God, Bible, Holy Spirit

Christy Thornton, PhD
cthornton@sebts.edu
June 24-July 8, 2022

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 helpful 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

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. You will better understand how one God has revealed himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You will gain greater confidence in Scripture as the inspired, truthful, authoritative, sufficient and powerful Word of God. You will discover how the Holy Spirit enables you to grow in conformity to the image of Christ and empowers God's people to bear witness about Christ to the ends of the earth. We will examine these doctrines as they are taught in Scripture and confessed by the church so that we may better live to the glory of the triune God (2 IBS credits – Theology and Apologetics).

Learning Outcomes

<u>Affective</u> (attitudes, motivation, character)

1. Deepen your motivation to know, love and worship the triune God and reflect God's character as image-bearers.
2. Gain greater confidence in Scripture as the inspired, truthful, authoritative, sufficient and powerful Word of God.
3. 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.

<u>Cognitive</u> (knowledge and thinking skills)

1. Deepen your understanding of 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 as these doctrines are taught in Scripture and confessed by the church.
2. Become more familiar with viewpoints, differences, and conflicts which exist among Christians regarding these doctrines as well as the way culture shapes our theologies.
3. Develop a deeper understanding of and commitment to the Cru Statement of Faith.

4. Become persuaded that Christian theology is not merely about right beliefs (orthodoxy) but also right living (orthopraxy).

Behavioral (personal and ministry skills)

1. Grow in your capacity to read Scripture "theologically."

2. Grow in your capacity to teach these foundational doctrines from Scripture and relate them to evangelism, discipleship, movement-launching, ethics, and cross-cultural mission.

3. 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 and calling while pointing people to a compelling center (i.e., Christ, the gospel and our mission).

Required Texts

Irenaeus, *The Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching*. Trans. John Behr (St. Vladimir's, 1997). ISBN-13: 978-0881411744 (Other translations are acceptable. This one is just easier to read.)

Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012). ISBN-13: 978-0830839834. Also available in Kindle format.

Timothy C. Tennent, *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). ISBN-13: 978-0310275114. Also available in Kindle format.

Additional Readings (Posted Online)

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

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

Thomas F. Torrance. "The Reconciliation of the Mind" in *Atonement* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009), 437-447.

Learning Tasks

1. **Reading**: Your reading should be done thoroughly and thoughtfully with a sincere attempt to learn all you can. **Given the compressed nature of this course, it will help if you complete the reading prior to the first class session**. The Reeves book will be discussed in class. As a result, you may want to wait to read it till the night before we discuss it so it is fresh in your mind. **DUE: On the last day of class, July 8.**

2. **Participate in Class Discussion**: This class will include a mixture of lecture and classroom discussion. We will also be discussing some of the readings in class and you should be prepared to discuss them.

3. **Doctrinal Position paper:** Students will write a 1 page per doctrine (12 pt TNR, double spaced) explaining the student's own position on 3 doctrines covered in the class (God, Bible, Holy Spirit).

a. Students should include relevant Bible passages to substantiate their convictions

b. Students may reference ideas discussed in class lecture, but these position papers should not merely regurgitate lectures or books. They should be written in the student's own voice with the student's own thoughts.

c. **DUE: July 6**

4. **Theology Project**: You will write a paper in which you present Scriptural teaching on the Trinity. The goal is to be as comprehensive as you can be, exposing the richness of the Bible's own teaching on the Trinity. In order to write this paper, you will need to take the following steps:

a) **Choose:** Pick one of the following options:
- Doctrine of the Trinity as taught in the book of John
- Doctrine of the Trinity as taught in the book of Ephesians
- Doctrine of the Trinity as taught in the book of 1 Corinthians
- Doctrine of the Trinity as taught in the books of 1, 2, 3, John

b) **Explore**: Read through the whole book noting every reference to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For each reference, record your observations. Here are some questions you might consider: What do you learn from this passage about the eternal relations of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? What do you learn about the work of the Trinity and the inseparable operations of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Does the passage say anything about the relationship between the Trinity and the church? You may find it helpful to see what commentators say about your passage (e.g., ESV Study Bible notes).

c) **Synthesize:** What stands out to you regarding the Trinity in this book? Do you see any recurring themes? What patterns do you observe about the working of the Triune God? Are certain aspects of his eternal being explained in this book? Are certain aspects of the inseparable operations of the persons of the Trinity in this book in reference to creation or salvation? Consider how best to organize these teachings into a systematic and coherent whole.

d) **Write:** Drawing your work together, write a paper (7-9 pages, double spaced, 12 pt. font) summarizing what you learned. Remember that this is NOT a verse by verse commentary but a carefully crafted summary of the doctrinal teaching of your book on the Trinity. You will need to think about how best to structure your presentation. One simple way to structure you essay would be in terms of (1) teaching on the eternal relations of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and the (2) teaching on the work/inseparable operations of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. On the last two pages of your paper, address the following questions: What was the most helpful thing you learned about the Holy Spirit from your study? What implications does this have for the mission and ministry of the church? What implications does your study have the mission of God? Look for links between the Trinity and missional proclamation in your book drawing on our discussion the last day of class. **DUE: Friday, July 8**

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. Along with that, I will give you feedback on what you did well and where you can grow.

Reading Report	25% (due Fri, July 8)
Doctrinal reflection	25% (due Weds, July 6)
Theology Project	50% (due Friday, July 8)
	100%

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

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.

Course Schedule

Given the compressed nature of this course, it will help if you complete the reading prior to the first class session. If you read 100 pages per week, you can finish it in five weeks. Additional readings (e.g., González, Ellis, Johnson, Tennent and Evans) will be posted online.

Day	Lecture Focus	Reading	Scripture Reading
1	Introduction/What is theology?	Tennent, Ch. 1 Gonzalez, Ch.1	Eph 4:1-17
2	What does it mean to know God?	Torrance "Reconciliation of the Mind" Reeves, Intro	John 17
3	What is revelation? How does God reveal himself?	Reeves, Ch. 1-2	John 14:8-11 1 Cor 2:6-16
4	The God of the Gospel: God in himself	Reeves, Ch. 3-4 Tennent, Ch. 2	Matthew 28:18-20 1 John 4:7-16
5	The God of the Gospel: What is a person?	The Nicene Creed Reeves, Ch. 5 & Conclusion	Matthew 3:13-17 John 3
6	The God of the Gospel: The God who acts (Inseparable Operations)	Irenaeus, Behr intro (optional)& Paragraphs 1-7	John 1 Genesis 1
7	Scripture: What is the Bible?	Irenaeus, paragraph 7-end of part 1	2 Peter 1:12-21 2 Tim 3:14-17
8	Scripture: How do we interpret the Bible?	Irenaeus, part 2	Luke 24:13-49
9	The Holy Spirit: Pentecost and Pentecostalism	Tennent, Ch. 7 Ellis, "Biblical Righteousness…"	Acts 2
10	The Holy Spirit: The Mission and Ministry of the Church		Eph 4:1-17 1 Cor 1:18-2:5

Reading Report

Of the required reading, how many pages did you complete? _____

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 400 pages of required reading. 400 ÷ 426 = 0.89 x 100 = 89%.

Submit this number electronically to the instructor using Canvas.