

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 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. Dr. Jones is associate professor of theology at Wheaton College. This 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]

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.

Thabiti Anyabwile, "An Apology to Beth Moore and My Sisters" (May 3, 2018).

Charles Octavius Boothe, *Plain Theology for Plain People* (Bellingham, W.A.: Lexham, 2017), intro and chapter 5.

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

Carl Ellis, Jr., "Preaching the Gospel Amidst Racism: Remembering Billy Graham," *Christianity Today* online (February 24, 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), chapters 1 and 8.

Keith E. Johnson, "Is Water Baptism Necessary for Salvation?" (unpublished)

Beth Moore, "A Letter to My Brothers" (May 3rd, 2018).

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 you complete the majority of the reading prior to the first session. Every year on the course evaluation, staff write “I wish I had completed all the reading before I came to class.” As you read, you may find it helpful take notes on what you are reading. **DUE: Tuesday, July 2**
2. **Attributes of God Project:** This assignment is designed to help you grow in your ability to read Scripture theologically by exploring the attributes of God in Ephesians. You will find instructions posted in a worksheet online. **DUE: Monday, June 24 before class**
3. **Theological Journal:** Throughout the class, you will keep an electronic journal where you record what you are learning and experiencing. After each class, you will write a short journal entry (100-150 words) reflecting on how you felt about something you read, heard or discovered. It could be something that surprised you, something you found helpful or something that upset you. Consider the following questions: What was the most important thing you heard or read in today’s session? Why was it important? Was there anything you found challenging in today class or readings? Why? Was there anything that made you feel uncomfortable or with which you disagreed? What is one way your future life and ministry might be impacted by what was discussed today? **Due: Monday, July 1 at 5:00pm**
4. **Final Exam (see schedule for dates):** 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 (see the following page).

Important Terms for Final Exam

Convictions	Tritheism	Second blessing
Persuasions	Arianism	Election
Opinions	Atheistic evolution	Universal gospel call
Ethics	Theistic evolution	Effective calling
Side A/Side B	Progressive	Prevenient grace
4 panes of the	creationism	Regeneration
“window of	Young earth	Conversion
righteousness”	creationism	Justification
General revelation	Image of God	Imputed
Special revelation	Ethnicity	righteousness
Inspiration	Race/racism	Assurance
Dictation theory	Imputation	Adoption
Verbal plenary	Inherited guilt	Sanctification
inspiration	Inherited corruption	Preservation
Canon	Christological terms	Arminian
Apocrypha	Incarnation	Local church
Inerrancy	Christological heresies	Universal church
Infallibility	Humiliation of Christ	Visible church
Attributes of God	Exaltation of Christ	Invisible church
Incommunicable	Offices of Christ	Kingdom of God
attributes	Atonement	Voluntary societies
Communicable	Representations of	Complementarian
attributes	the Holy Spirit	Egalitarian
Trinitarian terms	Baptism with the	Eschatology
(person, nature,	Holy Spirit	Return of Christ
essence)	Filling of the Holy	Millennium
Modalism	Spirit	

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%
Theological Journal	10%
Final Exam	<u>40%</u>
Total	100%

Grading Scale

94-100	A	82-83	B-	65-71	D
92-93	A-	80-81	C+	0-65	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 or the lead TA 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. (Note: In the Bible Study Methods course, you will need your laptop or tablet in some of the coaching sessions.)

Course Schedule and Assignments

Given the compressed nature of this course, it is important that you complete the majority the reading (especially Jones and Platt) prior to the first session. Readings are “due” the day after they are assigned (i.e., readings for June 18 should be completed by June 19).

Date	Topic	Reading
Tuesday June 18	Introduction to the Practice of Theology	González, <i>Mañana</i> , 21-30 [10pp online]
	Convictions, Persuasions and Opinions	“Doctrinal Convictions and Persuasions,” [13pp, online] “Ten Things You Should Know about Systematic Theology” Swain [1p, online] PCD intro, [9pp]
Wednesday June 19	God Speaks: Revelation, Inspiration and Canon	PCD c2 [24pp] CC c9 [20pp]
	Authority and Truthfulness of God’s Word	(Review instructions for Attributes Project)
Thursday June 20	What is God Like?	PCD c3, c4 [42pp]
	Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit	(Begin work on Attributes Project)
Friday June 21	Creation: God Made All Things	PCD c5 [20pp] Watch “Biblical Theology of Race” by Jemar Tisby (15 min)
	Creation: Made in the Image of God	González, <i>Mañana</i> , 117-23 [7pp online] “A Letter to My Brothers” [2pp online] “An Apology to Beth Moore and My Sisters” [2pp online] “Cru’s Commitment to Oneness and Diversity” [1p online] “Cru/Family Life Statement on Marriage and Family” [2pp]
Friday June 21	“Understanding Cru’s Heart for Racial Diversity and Social Justice” Guests: Gwen and Darryl Smith Special Seminar over Lunch 12:45-2:00pm	

Course Schedule and Assignments

Date	Topic	Reading Due
Monday June 24	The Fall: Corruption of Humanity	Attributes Project Due*** PCD c6 [24pp] “Leading in a Complx Moral Environment” [13pp] “Navigating Transgender Questions” [15pp] Watch “Dear Church: I’m Gay” (20 min)
	Who is Jesus Christ?	
Monday June 24	“LGBT+ Questions and Cru” Guest: Rachel Gilson Special Seminar over Lunch 12:45-2:00:pm	
Tuesday June 25	What did Jesus do to save us?	PCD c7 [25pp] Ellis “Biblical Righteousness” [2pp, online] CC c5 [24pp]
	Who is the Holy Spirit?	
Wednesday June 26	Baptism and Filling with the Holy Spirit	PCD c8 [25pp] Ellis, “Preaching the Gospel Amidst Racism: Remembering Billy Graham” [2pp, online] CC c2 [34pp]
	Election: God Chose Us	
Thursday June 27	Salvation: Calling, Regeneration, Conversion	“Gifts Flowing from the Grace of God,” <i>Plain Theology for Plain People</i> , Boothe [20pp, online] “Is Water Baptism Necessary for Salvation?” Johnson [11pp, online] “Talking about Faith in Non-Western Contexts” Georges [2pp, online]
	Salvation: Justification and the Gospel	
Friday June 28	Salvation: Assurance, Growth, Preservation	PCD c9 [20pp] CC c3 [22pp] “Understanding the Complementarian/Egalitarian Debate” [3pp, lecture notes] “Men and Women in Ministry Together” [4pp, lecture notes]
	What is the Church?	

Course Schedule and Assignments

Date	Topic	Reading Due
Monday July 1	How does Cru relate to the Church?	“Like Families and Soccer Teams” Straughn [9pp, online] “Missionary Rights and Responsibilities” [4pp, lecture notes] “Guidelines on Alcohol Use” [3pp, lecture notes] PCD c10 and Benediction [24pp] Allison, “Eternal Punishment” [8pp online]
	How Will God’s Story End?	
Tuesday July 2	Early Final Exam (For those attending IBS only) 9:00-11:00am	Reading Report Due (everyone)
Wednesday July 3	Final Exam (For those attending IBS + NSO) 9:00-11:00am	

TOTAL READING = 447 pages

Submitting your Reading Report

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. Example: Joe staff completed 300 pages of required reading. $300 \div 447 = 0.67 \times 100 = 67\%$. You will submit your reading report electronically.