, impassibility, etc).
9. Defend or critique classical theism in dialogue with a biblical portrait of God.
10. Critique or defend open theism.
11. Critique or defend a particular understanding of the Trinity (e.g. social Trinitarianism).
12. Compare and contrast Trinitarianism with Western monotheism.
13. Defend or critique a view of the divine processions (e.g. the Filioque).

Doctrine of Creation

14. Defend the Judeo-Christian doctrine of creation against charges that it undermines concern for the environment.
15. Defend or critique the theory of evolution with respect to Christian doctrine.
16. Defend the double causation model of divine providence (e.g. Calvinism; Thomism).
17. Reconcile the doctrine of divine providence with the problem of evil.
18. Defend a particular theory of divine action in the world.
19. Defend a particular theory of the image of God (e.g. reason; relationality).
20. Defend or critique substance dualism.

Doctrine of the Fall

22. Defend a particular theory of original sin and/or original guilt (e.g. Federal Headship).
23. Defend (or critique) the claim that the doctrine of original sin requires a historical Adamic fall.
24. Defend (or critique) the claim that fallen human beings have free will.