Introduction to Christian Theology:  
The Basic Components of Christian Faith and Life  

(Wednesday, 4:30-7:30 pm)

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- Course’s Description: This course aims at guiding the students through a comprehensive survey of all the major dogmatic elements in the Christian confessions and theological discourses: the doctrine of revelation, the doctrine of God/Trinity, Christology, Soteriology, Christian anthropology, Pneumatology, Ecclesiology, Eschatology, etc. It endeavors to providing the students with basic, coherent and accessible, knowledge about every basic element of faith that underpin the Christian community’s life in the world. The survey would be pursued in reliance on the book of Daniel Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding and also other readings whenever this is necessary.

- Course’s Objectives:  
  At the end of the course the students would:
  1- acquire an introductory knowledge of the basic components of every Christian doctrinal claim
  2- analyze and perceive the core argument of one contemporary issue related to each Christian doctrinal teaching and its impact on the Christian life today
  3- would be exposed to various theological literatures that will develop their ability to read coherently and perceptively Christian theological literature.
  4-recognizing the relation between the intellectual and the practical dimensions of Christian faith and construct an initial understanding of the mutual impact of these two dimensions of faith on each other.

- Text Book:

This text is going to be used during the whole course. So, the students are expected to purchase their own copy of the book. The book would be studied chapter-by-chapter during the semester.
- **Required Readings**: to be read, studied and presented by the students during the sessions. The texts are going to be on the courses’ reserve shelf in the library, and the students not required to buy their own copies of these reading’s books. The texts in alphabetic order are:


- **Course’s Outlines and Sessions’ Reading Assignments**

I- **Week One (Wed- Sept. 3, 2014):**

1) Introducing the Course

II- **Week Two (Wed- Sept. 10, 2014):**

2) The Task of Theology (1)


3) The Task of Theology (2): As Church Practice

III- Week Three (Wed- Sept. 17, 2014):

4) The Meaning of Revelation (1)  


IV- Week Four (Wed- Sept. 24, 2014):

6) The Authority of Scripture (1)  

7) The Authority of Scripture (2): in Terms of Function  

V- Week Five (Wed- Oct. 1, 2014):

8) The Triune God (1)  
[R.R: D. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, pp. 64-91]

9) The Triune God (2): The Gender Question  

VI- Week Six (Wed- Oct. 8, 2014):

10) The Good Creation (1)  

11) The Good Creation (2): Panentheistic Relationality  

VII- Week Seven (Wed- Oct. 15, 2014):  
(papers proposals & outlines’ submission)

12) Divine Providence (1)  

13) Divine Providence (2): The Scriptural View  
VIII- Week Eight (Wed- Oct. 22. 2014):

14) The Theology of Humanity (1)  
[R.R: D. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, pp. 139-162]

15) The Theology of Humanity (2): Theocentric Particularity  
[presentation]  

IX- Week Nine (Wed- Oct. 29. 2014):

16) Jesus the Christ (1)  

17) Jesus the Christ (2): in Relation to Modernity  
[presentation]  

X- Week Ten (Wed- Nov. 5. 2014):

18) Faith and/in Context (1)  

19) Faith and/in Context (2): Context as Method  
[presentation]  
[R.R: S. Bevans. *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective*, pp. 45-60, 164-188]

XI- Week Eleven (Wed- Nov. 12. 2014):

20) The Holy Spirit (1)  

21) The Holy Spirit (2): Inspiration & Conversion  
[presentation]  

XII- Week Twelve (Wed- Nov. 19. 2014):

22) The Community of God/ Church (1)  

23) The Community of God/ Church (2): in Postmodernity  
[presentation]  
Reading Days...Reading Days...Reading Days...Reading Days...

Reading Day

XIII- Week Thirteen (Wed- Dec. 3, 2014):

24) Church Service and Ministry (1)
[**R.R:** D. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, pp. 274-300]

25) Church Service and Ministry (2): in Relation to Homosexuality (presentation)
[**R.R:** C. Glaser, “The Love that Dare Not to Pray Its Name: the Gay and Lesbian Movement in America’s Churches,” pp. 150-160; and J. Rogers, “Sex, Philosophy and Politics: How and What the Church Must Decide in the Debate over Ordination of Homosexuals,” pp. 161-177, both in *Homosexuality in the Church*]

XIV- Week Fourteen (Wed- Dec. 10, 2014):

26) Christian Hope (1)
[**R.R:** D. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, pp. 330-353]

27) Conclusion & Evaluation

- Course Requirements and Assessment Expectations

1) **Assigned readings’ preparation and active class participation:** Students are required to read these texts as thoroughly and perceptively as they can and then to demonstrate an active class participation by coming to the sessions with questions or comments on them and the taught materials therein.

2) **Presentations:** the students are required to prepare a presentation for the readings of the first session during every study week. The instructor would ask the students to sign in for the required presentations during the first introductory session of the course. The presentation must be no more than **45 minutes** long. The second 45 minutes of the session would be spent in open discussion between the presenter and the classmates over the texts’ contents and aspects related to their subjects. The students are free to use any audio-visual or material they find useful in performing their presentations. Every presenter must:

   A- present the content of the readings perceptively and coherently and make sure that every main argument in the texts have been given fair presentation before his/her class-mates.

   B- give his/her own appraisal and point of view on the text’s subject and claims.

   C- attend to the questions of the classmates in a way that would invite for further discussion.
3) **Term Papers:** students are expected to write 12-15 pages-long papers (foot/endnotes, bibliography, outlines, are excluded). They must submit them to the instructor at the end of the first or the second session of **Week Fifteen**. The students are welcomed to propose a subject and write on it after taking the permission of the instructor about it. The term paper’s proposal and tentative outlines & bibliography must be submitted to the instructor no later than **Week Seven**. Any failure in meeting this deadline would cost the student 5 **points** loss of the term papers’ final grade, whatever this grade would be. Some of the possible suggestions for term-papers’ topics can be the following:

- Daniel Migliore claims that there is a third theological method to be characterized as ‘theology from below’, and he opines that such a theology is seen in ‘liberation theology’ and ‘contextual theology’ alike: do ‘liberation theology’ and ‘contextual theology’ truly represent a ‘theology from below’? And if they do, do they do theology from below in the same way? Are there differences between liberation and contextual theologies, or are they two names for one and the same theological discourse?

- compare and contrast between Karl Barth’s vertical-referential and wolfhart Pannenberg’s horizontal-historical understanding of the nature and role of revelation in Christian faith. Which one of these two views is more biblically and theologically persuasive and plausible in your opinion?

- in the Protestant traditional thought, the central and sole canonical authority in the church has dominantly been given to the Holy Scripture. To the contrary, in the liturgical churches (catholic and orthodox) this central authority and canonical refrentiality has been bestowed upon the teaching of the church (Tradition) along with, and sometimes as preceding, the Holy Scripture’s. Explain the different understandings of ‘authority’ that lies behind each stance and then assess the validity and invalidity of ‘scripture alone’ and ‘Tradition primarily’, proposing a possible reconciliation between Scripture’s and Tradition’s authority.

- Christian theologians emphasize that confessing God as triune is a summery description of the scriptural witness to God. On the other hand, they also stress that the scriptural attestation of God is monotheistic (i.e., God is one) and far from polytheistic. How can we theologically reconcile ‘God is one’ with ‘God is triune’, and how can we explain this combination of threeness and oneness in a plausibly scriptural and theological manner?

- in her book *She who Is: the Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, Elizabeth Johnson suggests a correction to the Christian doctrine of God via speaking about the trinity in masculine and feminine terms and expressions alike. Is such a proposal theologically tenable, or does it rather distort the scriptural and doctrinal discourses on the trinity? Discuss this question critically and offer your own proposal on the trinity in relation to gender.

- One of the central beliefs in Christianity is the confession that God created heaven and earth and invited the humans to tend creation and protect it. How can such a theology of creation speaks to the natural ecological crisis earth suffers from today? What is the relevance of the doctrine of creation to the call for developing a theological and ethical stance against the human driving of earth and the life it sustains into catastrophic peril?

- in his interpretation of providence and Sin in *Church Dogamtics*, 3.III, Karl Barth describes Evil and sinfulness as ‘nothingness’. Explain and analyze Barth’s notion of ‘nothingness’, and then: 1) explore this notion’s implications on God’s providence and lordship over creation, and 2) state your own appraisal of the value of this notion in presenting a plausible theodicy for today.
one of the Christian main anthropological claims is that human beings were created in the ‘image of God’: in what sense the humans are in the image of God: is it in terms of what the human is, what she does, or what he/she has? Is it in terms of rational nature, human characteristics, gender identity, life patterns or what? Explore this inquiry by referring to some biblical and theological answers to it. Then, state what you find to be the most appropriate interpretation of ‘image of God’ in today’s context.

- compare and contrast between Karl Barth’s *Logos* christology (christology from above) and Wolfhart Pannenberg’s *retrospective* christology (christology from below). What are the conceptual and methodological differences between their readings of Jesus Christ’s reality? Are they contradictory or complementary? Which one of them speaks more meaningfully to the church, and in case you believe that neither does so alone, what kind of a reconciliatory christology one can develop out of both?

- what does it mean that “the scripture is inspired by God”? How is this inspiration related to the work of the Holy Spirit in the text and in the reader? Discuss this question to show one of the aspects of the Holy Spirit’s role and lordship in Christian life. Which notion of inspiration in your opinion would be more fairly and appropriately reflective of the Holy Spirit’s lordship over the texts rather than the opposite?

- should the church include homosexuals in its community and should it grant them full rights, equal human dignity, active membership, and then allow the dedicated among them (male or female) clerical/pastoral ordination, or should the church rather tolerate the homosexuals’ existent in its community out of compassion toward sinners who are in need of redemption and spiritual healing, denying them eventually clerical ordination or active role in the church? Discuss this question from biblical and theological perspectives, stating at the end your own stand-point.

- can the Christians continue to affirm the finality of Christ and the universal centrality of his salvation in a world where the plurality of cultures and religions increasingly points to the need for a spirit of openness and dialogue? What are the classical Christian answers to the inquiry on the universality of salvation in Christ alone and which one of them you think is the most appropriate stance for today’s multi-faith world and why?

**- Grading Division:**

1- reading’s preparation and class participation *(15%)*

2- presentations: *(35%)*

3-Term Papers’ proposal, tentative outlines and bibliography: *(10%)*

4-Term Papers: *(40%)*

**- Grading Criterion**

Students are graded using the A, B, C, or F system, with “+” and “−” markings allowed. For purposes of this course, these grades mean:

- A Exceptional in several or most ways; completes all tasks, is creative and even original in content, and displays mastery of expression.
Adequate in all basic ways; parts of the task are slighted, the content has minor weakness, and expression is competent yet not compelling.

Inadequate in some ways; does not address significant tasks, shows weak or erroneous content, and expression sometimes obstructs understanding.

The students can find their course’s grade posted in SONISWEB starting from January 10th, 2013.

- Additional Policies:

1) Attendance: Attendance in class is required. If you know you will be unable to attend a class session please inform the professor in advance. Missing two sessions will result in an automatic lowering of your final grade by 10%. Missing three or more sessions will result in automatic failure of the course.

2) Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the failure to give proper credit for the words or ideas of another person, whether published or unpublished, and is strictly prohibited. Credit will not be given for written work in this course containing plagiarism, and plagiarism may result in a failing grade for the entire course. Please consult the Plagiarism Policy on pp. 56-57 of the Hartford Seminary Catalogue 2011-2012, and/or contact the instructor with questions in this regard.

- Selected Bibliography

The books enlisted here are by no means exhaustive of all the literature on the various elements of Christian faith. I do not enlist here the classical literature of basic theological authorities, like Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Schleiermacher, Barth, Tillich, Rahner, Bultmann, Brunner. While I strongly encouraged the students to go through the works of these aforementioned classic theological minds, I present here concise, relatively more contemporary, bibliographical suggestions on every studied subject. I also invite the students to expand their reading spectrum beyond them in their term-papers’ writing and further studies.

- Theology & Theologians in General


- **The Meaning of Revelation**

- **The Authority of Scripture**
  Sauter, Gerhard. *Protestant Theology at the Crossroads*, Grand Rapids, USA/Cambridge, UK: W.B.


The Triune God


Hanson, R.P.C. The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God, the Arian Controversy 318-381, New York: T&T Clark/ Continuum Imprint, 2005.


The Good Creation

Dalton, Anne Marie and Henry C. Simmons. Ecotheology and the Practice of Hope, New York: University
of New York State, 2010.

- **Divine Providence**

  Helseth, Paul Kiosk; William Lane Craig; Ron Highfield and Gregory A. Boyd, *Four Views on Divine Providence*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.

- **Theology and Humanity**

  Jungel, Eberhard, “On Becoming Truly Human. The Significance of the Reformation Distinction between


- **Jesus the Christ**


Awad, Najeet G., “Is a *Perichoresis* between Theological Interpretation and Historical Criticism Possible? toward a Balanced Hermeneutics of Scriptural Christology,” in *Theological Review*, 31/2, pp. 152-178.


Pannenberg, Wolfhart. Jesus- God and Man, 2nd ed., Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (trans.),
Schwarz, Hans. Christology, Grand Rapids, USA/ Cambridge, UK: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company,
1998.
Sykes, S.W and J.P. Clayton (eds.), Christ Faith and History: Cambridge Studies in Christology,
Rea, Michael (ed.), Oxford Readings in Philosophical Theology 1: Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement,
Rosato, Philip J., “Spirit-Christology as Access to Trinitarian Theology,” in God’s Life in Trinity, Miroslav

- Faith And/In Context
Brown, Delwin; Sheila Creeve Davaney and Kathryn Tanner (eds.). Converging with Culture: Theologians
in Dialogue with Cultural Analysis and Criticism, Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press,
Cartledge, Mark J and David Cheetham (eds.), Intercultural Theology: Approaches and Themes, London:
SCM Press, 2011.
Costa, Ruy O (Ed.). One Faith, Many Cultures: Inculuration, Indigenization and Contextualization,
Gutiérez, Gustavo, “Theology, Spirituality and Historical Praxis,” in The Future of Theology: Essays in
Moltmann, Jürgen. God for a Secular Society: the Public Relevance of Theology, London: SCM Press,
1999.
Sauter, Gerhard. Protestant Theology at the Crossroads, Grand Rapids, USA/ Cambridge, UK: W.B.
II.
Thiemann, Ronald F. Constructing a Public Theology: the Church in a Pluralistic Culture, Louisville:
1959.
Yoder, John Howard. For the Nations: Essays Public & Evangelical, Grand Rapids, USA/ Cambridge, UK:

- The Holy Spirit
Siebeck, 2011.


- **The Community of God/Church**


- **Church Service and Ministry**


- **Theology of Other Faiths**


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**Christian Hope**


