

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 help fulfill the Great Commission through the ministry of Cru. This course explores 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 form us faithful disciples of Jesus and missionaries with Cru.

Learning Outcomes

Affective (attitudes, motivation, character)

1. Deepen your motivation to know, love and worship the triune God and reflect God's character in the world as an image-bearer and faithful disciple of Jesus.
2. Cultivate virtues that are central to the practice of theology including faith, humility, generosity, and curiosity.
3. Strengthen your missionary calling to serve with Cru.
4. Gain greater motivation to learn from believers in ethnic and cultural contexts different from your own.

Cognitive (knowledge and thinking skills)

1. Develop a deeper understanding of and greater confidence in the gospel of Christ.
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. Grow in your capacity to reflect theologically on cultural and ethical challenges we encounter in our world.

Behavioral (personal and ministry skills)

1. Grow in your capacity to ask good questions as you navigate theological challenges in ministry by discussing and reflecting on case studies.
2. Grow in your capacity to read Scripture “theologically” as a disciple who is faithful both to the truth of Jesus and the way of Jesus.
3. Be better prepared to partner with those who hold differing theological views allowing for differences 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).
4. Grow in your capacity to teach these foundational doctrines from Scripture and relate them to personal growth, evangelism, discipleship, movement-launching, cross-cultural mission.

Learning Resources: Books (See pp. 7-9 for reading schedule)

Beth Felker Jones, *Practicing Christian Doctrine: An Introduction to Thinking and Living Theologically*, second edition (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2023). ISBN-13: 978-1540965141. Beth Jones is a professor of theology at Northern Seminary in Chicago. This book will introduce the key doctrines we’ll be exploring together in the class. *Be sure to get the second edition published in 2023.* [PCD]

David Platt, *Counter Culture: Following Christ in an Anti-Christian Age*, revised and updated (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 2017). ISBN-13: 978-1414390383. David Platt is the pastor of McLean Bible Church in Virginia. Good theology includes not only the beliefs we confess but also the virtues, practices, and moral vision that shape how we live in the world. This book will help you reflect theologically on a number of important ethical issues. [CC]

Learning Resources: Articles (See pp. 7-9 for reading schedule)

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).

Phillip Bethancourt, “10 Connections Between Jesus and the Kingdom of God” (February 24, 2014)

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)

Beth Moore, “A Letter to My Brothers” (May 3, 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.

Learning Resources: Cru Documents (See pp. 7-9 for reading schedule)

You will read several internal Cru documents outlining Cru’s approach to several issues. They are printed in the back of this notebook

Cru Resources

Number	Title	Page
Article 1	Sex & Gender: Cultural and Biblical Factors	
Article 2	Oneness in Ethic and Cultural Diversity: Posture, Position, Practices	
Article 3	Reflections on the Incarnation	
Article 4	Compassionate and Faithful: Navigating LGBT+ Questions in Ministry	
Article 5	Understanding the Complementarian/Egalitarian Debate	
Article 6	Men & Women in Ministry Together	
Article 7	Missionary Staff Rights and Responsibilities	

Note about Sensitive Nature of Some Course Readings

In this class we will tackle several ethical issues that are important for us to explore as faithful followers of Christ. David Platt’s *Counter Culture* addresses a number of these issues. Several of the stories he shares are intense. In the past, some students, because of their personal story, have found these stories triggering. On their evaluations they said it would be helpful to know ahead of time (which is why I’m including a note). If you find yourself feeling triggered, reach out to someone you can process this with. Please let your instructor or TA know if you can’t think of someone to process with.

Learning Tasks

- A. **Class Sessions (2 hrs daily plus two special seminars):** Class sessions will involve a mix of lectures and discussions (whole class and small groups). If you get sick and need to miss a class session, please let the instructor know. We will try to record audio of the sessions so you can listen to it later. (Please note that if you miss more than 20% of the class sessions, you cannot complete the class.)
- B. **Reading:** In addition to select chapters from Jones and Platt, you will also be reading several articles. Most of the articles are posted on the IBS website. A few articles, published by Cru, are included at the end of this notebook. You will find a reading schedule on pp. 7-9. **Try to complete as much reading as possible 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 indicating the percentage of reading you completed. **DUE: Wednesday, July 3 by 11:59pm (submit in 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 troubled 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's class? Why? Was there anything that made you feel uncomfortable or with which you disagreed? How might your future life and ministry be impacted by what was discussed today? **Due after class each day by 11:59pm (submit in 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, June 24 at 8:00am (prior to 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 should address Side A of theology (beliefs, e.g., Jones, Boothe), while the other reading should address Side B (ethics, e.g., Platt, Ellis, Moore).** 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: Tuesday, July 2 by 11:59pm (submit to Canvas)**
- F. **Case Studies:** You will compose 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 are posted in Canvas. **You will not have access to the case studies until Tuesday, July 2.** **Due Thursday, July 4 by 5:00pm (submit in Canvas)**

Mutual Commitments¹

My commitments to you are:

1. To pray for you that God would use this course to broaden your view of God, deepen your understanding of the gospel, help you grow spiritually, and fuel your vision to take Christ to the nations.
2. To promote active learning, using problem-based learning, polls, case studies, questions, discussion, attractive PowerPoint slides, and structured notes.
3. To show respect toward every student in the class, being sensitive to national, cultural, ethnic, generational, gender, and other individual differences, and listen courteously when students speak.
4. To provide opportunities outside class to discuss theological questions.
5. To ensure you receive constructive feedback on your work.
6. To welcome your feedback on the course content and methods.

What I expect from you:

1. To pray that God would help you see how he wants to use this course to help form you as a Cru missionary and faithful disciple of Jesus.
2. To bring a learning posture to the class and participate fully in all course activities and avoid distractions (e.g., email, social media).
3. To show respect towards fellow students, being sensitive to national, cultural, ethnic, generational, gender, and other individual differences, and listen courteously when others speak.
4. To proactively communicate with me about any unique needs that affect your involvement in the class (e.g., if you are sick one day and need to miss a session).
5. To submit work on time, or, if this is not possible, to request an extension adequately in advance of the deadline.
6. To provide constructive feedback on the course content and methodology that will help me as I teach this course in the future.

Contact Information

Email: Keith.Johnson@cru.org

¹ These commitments are adapted from Perry Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education* (Langham Press), p. 159. I have received great help from Shaw in thinking about the design of this course.

Course Feedback

Reading Report	20%
Reading Reflection	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 know 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 in 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 in June 2014 showed that students who take hand-written notes have a higher level of comprehension rather than those who type. It appears that when you take notes on your laptop, you basically become a stenographer rather than 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 reach out to 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

Readings are “due” the day they are assigned (i.e., readings for June 20 should be completed prior to class on June 20).

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

Date	Topic	Reading Due
Wednesday June 19 7:00-8:00pm	Introduction to Intro to Christian Theology and Bible Study Methods	
Thursday June 20 8:00-10:00am	Introduction to the Practice of Christian 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 [10pp]
	Convictions, Persuasions, and Opinions	
Friday June 21 8:00-10:00am	What is God Like?	PCD c3, c4 [42pp] Tozer, “A Divine Attribute” [5pp, online] (Begin work on Attributes Project) Optional reading: “Trinitarian Patterns in Ephesians” [12pp, online]
	Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit	
Monday June 24 8:00-10:00am	God Speaks: Revelation, Inspiration and Canon	**Attributes Project Due PCD c2 [24pp] CC c9 [20pp]
	Authority and Truthfulness of God’s Word	
Tuesday June 25 8:00-10:00am	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] “Oneness in Ethnic and Cultural Diversity” [10p notebook] “Sex and Gender: Cultural and Biblical Factors” [1p, notebook]
	Creation: Made in the Image of God	
Tuesday 2:00-3:00pm	“Oneness in Ethnic and Cultural Diversity” Special Seminar	

Course Schedule and Assignments (continued)

- “Online” means that the article is posted on the IBS website.
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Date	Topic	Reading Due
Wednesday June 26 8:00-10:00am	Who is Jesus Christ?	PCD c6 [24pp] PCD c7 [26pp] “Reflections on the Incarnation” [2pp, notebook]
	What did Jesus do to save us?	
Thursday June 27 8:00-10:00am	Who is the Holy Spirit?	PCD c8 [24pp] Ellis “Biblical Righteousness is a Four-Paned Window” [2pp, online] CC c5 [24pp]
	Baptism and Filling with the Holy Spirit	
Friday June 28 8:00-10:00am	The Fall: Corruption of Humanity	CC c2 [34pp] “Compassionate and Faithful” [16pp, notebook] Please read Cru’s public statement on LGBT+ questions as well [2pp, online]
	Election: God Chose Us	
	Ethics of Sexuality & Gender	
Friday 2:00-3:00pm	“Navigating LGBT+ Questions in Ministry” Special Seminar	
Monday July 1 8:00-10:00am	The Gospel Call	“Gifts Flowing from the Grace of God,” Boothe [20pp, online] “Is Water Baptism Necessary for Salvation?” Johnson [11pp, online] “Talking about Faith in Non-Western Contexts” Georges [2pp, online] “Five Gospel Questions” from <i>The Deeply Formed Life</i> [6pp, online]
	Coming to Faith: Regeneration, Conversion and Justification	
Tuesday July 2 8:00-10:00am	Assurance, Growth, Remaining a Christian	** Reading Reflection Due PCD c9 [24pp] CC c3 [22pp] “Understanding the Complementarian/Egalitarian Debate” [3pp, notebook] “Men and Women in Ministry Together” [4pp, notebook] “Ten Connections between Jesus and the Kingdom” [1p, online]
	What is the Church?	

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 the appendix to this notebook.

Date	Topic	Reading Due
Wednesday July 3 8:00-10:00am	How does Cru relate to the Church?	“Like Families and Soccer Teams” Straughn [9pp, online] “Missionary Rights and Responsibilities” [7pp, notebook] PCD c10 [22pp] PCD, prayer, pp. 237-38 [2pp] “Eternal Punishment,” Allison [8pp online]
	Living into God’s Story	**Reading Report Due Total Reading = 462 pages
Thursday July 4	Case Studies Due 5:00pm	

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. $300 \div 462 = 0.66 \times 100 = 66\%$. You will submit your reading report electronically in Canvas.