

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 (Pastor of McLean Bible Church) 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)

Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail."

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).

Scott Swain, "Ten Things You Should Know about Systematic Theology" (Oct. 08, 2017).

You will also read several internal Cru documents outlining Cru's approach to several issues. These will be printed in your class notes.

Learning Tasks

1. **Reading:** Given the compressed nature of this course, it will help if you can complete most the reading prior to the first session. Otherwise will be reading almost 50pp per night on top of work for your BSM course. Every year on the course evaluation, staff write "I wish I had completed the reading before I came to class." As you read, you may find it helpful take notes on what you are reading. You will submit your reading report in Canvas. **DUE: Wednesday, January 29 by 5:00p.m.**
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 the worksheet posted online. **DUE: Tuesday, January 21 by 8:00a.m.**
3. **Theological Journal:** Throughout the class, you will keep an electronic journal where you record what you are learning and experiencing. After each two-hour class block, 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: Tuesday, January 28 by midnight.**
4. **Final Exam:** 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). **Wednesday, January 29, 8:30-10:30a.m.**

Important Terms for Final Exam

| | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Convictions | Incarnation |
| Persuasions | Christological heresies |
| Opinions | Humiliation of Christ |
| Ethics | Exaltation of Christ |
| Side A/Side B | Offices of Christ |
| 4 panes of the “window of righteousness” | 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 |
| Attributes of God | Regeneration |
| Incommunicable attributes | Conversion |
| Communicable attributes | Justification |
| Trinitarian terms (person, nature, essence) | Imputed righteousness |
| Modalism | Assurance |
| Tritheism | Adoption |
| Arianism | Sanctification |
| Atheistic evolution | Preservation |
| Theistic evolution | Arminian |
| Progressive creationism | Local church |
| Young earth creationism | Universal church |
| Image of God | Visible church |
| Ethnicity | Invisible church |
| Social construct of race | Kingdom of God |
| Imputation | Voluntary societies |
| Inherited guilt | Complementarian |
| Inherited corruption | Egalitarian |
| Christological terms | 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% |
| 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 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.)

Week 1: Course Schedule and Assignments

| Date | Topic | Reading Due |
|---------------------|--|--|
| Wednesday Jan 15 | Introduction to the Practice of Theology | González, <i>Mañana</i> , 21-30 [10pp online] “Doctrinal Convictions and Persuasions,” [13pp, online] “Ten Things You Should Know about Systematic Theology” Swain [1p, online] PCD intro, [9pp] |
| | Convictions, Persuasions and Opinions | |
| Thursday Jan 16 | God Speaks: Revelation, Inspiration and Canon | PCD c2 [24pp] CC c9 [20pp] (Review instructions for Attributes Project) |
| | Authority and Truthfulness of God’s Word | |
| Friday Jan 17 | What is God Like? | PCD c3, c4 [42pp] (Begin work on Attributes Project) |
| | Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit | |
| Saturday Jan 18 | Creation: God Made All Things | PCD c5 [20pp] Watch “Biblical Theology of Race” by Jemar Tisby (15 min) 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] |
| | Creation: Made in the Image of God | |
| Saturday Jan 18 | “Cru's Heart for Oneness, Diversity and Biblical Justice” Special Seminar with Darryl and Gwen Smith 12:45-2:00pm Auditorium | |

Week 2: Course Schedule and Assignments

| Date | Topic | Reading Due |
|---------------------|--|--|
| Monday Jan 20 | Martin Luther King, Jr. Day: NO CLASS Today we honor the memory of Martin Luther King, Jr. You will 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 Jan 21 | The Fall: Corruption of Humanity | Attributes Project Due*** PCD c6 [24pp] "Leading in a Complex Moral Environment" [13pp, lecture notes] "Navigating Transgender Questions" [15pp, lecture notes] Watch "Dear Church: I'm Gay" (20 min) |
| | Who is Jesus Christ? | |
| Wednesday Jan 22 | What did Jesus do to save us? | PCD c7 [25pp] Ellis "Biblical Righteousness is a Four-Paned Window" [2pp, online] CC c5 [24pp] |
| | Who is the Holy Spirit? | |
| Thursday Jan 23 | 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 | |
| Friday Jan 24 | 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 Jan 25 | "Navigating LGBT+ Questions" Special Seminar with Rachel Gilson 12:45-2:00:pm Auditorium | |

Week 3: Course Schedule and Assignments

| Date | Topic | Reading Due |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Monday Jan 27 | 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? | |
| Tuesday Jan 28 | 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 and online] |
| | How Will God’s Story End? | PCD c10 [22pp] Allison, “Eternal Punishment” [8pp online] |
| Wednesday Jan 29 | Final Exam 8:30-10:30am | Reading Report Due TOTAL READING = 451pp |

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. $300 \div 451 = 0.655 \times 100 = 66.5\%$. You will submit your reading report electronically in Canvas.