

Religious Studies 332-001

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Fall 2016: Tuesday and Thursday, 1:15 - 2:30 p.m.

Professor James S. Cutsinger

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The aim of this course is to explore, not just the *what*, but the *why* of Christian faith. What do Christians—Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant—believe about God, creation, the fall, salvation, the Holy Spirit, the resurrection, and life after death? And what are their grounds—scriptural, experiential, and logical—for holding these beliefs? Special attention will be devoted to the person of Christ and the doctrine of the incarnation.

This approach is sometimes referred to as systematic theology, for the goal is to understand the essential doctrines of Christianity as organically related parts of a single metaphysical, spiritual, and cosmological system. Our chief interest is not the historical origin or development of religious institutions nor the social or psychological context of religious convictions, but the internal consistency and underlying meaning of the Christian view of reality.

Readings

Three texts are required. The first, *The Orthodox Way*, by Kallistos Ware, can be purchased at the USC Bookstore. The other two, *That Man Might Become God*, the instructor's lectures for the course, and *A Reader in Christian Theology*, a collection of writings selected and edited by Professor Cutsinger, are available as downloadable PDFs on the course Blackboard site (click on "Required Readings" in the menu).

Requirements

1. *Reading.* Reading and thoughtful reflection are essential. The assigned materials will demand study and not just skimming. Students are expected to read these materials very closely and carefully.
2. *Attendance,* both prompt and regular. A sign-up sheet will be circulated at the start of each class to record daily attendance; two unexcused absences are permitted, but a penalty of one letter grade is imposed for each additional unexcused absence.

Please note: Absences are always excused for medical or other essential reasons, *but only if one promptly presents a written excuse from a doctor or other responsible authority as soon as one returns to class.* Waiting until the end of the semester to get serious about attendance is most unwise.

3. *Participation.* Students should be active participants; questions and comments are strongly encouraged. During the first part of each class, Professor Cutsinger will highlight certain points in the assigned readings for the day and introduce additional material, but there will always be plenty of time for discussion. Although there is no

grade as such for class participation, constructive contributions on a regular basis can help to raise a student's final course grade by as much as a full letter.

4. *Quizzes*. Links have been placed on the course Blackboard site for each of the 23 lectures in *That Man Might Become God*. 15 of these links connect to quizzes. Each quiz contains five questions (including fill-in-the-blank, true/false, and multiple choice); each is timed to expire after three minutes; and each is worth five points. The links become live after the preceding class and are set to disappear before the class session on the relevant lecture begins. Total quiz points: 75.

5. *Examinations*. There will be two essay examinations: a midterm, to be taken via Blackboard (worth 50 points); and a comprehensive final, to be taken in class (worth 75 points). Both of these exams are designed to test one's knowledge of *The Orthodox Way* and *A Reader in Christian Theology*, as well as *That Man Might Become God*. Total exam points: 125.

Grading Scale

Conversion of points earned to final course grades will be as follows; total possible points (quizzes plus examinations) = 200.

190 - 200 = A, 178 - 189 = B+, 166 - 177 = B, 154 - 165 = C+, 142 - 153 = C,
130 - 141 = D+, 118 - 129 = D, below 118 = F

Learning Outcomes

Conscientious students should come away from this course with the following:

- The ability to distinguish doctrines and practices shared by all Christians from those specific to one or more of Christianity's three major sectors: Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant
- An understanding of what makes Christian systematic theology "systematic"
- An appreciation for the logical substructure of religious teachings—teachings that might otherwise seem to be based, and are too often regarded as based, on blind faith
- A keener sense of the full range of human possibility than is usually supplied by a twenty-first century university education

Schedule

I. *Orthodox Way*, "Prologue: Signposts on the Way"; *Reader*, 1, 2

Aug. 18, No assignment (first day of class)

Aug. 23, *Lecture 1*; Aug. 25, *Lecture 2*; Aug. 30, *Lecture 3*

II. *Orthodox Way*, Chapter 1, “God as Mystery”; *Reader*, 3, 4

Sep. 1, *Lecture 4*; Sep. 6, *Lecture 5*

III. *Orthodox Way*, Chapter 2, “God as Trinity”; *Reader*, 5, 6

Sep. 8, *Lecture 6*; Sep. 13, No class; Sep. 15, *Lecture 7*; Sep. 20, *Lecture 8*

IV. *Orthodox Way*, Chapter 3, “God as Creator”; *Reader*, 7, 8

Sep. 22, *Lecture 9*; Sep. 27, *Lecture 10*; Sep. 29, *Lecture 11*

V. *Orthodox Way*, Chapter 4, “God as Man”; *Reader*, 9, 10, 11, Appendix

Oct. 4, *Lecture 12*

Oct. 6, Review for Midterm and Open Discussion

Midterm Examination via Blackboard, due by Oct. 11

Oct. 11, *Lecture 13*; Oct. 13, Fall Break (no class); Oct. 18, *Lecture 14*

VI. *Orthodox Way*, Chapter 5, “God as Spirit”; *Reader*, 12, 13

Oct. 20, *Lecture 15*; Oct. 25, *Lecture 16*; Oct. 27, *Lecture 17*

VII. *Orthodox Way*, Chapter 6, “God as Prayer”; *Reader*, 14, 15

Nov. 1, *Lecture 18*; Nov. 3, *Lecture 19*; Nov. 8, Election Day (no class);

Nov. 10, *Lecture 20*

VIII. *Orthodox Way*, “Epilogue: God as Eternity”; *Reader*, 16, 17

Nov. 15, *Lecture 21*; Nov. 17, *Lecture 22*; Nov. 22, No class (AAR Meeting);

Nov. 24, Thanksgiving (no class); Nov. 29, *Lecture 23*

Dec. 1, Review for Final Exam and Open Discussion

Dec. 8, **Final Examination** in class (12:30 p.m.)

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m., or by appointment.