

Intro to Christian Theology

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Organizational Purpose

The Institute of Biblical Studies (IBS) exists to help develop Christ-centered missionaries who possess the biblical and theological competencies they need (head, heart and hands) to live out the Great Commandment and helpfully fulfill the Great Commission through the ministry of Cru. This course explores twenty Christian doctrines that are foundational to our life and mission.

Course Description

Good theology is vital to the life and health of the church. Theology helps us answer questions like, 'What is God like?' 'How does God speak to us?' 'Why did God create the world?' 'What does it mean to be human?' 'What's wrong in the world?' 'Who is Jesus Christ and what did he do for us?' 'What is the good news of the gospel?' 'Who is the Holy Spirit?' 'What is a church?' 'How will God's story end?' This course will introduce you to the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith affirmed in the Cru Statement of Faith. Not only will you gain a deeper understanding of these doctrines but you will also discover how these doctrines should practically shape our lives and ministries.

Learning Outcomes

1. Deepen your motivation to know, love and worship the triune God and to reflect God's character as an image-bearer.
2. Gain greater confidence in Scripture as the inspired, truthful, authoritative, sufficient and powerful Word of God.
3. Develop a deeper understanding of and commitment to the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith expressed in our Statement of Faith.
4. Grow in your capacity to teach these foundational doctrines from Scripture and relate them to ethics, personal growth, evangelism, discipleship, movement-launching, and cross-cultural mission.
5. Become more familiar with major viewpoints, differences, and conflicts which exist among Christians regarding key doctrines.
6. Grow in your awareness of the ways in which culture shapes our reading of Scripture (and hence our theologies) as well as the importance of listening to believers in other cultural and ethnic contexts.
7. Be better prepared to partner with those who hold differing theological views allowing for difference of opinion on matters not central to our Statement of Faith while pointing people to a compelling center (i.e., Christ, the gospel and our mission).
8. Develop a deeper understanding of and greater confidence in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Required Texts

Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994). ISBN-13: 978-0310286707. Grudem's systematic theology is one of the most readable graduate-level texts available. You will read several chapters from this book. It is a great reference tool to have in your library. Wayne Grudem is a professor at Phoenix Seminary. [ST]

David Platt, *Counter Culture: Following Christ in an Anti-Christian Age*, revised and updated (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 2017). ISBN-13: 978-1414390383. Theology includes not only what we believe but also how we live (ethics). Every doctrine we will discuss in this class has ethical implications. Platt relates a number of contemporary issues (poverty, abortion, sex slavery, marriage, sexual morality and ethnicity) to the gospel. David Platt is the head of the International Mission Board (IMB) for the Southern Baptist Convention. [CC]

Tim Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Dutton, 2009). ISBN-13: 978-0525950493 (Paperback: ISBN-13: 978-1594483493). This book addresses cultural objections to a number of the doctrines we are examining in the class. Tim Keller is the pastor Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City. [RFG]

Recommended Texts

Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).

Learning Tasks

- Reading:** You will be reading selections from Grudem's *Systematic Theology*, Keller's *Reason for God*, Platt's *Counter Culture* as well as several articles posted online (roughly 450 pages). **Given the compressed nature of this course, it will help if you can complete most the reading prior to the first session. Every year on the course evaluation, staff write "I wish I had completed the reading before I came to class."** See "Course Schedule and Assignments" for a list of required readings. The last day of class you will electronically submit a reading report indicating how much of the required reading you completed. As you read, you may find it helpful take notes on what you are reading. Not only will this help you digest the material, but it will also provide something you can refer to in the future without re-reading the text. **DUE: Friday, September 29.**
- Case Studies:** You will craft responses to a series of case studies. These case studies integrate the doctrines we are studying in this class with practical ministry situations. They will be posted on the IBS website. **DUE: Monday, October 2 by 5:00 pm.** **When you email your file, please name it using the following format: YourLastName_casestudies.doc.**

3. **Theology Project:** What is the gospel? Few questions are more fundamental to our personal lives and organizational calling than this. Although we spend a lot of time and energy strategizing how to introduce men and women to the gospel, we often spend little time reflecting on the gospel itself. You will write a paper in which you summarize biblical teaching concerning the gospel. The purpose of this project is not to summarize *everything* the Bible teaches the gospel but to focus on the gospel teaching in a *particular* book.
- a) **Pick one of the following options:**
 - The gospel as taught in Mark
 - The gospel as taught in Acts
 - The gospel as taught in Ephesians
 - b) **Explore:** Using the four gospels questions to guide you (Who is Jesus? What did Jesus do? What blessings did Jesus bring? How should we respond?), pay careful attention to what your book teaches about the good news (see lecture 16, Justification and the Gospel). You may find it helpful to put your four questions in a doc and make notes under each of them as you read through the book.
 - c) **Synthesize:** Look at what you wrote in response to each of the four questions. What stands out to you? What themes do you see repeated? What are the ethical implications of the gospel? Consider how best to organize what you learned into a systematic and coherent whole.
 - d) **Write:** Drawing your work together, write a paper (7-9 pages, double spaced, 12 pt. font) summarizing what you learned. To the best of your ability, present all that your book says about the gospel. Remember that this is not a verse by verse commentary but a carefully crafted synthesis of the teaching of your book regarding the gospel. You may find it helpful to structure your paper around the four gospel questions. On the last page of your paper, address the following questions: What was the most helpful thing you learned about the gospel from your study? Are there any changes you want to make in how you communicate the gospel as a result of your study? If so, what are they? What the implications of the gospel for how you live (ethics)? **DUE: Friday, October 6 by 5:00 pm. When you email your file, please name it using the following format: YourLastName_project.doc.**

Course Grade

In Cru, we talk about the five “E’s” of development: education, experience, exposure, environment and evaluation. Evaluation, the fifth E, plays an important role in our growth. Because this is a graduate level course, you will receive a letter grade

Reading	20 %
Attributes Project	30 %
Final Exam	<u>50 %</u>
Total	100 %

Grading Scale

94-100	A
92-93	A-
90-91	B+
84-89	B
82-83	B-
80-81	C+
74-79	C
72-73	C-
65-71	D
0-65	F

Note: A grade of C- or better is required to apply this course toward your IBS requirements

Course Schedule and Assignments

Date	Topic	Reading Due
Monday morning September 25	What is Theology and Why does it Matter?	“Doctrinal Convictions and Persuasions” Scholes [13pp, online] CC intro, pp. xi-xv [5pp]
	Convictions, Persuasions and Opinions	
Monday afternoon September 25	God Speaks: Revelation, Inspiration and Canon	“The Bibliographical Test” [read p. 1, 11-12, 3pp, online] RFG c7 [20pp] ST c4 [17pp]
	Authority and Truthfulness of God’s Word	
Tuesday morning September 26	What is God Like?	RFG c2 [17pp] RFG c5 [16pp] CC c3 [22pp]
	The Holy Trinity	
Tuesday afternoon September 26	Creation: God Made All Things	RFG c6 [13pp] ST c15, pp. 262-273 only [12pp] CC c5 [24pp] Watch “Dear Church: I’m Gay” (20 min)
	What does it mean to be Human? Finite Image-Bearers	
Wednesday morning September 27	What does it mean to be Human? Fallen Image-Bearers	RFG c10 [16pp] CC c8 [28pp] Watch “Biblical Theology of Race” by Jemar Tisby (15 min) “Leading in a Complex Moral Environment” [13pp, in the lecture notes] – You will also find this document posted on the staff web at staffweb.cru.org . Type the title into the search window.
	Who is Jesus Christ?	
Wednesday afternoon September 27	What did Jesus do to save us?	RFG c12 [15pp] CC c2 [34pp]
	Who is the Holy Spirit?	

Course Schedule and Assignments (continued)

Date	Topic	Reading Due
Thursday morning September 28	Baptism and Filling with the Holy Spirit	ST c39 [21pp] RFG c11 [12pp] CC c7 [28pp]
	Salvation: Election	
Thursday afternoon September 28	Salvation: Calling, Regeneration, Conversion	"Is Water Baptism Necessary for Salvation?" [11pp, online] ST c36 [14pp]
	Salvation: Justification and the Gospel	
Friday morning September 29	Salvation: Assurance, Growth, Preservation	ST c45 [14pp] ST c48 [16pp] "Being an Arm of the Church" Murray [17pp, online]
	What is the Church?	
Friday afternoon September 29	How does Cru relate to the Church?	"Like Families and Soccer Teams" [9pp, online] "Missionary Rights and Responsibilities" [4pp, pp. 182-86 lecture notes] "Guidelines on Alcohol Use" [3pp, pp. 187-89, lecture notes] ST c41 [17pp]
	How Will God's Story End?	
		TOTAL READING = 434pp

Reading Report

Name _____

Of the required reading, how many pages did you complete? _____ (You will find the number of pages for each chapter on the previous page.)

To determine the percentage of reading you completed, divide the number of pages you completed by the total number of required pages and convert to a percentage

- Divide the number of pages you completed by 434
- Example: Joe staff completed 300 pages of required reading. $300 \div 434 = 0.691 \times 100 = 69.1\%$.

I completed _____% of the required reading.

NOTE: *You will submit your reading report electronically. You will be given instructions in class.*