

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 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, 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 a professor of theology at North Park Seminary. 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 relates the gospel to several ethical issues. [CC]

Additional Readings (See pp. 5-7 for reading schedule; these are 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).

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" (April 16, 1963)

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).

A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), chapter 3.

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

- A. **Zoom Sessions (2 hrs daily plus two special seminars):** Class sessions will involve a mix of lecture and discussion (whole class and small groups). Just as you would arrive at class before the start time, be ready to go 5 min before class begins. Students are expected to actively engage, with their video on, in every class session. If you get sick and need to miss a class session, please let the TA know. We will try to record the session so you can watch it later. (Please note that if you miss more than 20% of the sessions, you cannot pass the class.)
- B. **Reading:** In addition to select chapters from Jones and Platt, you are also reading articles and watching a couple videos. A few articles, published by Cru, are included at the end of this notebook. Most of the articles are posted on the IBS website. To find them, go to ibs.cru.org and select “Winter IBS” from the venues drop down menu. Then click “How to Prepare / Course Information” in the navigation. You will find a reading schedule on pp. 5-7. Try to complete most the reading before class begins. Otherwise, you will be reading almost 50pp per night. Every year on the course evaluation, students write “I wish I had completed the reading before I came to class.” You will submit a reading report in Canvas. **DUE: Tuesday, Jan. 18 by 11:59pm eastern time (submit to Canvas)**
- C. **Daily Journal:** Throughout the class, you will keep a journal where you record what you are learning and experiencing. Each day after class you will write a short journal entry (100-150 words) reflecting on how you felt about something you heard or discovered in class. 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 in today’s session? Why was it important? Was there anything you found challenging in today class? 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 after class each day by 11:59pm Eastern time (submit to Canvas)**
- D. **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, with instructions, posted in Canvas. **DUE: Monday, Jan. 10 at 1:00p.m. Eastern time (beginning of class)**
- E. **Reading Reflection:** You will pick two readings (chapters or articles) that impacted you during the class and write about your experience with them. One reading must address Side A of theology (beliefs, e.g., Jones, Boothe, etc.) and one reading Side B (ethics, e.g., Platt, Ellis, Moore, etc.). What were the ideas from the chapter or article that connected with you? Why did you find them helpful? How did they challenge or encourage you? How do you want to apply them? Write 250 words for each reading. **DUE: Friday, Jan. 14 by 11:59pm eastern time (submit to Canvas)**

- F. **Final Project – Case Studies:** You will write responses to a series of case studies. These case studies integrate the doctrines we are studying in this class with practical ministry situations. The case studies, with instructions, are posted in Canvas. You will NOT have access to them until the last day of class. **Due Wednesday, Jan. 19 by 11:00am Eastern time (when BSM starts)**

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 Report	20%
Reading Reflections	10%
Attributes Project	30%
Daily Journal	10%
Case Studies	<u>30%</u>
Total	100%

Grading Scale

94-100	A	80-81	C+
92-93	A-	74-79	C
90-91	B+	72-73	C-
84-89	B	0-71	F
82-83	B-		

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 let the instructor or lead TA so we can help you as you engage with the learning tasks in the course.

Readings in this Notebook

Number	Title	Page
Article 1	Cru’s Commitment to Oneness and Diversity	232
Article 2	Sex & Gender: Cultural and Biblical Factors	233
Article 3	Reflections on the Incarnation	235
Article 4	Leading in a Complex Moral Environment	238
Article 5	Understanding the Complementarian/Egalitarian Debate	254
Article 6	Men & Women in Ministry Together	257
Article 7	Missionary Staff Rights and Responsibilities	261

Course Schedule and Assignments

Readings are “due” the day they are assigned (i.e., readings for January 4 should be completed prior to class for January 4).

- “Online” means that the article is posted on the IBS website
- “Notebook” means that the article can be found in this notebook

Date	Topic	Reading Due
Tuesday January 4 1:00-3:00pm Eastern time	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	
Wednesday January 5 1:00-3:00pm Eastern time	God Speaks: Revelation, Inspiration and Canon	PCD c2 [24pp] CC c9 [20pp] (Review instructions for Attributes Project)
	Authority and Truthfulness of God’s Word	
Thursday January 6 1:00-3:00pm Eastern time	What is God Like?	PCD c3, c4 [42pp] Tozer, “A Divine Attribute” [5pp, online] (Begin work on Attributes Project - due Monday)
	Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit	
Friday January 7 1:00-3:00pm Eastern time	Creation: God Made All Things	PCD c5 [20pp] 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 Theological Framework for Oneness and Diversity” [1p notebook] “Sex and Gender: Cultural and Biblical Factors” [1p, notebook]
	Creation: Made in the Image of God	
Friday January 7 4:30-5:30pm Eastern	“Cru's Heart for Oneness, Diversity and Biblical Justice” Special Seminar with Darryl and Gwen Smith	

Course Schedule and Assignments (continued)

- “Online” means that the article is posted on the IBS website
- “Notebook” means that the article can be found in this notebook

Date	Topic	Reading Due
Monday January 10 1:00-3:00pm Eastern time	Who is Jesus Christ?	PCD c6 [24pp] PCD c7 [25pp] “Reflections on the Incarnation” [2pp, notebook]
	What did Jesus do to save us?	**Attributes Project Due
Tuesday January 11 1:00-3:00pm Eastern time	Who is the Holy Spirit?	PCD c8 [25pp] Ellis “Biblical Righteousness is a Four-Paned Window” [2pp, online]
	Baptism and Filling with the Holy Spirit	CC c5 [24pp]
Wednesday January 12 1:00-3:00pm Eastern time	The Fall: Corruption of Humanity	CC c2 [34pp] “Leading in a Complex Moral Environment” [15pp, notebook]
	Election: God Chose Us	Watch “Dear Church: I’m Gay” [online]
Wednesday January 12 3:30-4:30pm Eastern time	“Navigating LGBT+ Questions” Special Seminar with Rachel Gilson	
Thursday January 13 1:00-3:00pm Eastern time	The Gospel Call	“Gifts Flowing from the Grace of God,” Boothe [20pp, online]
	Coming to Faith: Regeneration, Conversion and Justification	“Is Water Baptism Necessary for Salvation?” Johnson [11pp, online] “Talking about Faith in Non-Western Contexts” Georges [2pp, online]
Friday January 14 1:00-3:00pm Eastern time	Assurance, Growth, Perseverance	PCD c9 [20pp] CC c3 [22pp] “Understanding the Complementarian/Egalitarian Debate” [3pp, notebook]
	What is the Church?	“Men and Women in Ministry Together” [4pp, notebook] “Ten Connections between Jesus and the Kingdom” [1p, online] ** Reading Response Due

Course Schedule and Assignments (continued)

- “Online” means that the article is posted on the IBS website
- “Notebook” means that the article can be found in this notebook

Date	Topic	Reading Due
Monday Jan 17 (No class)	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 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, online]	
Tuesday January 18 1:00-3:00pm Eastern time	How does Cru relate to the Church?	“Like Families and Soccer Teams” Straughn [9pp, online] “Missionary Rights and Responsibilities” [7pp, notebook] PCD c10 [22pp]
	How Will God’s Story End?	“Eternal Punishment,” Allison [8pp online] **Reading Report Due
Wednesday January 19		**Case Studies Due 11:00am eastern

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. $300 \div 44 = 0.68 \times 100 = 68\%$. You will submit your reading report electronically in Canvas.

Total Reading = 445pp