

Intro to Christian Theology

Keith E. Johnson, Ph.D.

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 Christians 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, inerrant, 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. Become persuaded that Christian theology is not just about right beliefs (orthodoxy) but also right living (orthopraxy). You will be invited to explore the ethical implications of every doctrine we study.
5. Grow in your capacity to teach these foundational doctrines from Scripture and relate them to personal growth, evangelism, discipleship, movement-launching, cross-cultural mission.
6. Become more familiar with major viewpoints, differences, and conflicts which exist among Christians regarding key doctrines.
7. Grow in your awareness of the ways in which culture shapes our theologies as well as the importance of listening to believers in ethnic and cultural contexts different from our own.
8. 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).
9. Develop a deeper understanding of and greater confidence in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Required Texts

Beth Felker Jones, *Practicing Christian Doctrine: An Introduction to Thinking and Living Theologically* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014). ISBN-13: 978-0801049330. Beth Jones is associate professor of theology at Wheaton College. Her book will introduce the key doctrines we'll be discussing in the class. [PCD]

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 merely what we believe but also how we live (ethics). Every doctrine we are exploring in this class has ethical implications. David Platt (President of the International Mission Board for the Southern Baptist Convention) relates the gospel to several ethical issues. [CC]

Benjamin C. Shin and Sheryl Takagi Silzer, *Tapestry of Grace: Untangling the Cultural Complexities in Asian American Life and Ministry* (Eugene, O.R.: Wipf & Stock, 2016). ISBN-13: 978-1498232784. This book connects several important theological topics we are discussing to Asian American life and ministry. Benjamin Shin and Cheryl Silzer teach at Biola University. [TOG]

Additional Readings (Posted Online)

Gregg R Allison, *50 Core Truths of the Christian Life: A Guide to Understanding and Teaching Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), chapter 49.

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

Jayson Georges, "Talking about Faith in Non-Western Contexts," *Modern Reformation* 27 (July 2017).

Justo L. González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), chapter 1.

Alan Scholes, "Doctrinal Convictions and Persuasions," in *Principles of Leadership: What We Can Learn from the Life and Ministry of Bill Bright* (Orlando: New Life, 2001), chapter 24.

Byron Straughn, "Like Families and Soccer Teams: Church and Parachurch," *9Marks Journal* (March-April 2011).

You will also read several internal Cru documents outlining Cru's approach to several issues.

Learning Tasks

1. **Reading:** Given the compressed nature of this course, it is important that 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.” 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, Feb 8.**
2. **Attributes Project:** The purpose of the “Attributes Project” is to help you grow in your ability to read (and apply) 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: Friday, Feb 8 before class**
3. **Final Exam, Saturday, Feb 9, 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 what 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 the readings.) While you do not need to memorize the wording of the Cru SOF, you need to be familiar with the positions that Cru takes on key theological issues (which we discussed in class). The best thing you can do to prepare for the exam is to review the lecture notes. For each session, make sure you are familiar with (1) key points that were made and (2) important theological terms. Here are some key terms:

Convictions
Persuasions
Opinions
Ethics
Side A/Side B of theology
4 panes of the “window of righteousness”
General revelation
Special revelation
Inspiration
Dictation theory
Verbal plenary inspiration
Canon
Apocrypha
Inerrancy
Infallibility
Attributes of God discussed in class
Incommunicable attributes
Communicable attributes
Trinitarian terms (person, nature, essence)
Modalism
Tritheism

Arianism
Atheistic evolution
Theistic evolution
Progressive creationism
Young earth creationism
Image of God
Ethnicity
Race/racism
Imputation
Inherited guilt
Inherited corruption
Christological terms
Incarnation
Christological heresies
Humiliation of Christ
Exaltation of Christ
Offices of Christ
Atonement
Representations of the Holy Spirit
Baptism with the Holy Spirit
Filling of the Holy Spirit
Second blessing

Election
Universal gospel call
Effective calling
Prevenient grace
Regeneration
Conversion
Justification
Imputed righteousness
Assurance
Adoption
Sanctification
Preservation
Arminian
Local church
Universal church
Visible church
Invisible church
Kingdom of God
Voluntary societies
Complementarian
Egalitarian
Eschatology
Return of Christ
Millennium

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	82-83	B-	65-71	D
92-93	A-	80-81	C+	60-65	F
90-91	B+	74-79	C		
84-89	B	72-73	C-		

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

Students with Learning Issues

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

Use of Laptops and Tablets in Lecture

One of the things I love about working with Cru is our strong commitment to development. We want to create the best learning environment we can for you in this class. As a result, we’re going to ask you not to bring laptops, iPads or tablets to 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 hand-written 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 a learner who has to synthesize the material. We’re providing structured notes so you can listen and write more strategically without feeling overwhelmed to write everything down. If this is a problem for you, please come talk with me.

Course Schedule and Assignments

Note: This class will meet on both Saturdays, but Sunday and Monday will be off each week.

Date	Topic	Reading Due
Monday Morning Feb 4	What is Theology and Why does it Matter?	González, <i>Mañana</i> , 21-30 [10pp online] “Doctrinal Convictions and Persuasions,” [13pp, online]
	Convictions, Persuasions and Opinions	“Ten Things You Should Know about Systematic Theology” Swain [1p, online] PCD intro, [9pp] TOG Intro [4pp]
Monday Afternoon Feb 4	God Speaks: Revelation, Inspiration and Canon	PCD c2 [24pp] CC c9 [20pp]
	Authority and Truthfulness of God’s Word	
Tuesday Morning Feb 5	What is God Like?	PCD c3, c4 [42pp] TOG c11 [5pp] TOG c12 [6pp]
	Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit	
Tuesday Afternoon Feb 5	Creation: God Made All Things	PCD c5 [20pp] TOG c6 [14pp] TOG c7 [18pp]
	Creation: Made in the Image of God	
Wednesday Morning Feb 6	The Fall: Corruption of Humanity	PCD c6 [24pp] TOG c2 [16pp] “Leading in a Complex Moral Environment” [13pp] “Navigating Transgender Questions” [17pp] Watch “Dear Church: I’m Gay” (20 min)
	Who is Jesus Christ?	

Course Schedule and Assignments

Date	Topic	Reading Due
Wednesday Afternoon Feb 6	What did Jesus do to save us?	PCD c7 [25pp] Ellis "Biblical Righteousness" [2pp, online] CC c5 [24pp]
	Who is the Holy Spirit?	
Thursday Morning Feb 7	Baptism and Filling with the Holy Spirit	PCD c8 [25pp] TOG c3 [14pp]
	Election: God Chose Us	
Thursday Afternoon Feb 7	Salvation: Calling, Regeneration, Conversion	"Talking about Faith in Non-Western Contexts" Georges [2pp, online] CC c2 [34pp]
	Salvation: Justification and the Gospel	
Friday Afternoon Feb 8	Salvation: Assurance, Growth, Preservation	TOG c1 [24pp] TOG c4 [12pp] "Understanding the Complementarian/Egalitarian Debate" [3pp, lecture notes] "Men and Women in Ministry Together" [4pp, lecture notes]
	What is the Church?	
Friday Afternoon Feb 8	How does Cru relate to the Church?	PCD c10 [22pp] "Like Families and Soccer Teams" Straughn [9pp, online] "Missionary Rights and Responsibilities" [4pp, lecture notes] "Guidelines on Alcohol Use" [3pp, lecture notes] Allison, "Eternal Punishment" [8pp online] Attributes Project Due***
	How Will God's Story End?	
Saturday Morning Feb 9	Final Exam 9:00-11:00am	Reading Report Due TOTAL READING = 471pp