

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 help 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]

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]

David Platt, *Counter Culture: Following Christ in an Anti-Christian Age* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 2015). ISBN-13: 978-1414373294. "Theology" includes not only what we believe but also how we live (ethics). Every doctrine we will discuss in this class has implications for how we live. Platt relates several 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]

Recommended Texts

Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011). This book was written as a companion to Grudem's systematic theology. It covers all the same topics and can help you understand how Christians throughout the history of the church have thought about these doctrines. It's a great addition to your library.

Learning Tasks

1. **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 440 pages). **Given the compressed nature of this course, it will help if you can complete most the reading prior to the first class 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: Wednesday, Jan. 25**
2. **Attributes Project:** The purpose of the "Attributes Project" is to help you grow in your ability to read Scripture theologically. You will study a specific attribute of God in Scripture. You will find detailed instructions in a worksheet which will be posted online. **DUE: Tuesday, January 17 at the beginning of class.**

3. **Final Exam, Wednesday, Jan. 25, 9:00-11:00am.** The final exam will be objective (true/false, multiple choice and matching). You will have two hours to complete it. The purpose of the exam is to reinforce key points you have learned about the basics of Christian doctrine as well as the theological identity of Cru. The exam will focus *exclusively* on the material covered in the lectures and the Cru Statement of Faith. (You will NOT be tested on any content from CC, RFG or ST.) You do not need to memorize the wording of the Cru SOF but you do need to be familiar with the positions that Cru takes on key theological issues (which we have discussed in class). The best thing you can do to prepare for the exam is to review the lecture notes. For each session, I would recommend that you identify (1) key points that were made and (2) important theological terms. Here are some terms you will want to be familiar with:

Convictions	Humiliation of Christ
Persuasions	Exaltation of Christ
Opinions	Offices of Christ
Ethics	Atonement
General revelation	Representations of the Holy Spirit
Special revelation	Baptism with the Holy Spirit
Inspiration	Filling of the Holy Spirit
Dictation theory	Second blessing
Verbal plenary inspiration	Election
Canon	Universal gospel call
Apocrypha	Effective calling
Inerrancy	Prevenient grace
Infallibility	Regeneration
Attributes of God discussed in class	Conversion
Trinitarian terms (person, nature, essence)	Justification
Modalism	Imputed righteousness
Tritheism	Assurance
Arianism	Adoption
Atheistic evolution	Sanctification
Theistic evolution	Preservation
Progressive creationism	Death
Young earth creationism	Glorification
Image of God	Arminian
Imputation	Local church
Inherited guilt	Universal church
Inherited corruption	Visible church
Pelagianism	Invisible church
Augustinianism	Kingdom of God
Semi-pelagianism	Voluntary societies
Wesleyanism	Eschatology
Christological terms	Return of Christ
Incarnation	Millennium
Christological heresies	

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

Note: Class will meet on Saturday, January 14 but not Monday, January 16.

Date	Topic	Reading Due
Wednesday January 11	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	
Thursday January 12	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	
Friday January 13	What is God Like?	RFG c2 [17pp] RFG c5 [16pp] CC c3 [22pp]
	The Holy Trinity	
Saturday January 14	Creation: God Made All Things	RFG c6 [13pp] ST c15, pp. 262-273 only [12pp] CC c5 [24pp]
	What does it mean to be Human? Finite Image-Bearers	
Monday January 16	MLK Day: NO CLASS Today we honor the memory of Martin Luther King, Jr. White evangelical Christians in the 1960s largely opposed or ignored the Civil Rights Movement. I’d like you read MLK’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” On the IBS website I’ve posted a five minute video providing some context as well as a PDF file containing both a letter from Birmingham clergy to MLK calling his nonviolent resistance “unwise” and “untimely” as well as King’s response “A Letter from a Birmingham Jail” [8pp]	
Tuesday January 17	What does it mean to be Human? Fallen Image-Bearers	RFG c10 [16pp] CC c8 [28pp] “Leading in a Complex Moral Environment” [15pp, pp. xxx 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?	

Course Schedule and Assignments (continued)

Date	Topic	Reading Due
Wednesday January 18	What did Jesus do to save us?	RFG c12 [15pp] CC c2 [34pp]
	Who is the Holy Spirit?	
Thursday January 19	Baptism and Filling with the Holy Spirit	ST c39 [21pp] RFG c11 [12pp] CC c7 [28pp]
	Salvation: Election	
Friday January 20	Salvation: Calling, Regeneration, Conversion	“Is Water Baptism Necessary for Salvation?” [11pp, online] ST c36 [14pp]
	Salvation: Justification and the Gospel	
Monday January 23	Salvation: Assurance, Growth, Preservation	ST c45 [14pp] ST c48 [16pp] “Being an Arm of the Church” Murray [17pp, online]
	What is the Church?	
Tuesday January 24	How does Cru relate to the Church?	“Like Families and Soccer Teams” Straughn [9pp, online] “Missionary Rights and Responsibilities” [4pp, pp. xxx lecture notes] “Guidelines on Alcohol Use” [3pp, pp. xxx, lecture notes] ST c41 [17pp]
	How Will God’s Story End?	
Wednesday January 25	Final Exam 9:00-11:00am	Reading Report Due TOTAL READING = 441pp

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 441
- Example: Joe staff completed 300 pages of required reading. $300 \div 441 = 0.68 \times 100 = 68\%$.

I completed _____% of the required reading.

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