
SL 210 THEOLOGY 1: AUTHORITY, TRINITY, CREATION, ANTHROPOLOGY, CHRISTOLOGY AND SOTERIOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION:

This course is the first of two courses designed to carefully and critically examine the central doctrines or teachings of the Christian church. In this course, students will first study and reflect upon the foundations of the Christian Faith and will then explore how the classical orthodox doctrines have shaped the life of the Church in its context. The focus of this particular course will be the question of what is theology, how a person makes sense of scripture for theological purposes, the doctrines of God, the Trinity, creation, sin and suffering, Christology, salvation, and anthropology.

STUDENT OUTCOMES:

By the end of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Understand the key points in the doctrines of the authority, God, Trinity, Creation, Christ, sin and salvation, and anthropology.
2. Identify and explain, with examples, a Lutheran hermeneutic (method of interpretation) based on a "theology of the cross" and "Law and Gospel," and how it can be used to interpret Christian doctrines
3. Explain, using examples, of how Christian doctrine has changed over time, according to its historical contexts
4. Identify and evaluate one's own theological "pre-understandings" (where you are coming from) regarding these classical, historical doctrines of the church
5. Appreciated and express their theological insights clearly, logically, and effectively in oral and written form.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Read the assigned readings given in this syllabus carefully before every class, and reflect upon the question posed in the course outline for this course. Students with special needs that might require a change in the way an assignment is handled are urged to contact the professor.

1) Daily Bible and Catechism Readings—10% of final grade

The Bible will be your main foundational resources in the parish—in worship, at people's bedsides, in their homes, in your sermon study, in confirmation and adult classes, and even in your counseling. The Catechisms (and the other symbols of the Book of Concord) bear witness to the Living God, clearly summarizing the main themes of scripture necessary for "life and salvation."

Because simple knowledge of the Bible's contents is essential both to pastoral ministry and good theology, I would like you to establish (if you have not already) a daily reading of the Bible. You may start where you like and may include Bible readings assigned in other classes. Read two chapters *each* day (up to at least ten per week); do not skip days and then catch up by reading in larger chunks. I would prefer that you read logical units of material rather than jumping around too much, especially when the material has a single theme or is a closely woven narrative. Try to cover some of each of the major biblical sections.

Plan also to read through the *Small Catechism* and *Large Catechism* during the semester. That will involve reading about a page and a half per day. Luther said in his preface to the *Large Catechism*:

I am also a doctor and a preacher, just as learned and experienced as all of them who are so high and mighty. Nevertheless, each morning, and whenever else I have time, I do as a child who is being taught the catechism and I read and recite word for word the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Psalms, etc. I must still read and study the catechism daily, and yet I cannot master it as I wish, but must remain a child and pupil of the catechism – and I also do so gladly. These fussy, fastidious fellows would like quickly, with one reading, to be doctors above all doctors, to know it all and to need nothing more. Well this, too, is a sure sign that they despise both their office and the people's souls, yes, even God and his Word. They do not need to fall, for they have already fallen all too horribly. What they need, however, is to become children and begin to learn the ABCs, which they think they have long since outgrown.¹

Chronicle your reading, giving the date read and the location of the reading (eg. John 1-2). Try to read with "naive" eyes, as if seeing the scripture and the catechisms for the first time. Keep in mind questions such as: "What is surprising, disturbing? What doesn't fit with your experience of reality, or opens up that experience in a new way? What new connection do you see with another part of scripture?"

The reading of scripture and the catechisms will be self-marked. If you complete the 30 chapters of scripture and the *Large Catechism* and *Small Catechism*, then you will get full marks (100% – proportionately less if you do not complete all the readings). Hand in your reading report on the last day of classes with the total number of chapters and catechisms that you read clearly marked.

2) Discussion of Questions – 20% of final grade

For every class, a question will be posed to help you in your readings. Each class will begin with a discussion of the question, in order to get to the heart of the issues before us. Therefore, you will be expected to have thought about the question before class. Please come to class ready to discuss the question at the beginning of class, explaining their answers. We will explore the

¹ Large Catechism, Longer Preface, 7-8. Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P., eds. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), Page 380.

possible assumptions in the answers and determine whether there are other answers that will better get to the heart of our subject. Therefore a regular effort to advance new ideas to the class, to engage the ideas of others, and to publicly express oneself theologically is essential.

3) Two Theological “Briefs” – 15% each (30% of final grade).

Twice during the course (at approximately 1/3 and 2/3 of the way through the course) you will be asked to reflect on a particular doctrine that we have just studied. In 5 – 6 pages (double-spaced, 1" margins, 12-point type) you will answer the following questions: 1) How do you understand that particular doctrine before you came into this course; 2) how your readings and class discussions have modified that understanding; and 3) what you would like to investigate further on the subject. Any reference to readings or other public material (eg. internet, videos, lectures, etc) should be properly footnoted according to normal LTS standards (ask the professor for a copy of the standards if you aren't sure).

The first theological brief is due on **October 13th** at the beginning of class. You may choose to do your brief on the doctrine the understanding of authority and the scripture, the Trinity, Creation, or Sin. The second theological brief is due **November 17th**, at the beginning of class. You may choose to do your second brief on the doctrine of Christology or Soteriology. Because these reflections are short it is important that each paper be clear and concise, tightly focused and flow logically. Papers will be docked five percentage points if they are late and will not be accepted beyond one class after they are due – unless special arrangements have been made *at least two days before the due date* with the professor or in cases of real emergency.

4) Final Paper – 40% of final grade

A final paper of 18-20 pages, typed, double-spaced, with 1" margins, using 12-point proportionally-spaced font. This paper will deal with a critical analysis of the varying approaches of one of the doctrines covered, and concluding with a proposal for how this doctrine is crucial for the parish context. This paper is due on the last day of classes (**December 3rd**).

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Braaten, Carl E., and Jenson, Robert W., eds. *Christian Dogmatics*. (2 Volumes) Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984. This is the standard Lutheran Christian Theology textbook in two volumes, and is well worth its purchase cost. Volume 1 will be used for *SL 210 - Theology I*, and Volume 2 will be used for *SL 211 - Theology 2*.

McGrath, Alister E., *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. 4th Edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

Also helpful are encyclopedias of theology, since they summarize many of the ideas, terms, and themes of Christian theology. Two recommended encyclopedias are:

Musser and Price, eds., *A New Handbook of Christian Theology*. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992).
or:

McGrath, Alister, ed. *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought* (Cambridge, Blackwell, 1993).

Class Schedule and Assigned Readings

	Topic	Required Readings	Question for the start of the class
Sept 13	Introduction to Theology:		
Sept 15	Hermeneutics: the theology of the cross	"Introducing a Theology of the Cross" (on professor's website)	From the perspective of the theology of the cross, what becomes the key starting points for theological discussion?
Sept 20a	Hermeneutics: Law and Gospel	Forde, "Law and Gospel in Luther's Hermeneutics" (on professor's website)	How does using "Law and Gospel" as a hermeneutic affect how you read scripture?
Sept 20b	Theology: Its Nature and its Task	-Braaten & Jenson 5-28 -McGrath, 101- 120	Why is it important for you to study theology, and what do you think is the most important task of theology?
Sept 27a	Theology: It's Sources	-McGrath, 121-52	What is the most important source of theology? Based on your answer, what problems arise from claiming this authority?
Sept 2b	Authority and Theology	-Braaten & Jenson 29-82 -FC-Epit. Binding Summary, 1-8 -FC-SD Binding Summary, 1-20	In what ways can you say that scriptures and doctrines are 'authoritative'? What is the source of that authority?
Oct 4a	Images of God	-McGrath 203-209 -Braaten & Jenson 163-177	How would you describe God to a 6 year old?
Oct 4b	Attributes of God	-McGrath 209-222; 231-234 -Braaten & Jenson 181-190	What problems do you solve, and what problems do you create when you say that God is omnipotent?
Oct 11	No class – Thanksgiving Monday		
Oct 18a	Speaking of God: God's self-revelation	McGrath, 153-172 -Braaten & Jenson 197-228 -SC III. 1-11 -LC III.35-70	What useful knowledge of God can be gained through reason, and what of God's nature is not disclosed in God's self-revelation?
Oct 18b	The Nature of the Triune God	-McGrath 243-271 -Braaten & Jenson 83-162	Why is there a need to understand God as Triune? What are the advantages and dangers of this doctrine?
Oct 25	No class – Reading Week		
Nov 1a	God and Creation	-McGrath 223-230 -Braaten & Jenson 269-318 -SC II.1-2; III.12-14 -LC II.1-24; III.71-84	Is the creation which God created still good, or is God recreating the world now or will recreate the world sometime in the future?
Nov 1b	Creation and Sin	-McGrath 360-368 -Braaten & Jenson 363-408 -SC III.15-21 -LC III.85-124	Has sin caused a blemish on creation, or has it totally changed the very nature of creation?
Nov 8a	Original Sin and sins	-Braaten & Jenson 409-468 -SC I. 1-22 -LC I.1-333	How is original sin related to sins? How is it different?
Nov 8b	The Nature of Christ: The Historical Jesus and God's Realm	-McGrath 305-325 -Braaten & Jenson 483-514	What was the central message that Jesus preached?

Date	Topic	Required Reading	Question for the start of the class
Nov 15a	The Nature of Christ: Divinity and Humanity	McGrath 272-304 -Braaten & Jenson 517-544	If Jesus knew he was going to be raised from the dead, could he take the crucifixion seriously?
Nov 15b	The Work of Christ in relation to the Trinity	-Braaten & Jenson 545-556	How did the death and resurrection of Christ affect God the Father and God the Holy Spirit?
Nov 22a	The Work of Christ: Soteriology and justification	-McGrath 326-349 -Braaten & Jenson Vol 2, 47-64	How does the work of Christ justify us?
Nov 22b	The Work of Christ: Soteriology and Classical Atonement Theories	-McGrath 349-359 -Braaten and Jenson Vol 2, 5-46, 65-100	How does Christ save us? What, if anything, changes in the relationship between the persons of the Triune God, and between God, humanity, and creation?
Nov 29a	Human Nature: Sin and Grace	-McGrath 368-390	What are the dangers and the attractions in the attempts to explain the relationship between sin and grace?
Nov 29b	The Human Being	-Braaten and Jensen, 323-357	What is the purpose for our being on earth, and what does it mean to be fully human