

COURSE SYLLABUS

ST410: Introduction to Theology

Course Lecturer: Aaron Smith, PhD

Course Description

Welcome to *Introduction to Theology*, an online undergraduate-level course designed to introduce you to the basic doctrines of the Christian faith. The teaching method is systematic, but it locates each topic within Scripture and with reference to formative historical concerns. The course assumes that you have some basic familiarity with the Bible; it is intended primarily to serve as a general education survey for undergraduate students.

The course recognizes that the discipline of theology itself is not well understood, and therefore strives not only to teach theological content, but also method. You will be invited into the act of “faith-thinking” (*fides quaerens intellectum*), aiming to cultivate the lifelong virtue of intellectual obedience to the Word of God.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

- Express an understanding of basic concepts, themes, figures, and events that have shaped historic Christian faith.
- Show an awareness of theological sources and subject matter, especially Scripture and the central doctrinal formulations of the Christian tradition.
- Identify and engage some significant patterns of thought within Christian history.
- Express sensitivity to issues that have divided Christians, including the different ways people have thought about such matters and exhibit a preliminary ability to assess strengths and weaknesses of these lines of thinking.
- Practice doing theology and not just talking about it.
- Develop a knack for effective communication; no class in Christian theology should want for opportunity to show grace while interacting with persons whose ideas differ from one's own.
- Exhibit critical thinking skills, including analysis of and personal interaction with complex arguments.
- Demonstrate writing aptitude both as this pertains to precision in language use and thought and to grammar and syntax; u shld lrn 2 prtctce GOOD English in this era of txtng.

Accessibility

If you have particular accessibility needs, please contact the CUGN Registrar at the beginning of the course. This will allow us to work directly with you to make efforts to accommodate your situation and ensure as full as possible accessibility to the course.

Course Lecturer



Aaron Smith, PhD

Education:

- Marquette University, PhD
- Bethel Seminary-San Diego, MDiv
- California State University-San Diego, BA

Teaching Career:

- Associate Professor Theology at Colorado Christian University

Publications:

- *A Theology of the Third Article: Karl Barth and the Spirit of the Word*
- Author of numerous articles appearing in professional journals, multiauthor works, and dictionaries or encyclopedias

Online Professor

If you are taking this course for credit, CUGN will assign one of its faculty members as the online professor for this course. This professor will contact you upon enrollment in the course and will guide your study. Your online professor will be available to you by email and, at set times, by chat room or other real-time technology. Your online professor will do the following in order to stimulate student involvement and facilitate effective learning:

- Evaluate and assign grades to all coursework.
- Provide assistance with technological problems that may occur.
- Answer questions that may arise.
- Issue your final grades.

Course Texts

Required:

McGrath, Alister. *The Christian Theology Reader*. 4th Edition. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2011.

Recommended, but not required:

McGrath, Alister. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. 5th Edition. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2011. (available as an e-book)

Migliore, Daniel. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. 2nd Edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004. (available as an e-book)

Textbooks can be ordered through our online store at CUGN.org, through your local bookstore, or through your preferred eReader when available.

Academic Honesty

At CUGN, we believe all we do is “as unto the Lord” and we thus hold to a high academic standard of honesty; we do not tolerate plagiarism and cheating. Students found guilty of any form of academic dishonesty face consequences ranging from interaction with the Academic Dean to expulsion from CUGN.

Quizzes and Exams: Any student found guilty of cheating on a quiz or exam will automatically receive a score of zero for that quiz or exam. A second offense will result in automatic course failure and possible disciplinary action and/or expulsion from CUGN. Please view the [CUGN Academic Catalog](#) for a full definition and examples of cheating.

Plagiarism: If a student’s work is found to be plagiarized, consequences will vary depending on the nature of the plagiarism.

If an offense is deemed unintentional, the student will have an opportunity to resubmit the work. A second offense will result in an automatic score of zero for that assignment, which may also result in failure of that course.

More serious plagiarism offenses could result in automatic course failure, disciplinary action, or expulsion from CUGN. Please view the [CUGN Academic Catalog](#) for a full definition and examples of plagiarism. If you have questions about plagiarism, or would like to request resources for learning how to avoid plagiarism, please contact our Registrar’s Office at registrar@cugn.org or toll free at (888) 487-5376 ext. 3.

Course Requirements

1. **Time:** The student is required to spend a minimum of 100 hours in this course. All course requirements must be completed within 6 months of enrolling in the course.
2. **Recorded Lectures:** The student is required to listen to all 15 audio lectures recorded by Dr. Aaron Smith.
3. **Required Reading:** The student must complete all of the required readings in accordance with the schedule presented in the Lesson Assignments section at the end of this syllabus. At the end of the course, submit a report to indicate what percentage of the reading you completed.
4. **Study Questions:** Answer the Study Questions provided in the Lesson Assignments section at the end of this syllabus.
5. **Research Project:** You will write brief personal statements of faith on the Work of Christ, the Person of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity. Each statement must parenthetically cite at least three biblical passages in support. Also, each statement must footnote one theological reference work as well as one longer, dogmatic treatise. This faith statement project should be composed in thoughtful prose and should utilize transition sentences in order to connect the claims together. The result will be an essay of between five and seven double-spaced pages written in a common 12-point font.
6. **Quizzes:** You will take a 10-question, multiple choice quiz at the end of each lecture.

Course Grading

Your grade for the course will be determined as follows:

Listening to Recorded Lectures	10% of Course Grade
Reading	10% of Course Grade
Study Questions	30% of Course Grade
Research Project	30% of Course Grade
Quizzes	20% of Course Grade
Total	100%

Grades will be issued within two weeks of the end of the course.

Lesson Assignments

Lesson 1: Understanding Our Task: Defining and Locating “Theology”

- Listen to Lecture 1.
- Read 1.6 (Apostles’ Creed), 1.12 (Luther), 1.13 (Calvin), 1.24 (Barth), and 1.28 Bonhoeffer) from *The Christian Theology Reader*.
- Answer the Lesson 1 Study Questions:
 1. What assumptions about “theology” do you bring to this class?
 2. How can one study God, that is, on what basis does one think and speak of God?
 3. What is the relationship between theology and the study of religion?
 4. What relevance does theological study have for the life of faith?
- Complete the Lesson 1 quiz.

Lesson 2: Method: The Word of God as Source and Norm of Theology

- Listen to Lecture 2.
- Read 2.9 (Jerome), 2.29 (Spener), 2.14 (Lefevre), 2.15 (Luther), and 2.20 (Gallic Confession) from *The Christian Theology Reader*.
- Answer the Lesson 2 Study Questions:
 1. State in your own words why it is important to identify one’s method in thinking and speaking of God. Or, respond to this question: “I have a personal relationship with God. Why can’t I just say what I believe in my heart to be true of Him?”
 2. If “subjectivity” refers to personal investment in a set of ideas, and “objectivity” means disinterest, then faith is *invested objectivity*. Describe this.

3. Define “dialectic” in your own words, and describe how God’s engagement with humankind is dialectical.
 4. According to recent polling, Americans are becoming less and less affiliated with traditional Christian confessions. Some consider themselves “spiritual but not religious,” and others identify with agnosticism and even atheism. How should theology be done in such a context?
- Complete the Lesson 2 quiz.

Lesson 3: The Word of God: Jesus Christ, Scripture, and Proclamation

- Listen to Lecture 3.
- Read 2.23 (Concord); 2.26 (King James Translators), 2.29 (Spener); 2.35 (Hodge); and 2.39 (Orr) from *The Christian Theology Reader*.
- Answer the Lesson 3 Study Questions:
 1. What is the three-fold form of the Word of God?
 2. In what sense is each form to be understood as God’s Word?
 3. In what way are the words of the prophets and apostles authoritative relative to other words of and about God?
 4. Discuss the Word of God as an event in which the human is made to participate. Scripture claims that the Word is “alive and active” (Heb. 4:12). How is this so?
- Complete the Lesson 3 quiz.

Lesson 4: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, Experience: The Four Traditional Sources of Theology and Their Merits

- Listen to Lecture 4.
- Read 2.5 (Tertullian), 2.7 (Cyril), 2.16 (Luther), 2.17 (Calvin), 2.31 (Edwards), 2.41 (Barth), and 2.42 (Brunner) from *The Christian Theology Reader*.
- Answer the Lesson 4 Study Questions:
 1. Describe why Scripture is authoritative for our understanding of God in a way that personal experience is not.
 2. Can one consistently employ the dictum of *sola scriptura*? What role should tradition play in informing our understanding of the biblical text?
 3. Describe how the Word of God takes place in human modalities while still remaining the Word of God and thus not being lost in human modalities.
 4. What role, if any, should unaided reason and experience play in our accounts of God?
- Complete the Lesson 4 quiz.

Lesson 5: On the Relationship between Theology and Philosophy

- Listen to Lecture 5.
- Read 1.1 (Justin), 1.2 (Clement), 1.3 (Tertullian), 1.4 (Augustine), and 1.23 (Harnack) from *The Christian Theology Reader*.
- Answer the Lesson 5 Study Questions:
 1. Take a moment to reflect upon the ways that *dualism* describes how you think of reality. Are these ways true to Scripture? How might Scripture correct them?
 2. What is the value in becoming aware of the ways that we have absorbed certain philosophical perspectives?
 3. Describe in your own words the positions of complete integration, complete rejection, and critical appropriation.
 4. Think through what it means to say, “all truth is God’s.” Can you articulate what this phrase entails?
- Complete the Lesson 5 quiz.

Lesson 6: Election

- Listen to Lecture 6.
- Read 6.11 (Augustine), 6.12 (Augustine), 6.15 (Augustine), 6.36 (Calvin), 6.40 (Beza), 6.51 (Barth) and 6.52 (Brunner) from *The Christian Theology Reader*.
- Answer the Lesson 6 Study Questions:
 1. In the light of Eph. 1, explain in your own words why “election” is an important teaching of the Christian faith.
 2. Does the notion of divine election necessarily clash with the vision of a loving God?
 3. How should we best understand the relationship between God’s sovereignty and human choice?
 4. Identify one of the three traditional positions with which you have previously *disagreed* and articulate at least one of its strengths.
- Complete the Lesson 6 quiz.

Lesson 7: Trinity

- Listen to Lecture 7.
- Read 1.5 (Nicene Creed), 3.3 (Irenaeus), 3.9 (Gregory of Nyssa), 3.11 (Gregory of Nazianzus), 3.13 (Augustine), 3.20 (Council of Toledo), and 3.36 (Jenson) from *The Christian Theology Reader*.
- Answer the Lesson 7 Study Questions:

1. What is the relationship between our understanding of Christ and the doctrine of God?
 2. What is the significance of the progressiveness of God's self-revelation throughout Scripture?
 3. What is the difference between a proper doctrine of the Trinity and one in which God's oneness is absorbed into His threeness or vice versa?
 4. State in your own words why the doctrine of the Trinity is more than just hairsplitting speculation.
- Complete the Lesson 7 quiz.

Lesson 8: The Church

- Listen to Lecture 8.
- Read 7.6 (Augustine), 7.9 (Thomas), 7.11 (Hus), 7.12 (Luther), 7.13 (Luther), 7.18 (Hooker), and 7.24 (Barmen Declaration) from *The Christian Theology Reader*.
- Answer the Lesson 8 Study Questions:
 1. Describe the totality of God's calling of Abram; what does it mean to "live by faith?"
 2. Think through what obedience to the will of God in Christ Jesus entails. How does this identify us as God's children?
 3. Describe in your own words what it means to be a part of the "Body of Christ."
 4. How is the church both visible and invisible?
- Complete the Lesson 8 quiz.

Lesson 9: Humanity and Sin

- Listen to Lecture 9.
- Read 6.3 (Tertullian), 6.6 (Origen), 6.13 (Augustine), 6.16 (Pelagius), 6.17 (Pelagius), 6.18 (Pelagius), and 6.19 (Synod of Carthage) from *The Christian Theology Reader*.
- Answer the Lesson 9 Study Questions:
 1. Most people naturally think of humanity as a given species, and the church as a collection of individuals taken from among this species. Describe how the opposite is true.
 2. The Genesis depiction of the human predicament is complex. How would you explain the way that humanity misuses the faculties given to it for obedient dependence upon God in order to construct a life of disobedient independence?
 3. If the soul is not the internal means of creaturely response to God, and the body the external means, then what are they? How would you define them, bearing in mind the conclusions drawn in Lectures four and five concerning the need to let Scripture and not popular reason or philosophy shape our theological categories?
- Complete the Lesson 9 quiz.

Lesson 10: The Work of Christ

- Listen to Lecture 10.
- Read 5.13 (Anselm), 5.14 (Abelard), 5.19 (Calvin), 5.23 (Wesley), 5.29 (Aulen), and 5.33 (Packer) from *The Christian Theology Reader*.
- Answer the Lesson 10 Study Questions:
 1. What is the relevance of the sacrificial system for Christian theology of salvation? Explain how God uses it, ultimately to put an end to it.
 2. State in your own words why Christ had to die for human sin.
 3. Which theory of the atonement best accords with the biblical data, in your estimation?
 4. Is it possible that an adequate account of the atonement would integrate contributions from different theories? How might we go about doing this?
- Complete the Lesson 10 quiz.

Lesson 11: The Person of Christ

- Listen to Lecture 11.
- Read 4.7 (Arius), 4.8 (Athanasius), 4.9 (Apollinarius), 4.12 (Nestorius), 4.13 (Cyril), 4.15 (Cyril), 4.16 (Leo), and 4.17 (Council of Chalcedon) from *The Christian Theology Reader*.
- Answer the Lesson 11 Study Questions:
 1. Why is it important for salvation that Christ is fully God and fully Man?
 2. I sometimes hear people say, “I think Jesus was great—an awesome teacher and extraordinary man. But he wasn’t God.” How, biblically, would you respond to this claim?
 3. Docetism was an early heresy that contended that Jesus was really God in something like a flesh suit. He was not fully human, for that would be beneath God. How, biblically, would you respond to this claim?
- Complete the Lesson 11 quiz.

Lesson 12: The Holy Spirit

- Listen to Lecture 12.
- Read 3.10 (Basil), 3.15 (Augustine), 3.17 (Cyril), 3.19 (John the Damascene), 8.9 (John the Damascene) from *The Christian Theology Reader*.
- Answer the Lesson 12 Study Questions:
 1. Why is it important to receive our understanding of “spirit” from the biblical text rather than from personal intuition or popular accounts of encounter with God?

2. Compare the way that the church defended the full deity of the Son with the way that it defended the full deity of the Spirit.
 3. In what way is the Spirit of God the *Holy Spirit*?
 4. What does it mean that the Spirit corrects rather than inspires human religiosity, and that He is the end of religion rather than its beginning?
- Complete the Lesson 12 quiz.

Lesson 13: Creation

- Listen to Lecture 13.
- Read 3.2 (Irenaeus), 3.4 (Tertullian), 3.5 (Origen), 3.6 (Origen), 3.27 (William of Ockham) from *The Christian Theology Reader*.
- Answer the Lesson 13 Study Questions:
 1. What does it mean for God's Lordship to say that He created everything and that nothing pre-existed with Him?
 2. What sort of things have you heard that Gen. 1 teaches? Rank them in priority. What is the most significant thing taught by this text?
 3. In what way is creation "the event of being corresponding to God's being?"
 4. How does God's providential governance of creation amount neither to minute control nor detached application of natural laws?
- Complete the Lesson 13 quiz.
- Submit the Research Paper.

Lesson 14: Last Things

- Listen to Lecture 14.
- Read 10.5 (Origen), 10.7 (Methodius), 10.9 (Gregory of Nyssa), 10.11 (Augustine), 10.16 (Donne), 10.19 (Wesley) from *The Christian Theology Reader*.
- Answer the Lesson 14 Study Questions:
 1. Explain in your own words how the Christian concept of resurrection is different from the religious notion of "soul escape."
 2. Have you encountered accounts of Christian eschatology in which God is expected to destroy creation? How well do these square with resurrection hope, when resurrection is *bodily*?
 3. How is Christian redemption both already upon us and not yet realized?
- Complete the Lesson 14 quiz.

Lesson 15: Theology Today

- Listen to Lecture 15.
- Complete the Lesson 15 quiz.