

## **The Triune God:** Basic Trends in the Christian Doctrine of God

Instructor: Prof. Dr. **Najib George Awad**  
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Office Hours: Monday & Tuesday: 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Meetings: upon appointment to be agreed upon with the instructor via email message.

**- Course's Description:** For many non-Christians, and sometimes Christians as well, one of the most puzzling and controversial teachings in Christian faith is the claim that God is triune in nature: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This course aims to explore the biblical, historical, and philosophical contexts that drove Christians to develop an understanding of God as Trinity. It first unpacks the biblical roots of the church's encounter and experience of God as creating Father, redeeming Son, and sanctifying Spirit. It then traces the historical development of this churchly spiritual experience into an intellectual trinitarian theology by investigating some major Christian discourses and trends considered to be milestones on the long historical track of the doctrine of the Trinity in Christianity.

**- Course's Objectives:**

At the end of the course the students would:

- 1- acquire a systematic and historical analysis and understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity
- 2- would have a chance to link the doctrine of the Trinity to some contemporary issues that are pertinent to today's world.
- 3- will learn how to discuss carefully and argue critically some primary theological texts on the Trinity and to reflect their implications for today.

**- Course's Object in Relation to the Study Program (MA #1):**

At the end of the course, the students would have the chance to

- 1- To acquire foundational and critical knowledge of Christian religion.
- 2- To accumulate knowledge of the practices of Christian religious tradition
- 3- To acquire knowledge and skills for dialogical and constructive engagement with diversity.

## **Course's Outlines and Sessions' Reading Assignments**

<b>I- <u>Week One (Thursday, Sept. 6. 2018): Introduction</u></b>
- <b>Session (1) (4:00- 5:30):</b> introducing the course and its syllabus
- <b>Session (2) (5:40- 6:45):</b> The Foundations of the Belief in a Triune God

<b>II- <u>Week Two (Thursday, Sept. 13. 2018): The Trinitarian Language of the Bible</u></b>
- <b>Session (1) (4:00- 5:30):</b> 'Father, Son & Spirit' in the Hebrew Scripture [R.R: Hans Schwarz, Hans. <i>The Trinity</i> , pp. 1-14]
- <b>Session (2) (5:40- 6:45):</b> 'Father, Son & Spirit' in the New Testament [R.R: Hans Schwarz, Hans. <i>The Trinity</i> , pp. 15- 34]

**III- Week Three (Thursday, Sept. 20. 2018): The Trinity in History: 4<sup>th</sup> Century Patristic Theology (1)**

- **Session (1) (4:00- 5:30):** The Trinity and Rejecting Christ's Divinity: Arianism  
[R.R: Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, pp. 95-116]

-**Session (2) (5:40- 6:45):** Counter Trinitarian Orthodoxy: Athanasius  
[R.R: Athanasius, *Orations Against the Arians*, Bk. 1, in *The Trinitarian Controversy*, William G. Rusch, pp. 63-129]

**IV- Week Four (Thursday, Sept. 27. 2018): The Trinity in History: 4<sup>th</sup> Century Patristic Theology (2)**

- **Session (1) (4:00- 5:30):** The Trinity and the Rejection of the Holy Spirit's Divinity: Eunomianism  
[R.R: Richard P. Vaggione, *Eunomius: the Extant Works*, pp. 67-75]

- **Session (2) (5:40- 6:45):** Counter Trinitarian Orthodoxy: The Cappadocians' Trinitarian Theology  
[R.R: Gregory of Nyssa, "Concerning We Should Think of Saying that There Are Not Three Gods to Ablibius," in *The Trinitarian Controversy*, William G. Rusch, pp. 149-161]

**V- Week Five (Thursday, Oct. 4. 2018): The Trinity in History: Trinitarian Theology after Nicaea and Constantinople**

- **Session (1) (4:00- 5:30):** The Trinitarian Orthodoxy of St. Augustin of Hippo  
[R.R: St. Augustine, *the Trinity*, Bk. VIII, Ch. 5; Bk. IX, Ch. 1, pp. 251-257; 271-275]

- **Session (2) (5:40- 6:45):** Early Patristic Trinitarian Theology: Constituents and Characteristics  
[R.R: V-M. Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspective*, pp. 19-42]

**VI- Week Six (Thursday, Oct. 11. 2018): The Trinity in History: Trinitarian Theology in the Shadow of Islam**

-**Session (1) (4:00- 5:30):** Trinitarian Theology in 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Centuries: John of Damascus  
[**R.R:** John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. IX, Bk.I, chs. 1-8, pp. 1-11]

-**Session (2) (5:40- 6:45):** Trinitarian Theology in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century: Theodore Abū Qurrah  
[**R.R:** Theodore Abu Qurrah, *On the Trinity*, in *Theodore Abu Qurrah*, J. Lamoreaux (trans.), pp. 175-193]

**VII- Week Seven (Thursday, Oct. 18. 2018): The Trinity in History: Trinitarian Theology after Late Antiquity**

- **Session (1) (4:00- 5:30):** Trinitarian Thought in the Middle Ages: Anselm of Canterbury & Thomas Aquinas  
[**R.R:** Edmund Fortman, *The Triune God*, pp. 173-176; 204-210]

-**Session (2) (5:40- 6:45):** Trinitarian Thought in the Renaissance Era: Protestant Reformation  
[**R.R:** Young-Ho Chun, “The Trinity in the Protestant Reformation: Continuity within Discontinuity,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity*, pp. 128-148]

**VIII- Week Eight (Thursday, Oct. 25. 2018): The Trinity in Modernity: The Intellectual Context of the Trinity’s Story in Modernity**

-**Session (1) (4:00- 5:30):** The Eclipse of the Idea of the ‘Triune God’

-**Session (2) (5:40- 6:45):** The Revivalism of the Idea of the ‘Triune God’

**IX- Week Nine (Thursday, Nov. 1. 2018): Trinitarian Theology in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

-Session (1) (4:00- 5:30): Protestant Revivalism of the Trinity: Karl Barth  
[R.R: Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatic*, I.1, pp. 400-440]

- Session (2) (5:40- 6:45): Catholic Revivalism of the Trinity: Karl Rahner  
[R.R: Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, pp. 15-24; 45-48; 80-103]

**X- Week Ten (Thursday, Nov. 8. 2018): Trinitarian Theology Post-Revivalism**

-Session (1) (4:00- 5:30): Radicalizing “Rahner’s Rule’: Jürgen Moltmann  
[R.R: J. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the kingdom of God*, 1-20, 191-200]

- Session (2) (5:40- 6:45): Taking Trinitarian Revelation to its Logical End: Wolfhart Pannenberg  
[R.R: Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, pp. 259- 280]

**XI- Week Eleven (Thursday, Nov. 15. 2018): Contemporary Trinitarian Trends (1)**

-Session (1) (4:00- 5:30): The Trinity as Social Analogy  
[R.R: Catherine M. LaCugna, *God for Us*, pp. 378-417]

- Session (2) (5:40- 6:45): The Trinity as Personal-Relational Analogy  
[R.R: John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, pp. 1-12; 165-170]

**Reading Week & Thanksgiving... Reading Week &  
Thanksgiving ..... Reading Week & Thanksgiving**

**XII- Week Twelve (Thursday, Nov. 29. 2018): Contemporary Trinitarian Trends (2)**

- **Session (1) (4:00- 5:30):** The Trinity as Feminist Project  
[R.R: Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is*, pp. 191-223]

- **Session (2) (5:40- 6:45):** The Trinity as Liberation Project  
[R.R: Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, pp. 123-154]

**XIII- Week Thirteen (Thursday, Dec. 6. 2018): Contemporary Trinitarian Trends (3)**

- **Session (1) (4:00- 5:30):** The Trinity as a Panentheistic Process of Participation in God  
[R.R: Robert Jensen, *Systematic Theology: The Triune God*, Vol. 1, pp. 224-236; and Paul Fiddes, *Participating in God*, pp. 34- 61]

- **Session (2) (5:40- 6:45):** The Trinity and Other Religions  
[R.R: V. Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism*, pp. 164-184]

**XIV- Week Fourteen (Thursday, Dec. 13. 2018): 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) **Book Appraisal:** Students are required to write **5-8** pages-long book appraisals. The appraisal must 1) present a sufficient and accurate exposition of the book's main argument/thesis, 2) offer a perceptive critical assessment of this argument and 3) end with a proposal on how such a book is valuable for today's readers on the Trinity. Students must submit this book appraisal to the instructor no later than **Friday of week seven, 10:00 pm**. The book the students must review should be one of the following texts:

- . Olson, Roger E & Christopher A. Hall. *The Trinity*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.
- . Hunt, Anne. *The Trinity*, New York: Paulist Press, 1998.
- . Smail, Tom. *Like Father, Like Son: the Trinity Imaged in Our Humanity*, Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2005.
- . McGrath, Alister E. *Understanding the Trinity*, Grand Rapids: Academic Books/Zondervan, 1990.
- . Boff, Leonardo. *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, Maryknoll: Orbis Press, 2000.

3) **Term Papers:** students are expected to write 12-15 pages-long (5000-7000 words-long) papers (foot/endnotes, bibliography, outlines, are excluded). They must submit them to the instructor at the end of the teaching calendar of the semester. The students are required to pick up one of the subjects related to the trinity and write a paper on it **either in relation to Christian thought in general, in relation to Christian life and ministry or in relation to Christianity's interfaith relation with Islam or Judaism**. The term paper must be submitted to the instructor no later than **20<sup>th</sup> of December, 10:00 pm**.

**- Grading Division:**

- 1- reading's preparation and class participation (40%)
- 2- Book Appraisal: (20%)
- 3- Term paper: (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 (95-100) Demonstrates excellent mastery of the subject matter, a superior ability to articulate this, and provides helpful connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.
- A- (90-94) Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, ability to articulate this well, and makes connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.
- B+(87-89) Demonstrates a very good understanding of the subject matter, able to articulate lessons learned in the assignment well. Meets expectations of the course.
- B (83-86) Demonstrates an understanding of the subject matter and the ability to articulate lessons learned. Meets expectations of the course.
- B-(80-82) Demonstrates an understanding of the material at hand, has some difficulty articulating this, and basic connection of the material to daily life or contemporary issues/life. Meets basic expectations for the course.

- C+(77-79) Demonstrates a basic comprehension of the subject matter, weak articulation and connections. Does not meet expectations for the course.
- C (70-76) Demonstrates a minimal comprehension of the subject matter and has difficulty making connections. Does not meet expectations of the course.
- F (below 70) Unable to meet the basic requirements of the course.

Auditors are welcome to participate in discussion and assignments to the degree they wish and should clarify their intent with the instructor, but their work will not be graded. The students can find their course's grade posted in SONISWEB starting from **January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019**.

**- Additional Policies:**

1) Attendance: Active 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. 3 - 4 or more absences --- without a serious reason should be an automatic failure.

2) Plagiarism: Academic honesty and integrity are expected of all students. Plagiarism exists when: a) the work submitted was done, in whole or in part, by anyone other than the one submitting the work, b) parts of the work, whether direct quotations, ideas, or data, are taken from another source without acknowledgement, c) the whole work is copied from another source [especially a web based source], or d) significant portions of one's own previous work used in another course. See "Plagiarism" at <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>

3) Appropriate Classroom Etiquette and Use of Technology: In order to respect the community within the classroom: 1) Mute all cell phones during class; 2) Utilize laptops for the sole purpose of taking class notes. Please do not surf the web, email, or other programs during class time. Such use of the computer during class is disrespectful of the class and professor, and may result in lowering your participation grade.

4) Inclusive Language: Hartford Seminary is committed to a policy of inclusion in its academic life and mission. All members of the community are expected to communicate in language that reflects the equality of genders, openness to diverse cultural and theological perspectives, and sensitivity to one another's images of God.

5) Extensions: Extensions for papers will be given for illnesses or family emergencies only in consultation with the instructor.

### -Selected Bibliography

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