

God, Bible, Holy Spirit

June 21 to July 2, 2021 at 2:00 to 4:30pm EDT

Professor:

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Organizational Purpose

The Institute of Biblical Studies exists in order 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 addresses three core areas of Christian doctrine that are foundational to our life and mission.

Course Description (2 IBS credits – Theology and Apologetics).

In his classic book *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A. W. Tozer explains, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. . . . For this reason, the gravest question before the Church is always God himself, and the portentous fact about any man is not what he may at a given time say or do but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like.” This course offers an opportunity to broaden and deepen your understanding of the God whom we love and worship.

To this end, we will explore Christian teaching regarding the nature and attributes of God, the persons of the Trinity, the inspiration and authority of Scripture, and the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

Questions to be addressed include (beside those raised in class):

- ★ Who is God? Is God male? Is God White? What does it mean that God is Father?
- ★ How does God relate within the Trinity? Is God the Father the Boss of the Son and Spirit?
- ★ If God is all-powerful, does that mean God can create a rock so heavy that He can't pick it up?
- ★ Is God in process learning and growing with us? Is that why there is evil in the world?
- ★ What is theology? What does my behavior reveal about my theology? What corrections do I need to make to my theology? How can I teach others to think theologically?
- ★ How can we evangelize to help people meet eternal God and not simply encounter institutionalized Christianity or mistake the Bible as being just another religious book?

Course Outcomes

Successful students will be able to:

Cognitive/Intellectual (knowledge and thinking skills)

1. Know Who God is on God's terms.
2. Begin to think theologically in accordance with a theological method that honors the authority of Scripture.
3. Articulate an orthodox understanding of the doctrine of the God, the Trinity, and the Holy Spirit.

4. Explain why it is reasonable and wise to submit to the authority of Scripture.
5. Interact with a variety of theological viewpoints, validating differences and doctrinal conflicts which arise among Christians, noting that culture and personal demographics initially shape people's view of God.
6. Promote the Cru Statement of Faith while growing in knowledge of the mysteries of the faith.

Affective/Spiritual (attitudes, motivation, character)

1. Know, love and worship God with greater understanding and heartfelt appreciation of Who God is.
2. Ground their faith with confidence in the eternal truth of Scripture as the inspired, authoritative, reliable, sufficient, unmatched Word of God.
3. Embody the Christian faith publicly by bearing witness of the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord, and by doing good deeds, and by regularly repenting with faith in the vastness of God's grace.
4. Demonstrate their faith by Grow as a disciple of Jesus who joyfully submits to the authority of God's Word and who builds movements of disciples who "truly follow Jesus" by embracing his Word in their lives.

Missional/Relational (personal and ministry skills)

1. Teach foundational doctrines from Scripture and relate them to evangelism, discipleship, movement-launching, ethics, and cross-cultural mission. (Matthew 28:18-20; II Tim 2:24)
2. Partner in ministry with fellow believers who share the same orthodox view of Christianity, but who also may hold different convictions and opinions than you do about various theological matters that are not central to CRU's Statement of Faith. (Philippians 2:1-4)
3. Translate orthodoxy (right doctrine) into orthopraxy (right practice).

CAUTION:

Certain aspects of the assigned and suggested readings do not accord with the theology of Cru; the purpose of this is to help Cru staff obey Jesus' command: "Be wise as serpents, innocent as doves," and to stretch your thinking so that you understand why genuine Christ followers honestly disagree on certain matters of faith that are not central to the doctrine of salvation.

Rest assured, Dr. Sumner agrees 100% with the theology of Cru.

Main Texts

- ❖ The Bible. (Dr. Sumner uses the NASB.)
- ❖ Erickson, Millard. Ed. *Readings in Christian Theology: The Living God: Vol 1. 7th Ed.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987.
- ❖ Pinnock, Clark. *Flame Of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit.* Downers Grove: IVP, 1999.

Required Handouts and Video (posted online)

- ❖ Philip Carey's. "The Logic of Trinitarian Doctrine" Access [here](#).
- ❖ Kevin Giles' video presentation on the Trinity presented at ETS November 2016: Access [here](#).

- ❖ Billy Graham's *Christianity Today* article, "Biblical Authority in Evangelism" (October 1956)
- ❖ Excerpt from Basil Mitchell's *How To Play Theological Ping-Pong: And other Essays on Faith and Reason*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1991.
- ❖ Jurgen Moltmann's *Theology of Hope*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993. pp. 16-17.
- ❖ Christopher Mwoleka's "Trinity and Community," *African Ecclesial Review* 17 (Jul 1975): 203-206.

Learning Tasks

1. **Pre-reading:** Please read all of Part Two in Erickson and at least half of Pinnock before the first day of class, and do so very carefully with your antennae up, knowing that some of what is said may be more convincing than true. Read "The Authors" section in Erickson to familiarize yourself with whom you're listening to, and read Pinnock to get a grasp on the breadth of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

I will say more in class, but I believe there will continue to be an increasing global shift of emphasis *away* from God the Son *toward* God the Spirit. Your reading should be done with discernment and with a sincere attempt to learn all you can. Given the compressed nature of this course, it is imperative that you complete the appropriate reading prior to the class session in which we will discuss (and possibly comb through the material) together. Theology is heady, hard, challenging, and demanding, but it is super fun. It will positively change your life if you hang in there, humble yourself to be teachable, and allow your mind to expand and become stronger, so you can love the Lord more robustly and thereby grow to be able love people. (I John)

2. **Reading:** I will help you read the Erickson volume slowly and carefully (it is hugely helpful) and all the Required Handouts (that save you a ton of time because they say so much in so few words). We will walk through some of the hard stuff line by line in class, and you will see things beyond what you probably think you're able to see with regard to reading. I understand you're a missionary, not an academic. We're not doing academic gymnastics in this course; everything we're doing is going to hit the ground of practical reality. Do the reading, and don't give up if you don't understand it effortlessly. Instead, put more effort into it and allow yourself to grow. If you are smart enough to understand this syllabus, you will do fine in class if you apply yourself.
3. **Participate in Class Discussion:** This class includes lecture, group reading, and deep discussion. Bring water to class. Stay hydrated. Go easy on your intake of sugar; it messes with your brain, dulls your thinking, and tends to make most people less spiritually motivated.
4. **Group Exam:** Instead of taking the test all by yourself, you will get to take it as a group, talking out the questions, thinking theologically together. The test will require you to apply what you have learned. Some of you might learn more from this group exam than from anything else in the course. Be prepared to study. I encourage you to study together between class sessions.
5. **Reintroducing God paper:** I want you to write a paper, introducing God to yourself. Explain to yourself what you have learned (or been reminded of) from all the reading in this course, synthesizing the sources, footnoting your references, being sure to describe the Holy Spirit. Display your ability to think theologically about God. Tell yourself the truth you need to hear, correcting your wrong thinking and forgetfulness about God, grappling with your questions, being honest. I will assume you know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; this is not a paper about the God incarnate, but rather about God unseen. The body of your paper should be 10 pages. (That means not counting your Cover Page or Bibliography). Document your claims.

Double-space. Either 11 or 12 pt. Roboto or Garamond font. Footnotes in Turabian style.

Papers should include a title page, introduction, body (comprised of sections and subsections you create), conclusion, biblio- and webliography. Make sure your paper is well-structured. Good structure yields good clarity.

Note: Conclusions are short and boring. Introduce nothing new in your conclusion. Instead, in about five to eight lines, end your paper by summarizing what all you said in it before.

In one sense, your paper is a synthesis of the class material meant to help you internalize the truth of all we learned about God. At a deeper level, it is a production of your critical thinking. Therefore, you must include as an element of your paper one theological corrective to your own theology of God connected to a chronic sin you've had that you are now repenting of in light of the greater truth of Who God is. For example, you may be harboring a seed of bitterness or doubt or anxiety due to your bad theology. Identify what the lie is about God that has been holding you in bondage, and say what the truth is now setting you free. Example: You may realize you have mistaken God for your father on earth in a particular way; you may have thought God was Buddha, a mere philosophy. The point is NOT for you merely to guess as to the quality of your head knowledge about God. Rather, I'm asking you to find a real sin you often commit, start with that sin, and trace that sin back to your embedded theology where your wrong theology is. Superimpose right theology over your wrong theology, synthesizing it to what all was taught in class (counting the reading) by reintroducing yourself rightly to real God.

I will grade you according to the logic of your reasoning, clarity, the sequencing of your structure. I will also consider the depth of your discipleship and theological reflection.

Grace period: If you can get your paper in by noon, the day after the due date, you will not be penalized if you attended the full class the night before.

Justice begins: At 12:01 p.m., 10% of your grade will be removed. At 1:01 p.m. another 10% will be deducted, and so forth.

Your bibliographical entries and footnotes should look like this:

Biblio:

Newbegin, Lesslie. Foolishness to the Greeks. Grand Rapid, MI: Eerdmans, 1984.

_____. The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989.

Footnotes (Use "Ibid." when necessary.)

Lesslie, Newbegin, Foolishness to the Greeks (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), p. 72.

Ibid., p. 88.

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. The goal is not so much to make an A in class as it is to make an A in following Christ. The key is how much you learn, and sometimes the most long-lasting learning comes *after* having been corrected on an assignment or test.

Assignment: All assignments are due at 11:59 pm EST Mon July 5.	Grade (Note: A grade of C- or better is required to apply this course toward your IBS requirements.)
Reading Report	35%
Group Exam during class	25%
Introducing God paper	30%
Participation	10% (Minus 1 point for any day you miss class.)

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

Suggested Additional Reading:

Allison, Gregg R. *50 Core Truths of the Christian Life: A Guide to Understanding and Teaching Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018. Also available in Kindle format.

Bloesch, Donald. *God the Almighty: Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Love*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1995.

Ellis, Carl. "[Biblical Righteousness Is a Four-Paned Window](#)" The Gospel Coalition (August 22, 2018)

Evans, James H. Jr., *We Have Been Believers: An African American Systematic Theology*, 2d ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012.

González, Justo L. *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990).

Johnson, Keith E. "Imitatio Trinitatis: How Should We Imitate the Trinity?" *Westminster Theological Journal* 75 (2013): 317-34.

McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction. 5th Ed.* West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

Mwoleka, Christopher. "Trinity and Community," *African Ecclesial Review* 17 (Jul 1975): 203-206.

Oden, Thomas. *Systematic Theology Volume 1*. NY: Harper, 1994.

Papal Encyclical: *Fides et Ratio* (Download [here](#) from the internet.)

Reeves, Michael. *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2012. Also available in Kindle format.

Sawyer, James M. *The Survivor's Guide to Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.

Sumner, Sarah. *Men and Women in the Church*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2003.

Tennent, Timothy C. *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010.

_____, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church Is Influencing the Way We Think about and Discuss Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007. Also available in Kindle format.

Tozer, A.W. *The Knowledge of the Holy*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009.

Woodbridge, John & McComiskey Eds. *Doing Theology in Today's World*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991.

Students with Learning Issues

If you have a learning issue that affects your participation in the class, please notify the TA, so we can help you as you engage with the learning tasks in the course.

Use of Laptops and Tablets in Class

Cru has a strong commitment to development, including your development. We want to create the best learning environment we can for you in this class. As a result, we ask you to steward your use of your technology (laptops, iPads or tablets) in class. There are three reasons for this:

First, if you have your laptop or tablet open, it's almost impossible not to check email, surf the web or engage social media. That's distracting not only to you but also to other learners around you.

Second, a growing body of research from cognitive science and neuroscience demonstrates that "multitasking" impairs learning. We not only remember less but have a hard time transferring that learning to new contexts.

Third, handwritten notes help you better metabolize what you are learning. You might say, "But I can type way faster than I can write." While it may be true that most people can type faster than they can write, this isn't necessarily an asset in learning. A study published June 2014 showed that students who take handwritten notes have a higher level of comprehension than those who type. It appears that when you take notes on your laptop, you basically become a stenographer-- rather than a learner who has to synthesize the material. We do provide some structured notes so you can listen and write more strategically without feeling overwhelmed to write everything down. Dr. Sumner uses the white board which helps to ease you from having to decide what to write down. You might want to take screenshots of the white board.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Pre-Reading Due	Pgs
Monday June 21	Review the syllabus.	Excerpt from Basil Mitchell's <i>How To Play Theological Ping-Pong: And other Essays on Faith and Reason</i> . Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1991. Don't worry if it seems over your head. I am confident you will "get it" if you give me a chance to teach you. God gave some as teachers because He knows we all need to be taught. (Ephesians 4:11)	9
	If there is a God . . . What is a deist? A theist? A panentheist? What is theology? What does it mean to think theologically?	Sumner: whiteboard	-
Tuesday June 22	Let's think theologically about _____.	Sumner: whiteboard	--
	What is the nature of revelation?	Erickson: Chapters 9-14	74
	What is God like? How do we know?	The Bible Moltmann: 16-17	2
Wednesday June 23	What is God like? Can we be like Him?	Erickson: 323-339	16
	Is God male? Is God White?	Sumner: whiteboard	-
Thursday June 24	Is God triune?	Carey article	5
	What are the theological implications of the doctrine of the Trinity for us, as God's people, in community?	Christopher Mwoleka's "Trinity and Community," <i>African Ecclesial Review</i> 17 (Jul 1975): 203-206.	3
Friday June 25	Is God triune?	Erickson: 417-439	22
	What does Saint Augustine say in his <i>De Trinitate</i> ?	Erickson: 417-439	-
Monday	Who is the Holy Spirit?	Pinnock's <i>Flame of Love</i>	270

June 28	What does the Holy Spirit do?	Sumner: whiteboard	-
	What is open theism?	Sumner: whiteboard	-
Tuesday June 29	Who is the Holy Spirit?	Pinnock's <i>Flame of Love</i>	-
	What does the Holy Spirit do?	Sumner: whiteboard	-
	Is God open to the future? Or is every detail of the future already planned? Does God predestine all of our decisions? Or are people free? How free are we to make disciples?	Erickson: 393-399	6
Wednesday June 30	Is Scripture inspired by the Holy Spirit?	Erickson: 259-311	52
Thursday, July 1	Is everything the Bible says about God true? Even that He commanded the Israelites to slaughter the Canaanites? Is genocide a biblical way for Christians to resolve the worst conflicts?	Excerpt from Peter Enns' <i>The Bible Tells Me So</i>	3
	How can Christians keep from drifting away from orthodoxy?	Billy Graham article	5
Friday July 2	Group Exam	90 minutes	-
	Review Group Exam	1 hour	-
Total Reading			464