

Seminary of the Southwest  
Spring 2018

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**Course Information**

T1310 Constructive Theology  
T/Th, 10:15-11:30

**Instructor Information**

Anthony D. Baker  
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**Course Description**

Is it possible to speak responsibly about the Creator of heaven and earth? Can we identify better and worse arguments for drawing conclusions about God's nature and the nature of a world ordered toward God? This course will study the key doctrines of Christianity, from Trinity to salvation to eschatology, making use of a broad range of texts and ideas from across the historical and geographical range of the Anglican and ecumenical theological tradition. At the same time, we will study the structure of theological arguments, with the goal of gaining skills in creative and constructive theological communication.

**Course Objectives**

Students who successfully complete this class will be able to

1. Articulate and explain the key topics of Christian theology. (Requirements 1 and 7)
2. Critically and charitably analyze complex theological questions. (Requirements 2 and 5).
3. Formulate multifaceted responses to complex theological questions. (Requirements 3 and 5).
4. Formulate and respond to a theological question in dialogue with other theologians. (Requirements 4 and 6).

**Required Texts**

All weekly readings posted on Populi.

**Recommended Texts**

John Behr, *The Mystery of Christ: Life in Death*  
Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, *Holy Teaching: Introducing the Summa Theologia of St. Thomas Aquinas*  
Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology*  
Mark McIntosh, *Divine Teaching*  
Janice Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language*

## **Course Requirements**

1. A midterm exam, due before class on March 8, assessing your fluency with key topics, and also your ability to respond to a good theological question. Uploaded from and turned in on Populi.
2. “Good question” assignment, due before class on February 22. Using the algorithm and example provided on Populi, identify a good theological question. Write at least 250 and no more than 500 words.
3. “Good answer” assignment, due before class on March 22. Using the algorithm and example provided on Populi, work out a good theological answer to a good theological question. This can be either the same question as you worked with for the previous assignment, or a new one. Write at least 500 and no more than 750 words.
4. Research templates, due before class on April 5 and April 12. Using the templates posted on Populi, summarize arguments relevant to your “Good Answer” from two separate authors. Write at least 250 and no more than 500 words for both.
5. Constructive Paragraph Assignments, due before class on most Thursdays. Answer the question provided for that day.
6. Constructive Essay, due Friday, May 11, 5PM. Using the rubric posted on Populi, write a paper between 1000-1500 words that identifies a good theological question, engages with at least two different authors, and crafts a good theological answer.
7. “Pop” interpretations for class discussion, due throughout semester. Your performance on these will determine your class participation grade. For full points, students will lead the class in an interpretation, or respond to an interpretation, of a video or reading three times during the semester, and also remain active in those discussions in which he or she is not a lead or a respondent. See Rubric on Populi.

## **Grading Policy**

The following rubric will be used to interpret students’ overall performance in fulfillment of the requirements for T1320:

- A Outstanding in all respects
  - A- Outstanding in most respects
  - B+ Proficient in all respects with some elements achieving a higher quality
  - B Proficient in all respects
  - B- Proficient in some respects but with some clear weaknesses
  - C+ Showing development but lacking proficiency
  - C Showing a basic level of development sufficient to pass a course but not sufficient to display proficiency in a program
  - F Beginning level work that does not display sufficient knowledge to pass the course or assignment. No credit shall be given for a grade of F. A grade of F remains on a student’s permanent record. If a grade of F is incurred in a required course, the course must be retaken. (See section J for special circumstances.)
- AU Audit: course not taken for credit

**Grades will be weighted as follows:**

Midterm 20%  
Good Question assignment 10%  
Good Answer assignment 10%  
Research Templates 10%  
Constructive Paragraphs 20%  
Research Paper 20%  
Class participation 10%

**Course Schedule**

Lesson 1: Scripture and the Beginning of Theology

Tuesday, January 30  
“Where Theology Happens”

Thursday, February 1

**Read:** Francis Young, “From Pondering Scripture to the First Principles of Christian Theology”

**Turn in:** Constructive Paragraph. *Why study theology?*

Lesson 2: Faith and Reason

Tuesday, February 6  
**Watch Video Lecture:** “The Desire to Understand”  
**Read:** Bonaventure, from *Breviloquium*  
McIntosh, “Strange Calling”

Thursday, February 8

**Turn in:** Constructive Paragraph. *Is faith reasonable?*

Lesson 3: Experience and Tradition

Tuesday, February 13  
**Watch:** “Quod Videtur: On Beginning with Experience”  
**Read:** Louth, “Tradition and the Tacit”  
Gutierrez, “Theology: A Critical Reflection”

Thursday, February 15

**Turn in:** Constructive Paragraph. *Does drawing on personal experience help or hinder theological conversation?*

Lesson 4: The End of Theology

Tuesday, February 20  
**Watch:** “An Encounter in God”  
**Read:** Gregory of Nazianzus, *Fifth Theological Oration*  
Rowan Williams, “Trinity and Revelation”

Thursday, February 22  
**Turn in:** Good Question Assignment

Lesson 5: God in Christian Theology  
Tuesday, February 27  
**Watch:** “Trinity and Unity”  
**Read:** Gregory of Nyssa, *To Ablabius*  
Soskice, “The Kindness of God”

Thursday, March 1  
**Turn in:** Constructive Paragraph: *How does the Trinity matter for Christian faith and life?*

Lesson 6: God’s Creation  
Tuesday, March 6  
**Watch:** “The Fittingness of Creation”  
**Read:** Irenaeus, from *Against Heresies*  
Tanner, “God and the Efficacy of Creatures”

Thursday, March 8  
**Turn in: Midterm**

March 11-19 Spring Break

Lesson 7: Sin and Evil  
Tuesday, March 20  
**Watch:** “The Triumph of Tragedy”  
**Read:** Alison, from *The Joy of Being Wrong*  
Irenaeus, from *Against Heresies*

Thursday, March 22  
**Turn in:** Good Answer Assignment

Lesson 8: Prayer  
Tuesday, March 27  
**Watch:** “Moving the Unmoved”  
**Read:** von Balthasar, “The Necessity of Contemplation”  
Maximus the Confessor, “Commentary on the Our Father”

Thursday, March 29  
**Turn in:** Constructive Paragraph. *Is praying an implicit form of Pelagianism?*

Lesson 9: Christology  
Tuesday, April 3  
**Watch:** “Divine-human harmonics”  
**Read:** Maximus, “On the Two Wills of Christ in Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane”  
Tanner, “Jesus”

Thursday, April 5  
**Turn in:** Good Answer  
Research template

Lesson 10: The Passion  
Tuesday, April 10  
**Watch:** “The Kenosis of Power”  
**Read:** Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, pp. 219-44  
Augustine, “The Trinity,” pp. 74-81

Thursday, April 12  
**Turn in:** Research template

Lesson 11: Pneumatology and Grace  
Tuesday, April 17  
**Watch:** “The Triumph of Grace”  
**Read:** Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, paragraphs 1-27  
Milbank, “Grace: The Midwinter’s Sacrifice”

Thursday, April 19  
**Turn in:** Constructive Paragraph. *How would Christian theology change without a pneumatology?*

Lesson 12: Ecclesiology  
Tuesday, April 24  
**Watch:** “Proclaiming His Death until He Comes”  
**Read:** Cavanaugh, “The Sinfulness and Visibility of the Church”  
Augustine, “Homily 12 on The Gospel of John”

Thursday, April 26  
**Turn in:** Constructive Paragraph. *What does it mean to believe in the church?*

Lesson 13: Eschatology  
Tuesday May 1  
**Watch:** “Christ Will Come Again”  
**Read:** von Balthasar, excerpt from “The Judgment of Christ”  
Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, pp. 91-120

Thursday, May 3  
**Turn in:** Constructive Paragraph. *What follows, theologically, from the claim that Christ will come again?*

**Friday May 11: Constructive Essays due (by 5PM)**

**Summary of the Seminary of the Southwest Conversation Covenant:**

A seminary community is a school of inquiry and interpretation: inquiry into the mystery of God in Jesus Christ and interpretation, in both action and reflection, of God's creative and redemptive love. Frank, confident, and trustful conversation is an essential part of our common learning. Often, though, we are led into difficult, even disturbing, conversations as we bring the length and breadth of our assumptions, hopes, opinions, and certainties, into the formative power of Christian faith. Avoiding the issues around which passion and disagreement reside might well be an easier path, but commitment to remaining in conversation with one another despite our differences is part of our calling as disciples of Jesus Christ.

**Policy on Disabilities**

Every reasonable effort, within the limits of the resources available to the Seminary and to the individual Professor, will be made to accommodate students with recognized physical disabilities and diagnosed learning disabilities such as dyslexia. See the Academic Code for more detail regarding the Seminary's Policy on Disabilities.

**Attendance Policy**

More than four absences will result in a failing grade for this course.

**Credit Hour Policy**

The seminary standard for one credit hour consists of a minimum of one fifty-minute hour per week of in-class instruction and a minimum of two hours of outside work for the student over 13 weeks, plus either a 14th week of instruction or a week of out-of-class independent learning in which exams are taken or papers are produced.

**Center for Writing and Creative Expression**

The Center for Writing and Creative Expression (CWCE) provides support to all SSW students in all phases of the research and writing process. It offers one-on-one consultations, long-term writing partnerships, Friday afternoon writing workshops, topical writing circles, and print and online resource libraries. To schedule an appointment with a writing consultant or to learn more about CWCE services, please visit our webpage at [www.ssw.edu/writing-center](http://www.ssw.edu/writing-center) or email us at [writing.center@ssw.edu](mailto:writing.center@ssw.edu).