

ACTS

SEMINARIES

Associated Canadian Theological Schools of Trinity Western University

THS 571: Introduction to Believer's Church Theology

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February 18-22, 2019
3 Credit Hours

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<https://learn.twu.ca>
February 18-22, 8:30 am -12:30 pm daily

I. Course Description

This course lays a foundation for theological study and reflection in all ACTS graduate degree programs. We will begin with a discussion of the nature and importance of theology and a review of key tools and methodological principles for the Christian thinker. We will also reflect on the particular dynamics of doing theology in the Evangelical and Believer's Church tradition. As an illustration of good theological reflection in action, we will explore the doctrines of revelation and Scripture, which are basic to our work. And we will provide a practical orientation to the expectations and opportunities for theological study in the ACTS curriculum.

II. Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this course, a student should be able to:

- 1) describe the **nature of theology, its role and importance** in the life of the individual Christian and of the church as a whole;
- 2) discuss the general **structure and function of theology as an academic discipline**, demonstrating an understanding of the relationship between various areas of theological study and their significance in the ACTS curriculum;
- 3) explain the key features that mark the **theological perspective of the Believer's Church Tradition**, showing an appreciation for its relationship to other theological traditions within historic Christianity and recognizing the significance of such concepts in their own ministry setting;
- 4) articulate the **historic Christian doctrines of Revelation and Scripture**, together with their biblical basis, contrasting these with other non-Evangelical perspectives;
- 5) discuss important **theological issues which arise in relation to these doctrines**, together with significant historical perspectives on those issues and key biblical concepts which apply to them;
- 6) apply basic **methodological principles, techniques, and tools for effective theological reflection and ministry application** in an Evangelical, Believer's Church Christian framework;
- 7) formulate concrete **plans for appropriate personal theological development** through the course of the student's program;
- 8) **integrate personal theological development with practical aspects of personal Christian life and ministry.**

III. Course Texts

Required texts (i.e.: you will need to read these for the course)

Donald Bloesch, *Holy Scripture*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2000.

W. David Buschart, *Exploring Protestant Traditions: An Invitation to Theological Hospitality*. Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2006.

Brad Harper and Paul Louis Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology: An Evangelical and Ecumenical Introduction*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2009.

Howard W. Stone and James O. Duke, *How to Think Theologically*. 3rd Edition: Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013.

Recommended (i.e.: these are appropriate for course reading but not required; they would be good additions to your library)

Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*. Second Edition; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.

Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *Who Needs Theology?* Downers Grove: IVP, 1996.

John R. Franke, *The Character of Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.

Paul C. McGleson, *Invitation to Dogmatic Theology: A Canonical Approach*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006.

Helmut Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962.

IV. Course Requirements

A. Reading and Reading Reports

For this course, you will be reading ...

- **All four textbooks!** (Approx. 1000 pages)

To maximize the value of the reading and enhance our class interaction, **you will be expected to complete the appropriate readings by the relevant class period, as set forth on the course outline** (below).

You will write a 5-6 page paper describing your personal ecclesiological commitments (and especially what they would look like in real life), using Bloesch, Buschart, and Harper & Metzger to stimulate your thinking. Write a paper describing what a church (think about a hypothetical church, not your current church) would look like if you could build it to fit your theological commitments concerning church identity and mission, and organized particularly around the following considerations: polity and decision-making, baptism and membership, strategizing and goal-setting. Include in your paper theological definitions of leadership and leadership roles, membership, and other concepts (Hint: Use your textbook readings!) that form part of your paper. **Ecclesiological commitment papers are due March 8, 2019.**

Ecclesiological Commitment Paper Guidelines:

Your goal in this paper to explain how a church needs to be built in order to be and do the things that you believe churches should be and do. In order to accomplish this task, think about (among other things) the following questions:

1. What theological method, assumptions and/or positions underlie church polity and decision-making processes? How do these affect the way churches operate?
2. What are the implications of your theology of baptism and church membership? What are the implications of connecting oneself to a church community as a member? What, if any, continuing relevance does Believers' Church ecclesiology have?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses the church structure you have described, and how do you address the weaknesses?
4. What, if anything, will you change in your ministry as a result of reading this book? What will change in terms of your participation in the life of your church?

B. Research paper on the nature, role, and expression of theology

- You will write a research paper (12-15 pages) reflecting on a theological issue of interest to you in your Christian life and ministry.**

The purpose of this paper is to help you reflect critically on the methodological issues raised in Stone & Duke and explored in the context of the course, and to demonstrate your awareness of the distinctive theological agenda that shapes the Believers' Church tradition. Your paper should contain four main elements:

- A thesis statement which clearly and concisely articulates the point you intend to argue in your paper.
 - A synopsis of the possible positions on the issue you have chosen and the theological issues at play – e.g., the methods, norms, and sources involved; the priorities inherent in the different options, strengths and weaknesses of each, and the implications for church ministry.
 - Historical examples of each – the positions, including their origins and outcomes.
 - Your conclusion, anticipating objections to your arguments and also exploring specific application to your personal life and ministry.
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- The paper is due on March 22, 2019.** This is a formal research paper, so we are concerned about bibliography or sophisticated footnote apparatus. The paper should be written in good, clear prose, cleanly edited and properly and consistently formatted according to Turabian style (see below for more information).

C. **Critical reflection paper on revelation, Scripture, and the Evangelical - Believer's Church tradition**

- You will write a brief paper (8-10 pages) interacting with key concepts from the section of our course dealing with revelation, Scripture, and the Believer's Church tradition.**

This paper will help you consolidate your understanding of the doctrines of revelation and Scripture. It will also push you to reflect on the significance of these doctrines and some of the special issues and challenges associated with them. And it will invite you to consider how these (and other related) doctrines have shaped the life of the church, particularly within the Believer's Church movement.

The paper should be structured in sections which answer the following questions:

- Describe what you view as the key ideas which are essential in a good presentation of the doctrines of revelation and Scripture, if you had to teach these in a church setting.
 - Comment briefly on the reason we believe it is essential to hold these truths about God's revelation and the Bible. How do these ideas shape the rest of our doctrine? How do they affect church life in general, and a believer's faith in particular? What happens if we question them?
 - Reflect on the role these doctrines play in your own church tradition. Does your tradition embrace the same essentials you have named? How has your tradition's view of Scripture shaped other aspects of its thought and practice? In particular, if your tradition is part of the Believer's Church movement, how has its understanding of revelation and Scripture influenced other key elements that mark it as part of that movement?
 - Identify several of the most challenging issues that relate to the doctrine of revelation and Scripture—either in your own current ministry context or in the Christian world in general. Why are these issues a challenge at this time? How do they affect faith and ministry in your setting? Briefly, comment on key insights or strategies which will help you to address these challenges as you face them.
- The paper is due on April 5, 2019.** This is not a major research paper which requires and extensive bibliography. However, you should be interacting with the sources you are reading—and where you quote from or engage a source directly, it is appropriate that you leave a documentation trail through footnotes. As always, the paper should be well-written and well presented.

Assignment weight (%)

| | |
|--------------------------------|------|
| Ecclesiology Paper | 30% |
| Research Paper | 35% |
| Critical Reflection Paper..... | 25% |
| Class participation | 10% |
| Total:..... | 100% |

Late Assignments will be penalized as follows:

- Reduction by 5% of assignment value for each (working) day after due date . (Assignments due at class time are considered late after the end of the class period).
- Late or incomplete reading is evaluated qualitatively.
- No late assignments will be accepted after April 30.

Grading Scale

| Letter Grade | Percentage | Grade Point |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| A+ | Blew my mind | 4.30 |
| A | Excellent | 4.00 |
| A- | Very Good | 3.70 |
| B+ | Proficient | 3.30 |
| B | Good | 3.00 |
| B- | Average | 2.70 |
| C+ | Adequate | 2.30 |
| C | Acceptable | 2.00 |
| C- | Marginal | 1.70 |
| F | Inadequate | 0.00 |

V. **Miscellaneous Notes/Policies**

Do your reading ***BEFORE*** you come to class. I will come expecting that you have read the assigned pages beforehand. If you don't, you'll look foolish when I ask you questions. I love interaction, and think that people learn better when more than one person talks.

A. Submitting Papers Electronically

Assignments may be submitted electronically. I have two requests which will help me to handle your materials easily and not lose them:

(1) Please use document attachments linked to emails, rather than pasting your material into the email message. (The format is less likely to be corrupted, and the item is easier to file.) Attach your documents as MS Word files, or if you are not using Word, as files that will convert easily and neatly to Word. (Examples would include WordPerfect or .rtf—"rich text format"—files.)

(2) Before you attach your file, please save it ("save as") using the following format: last name – initial – assignment name.doc. So, for example, Joe Kowalski's first paper would be kowalski-j-paper 1.doc, and his reading report would be kowalski-j-reading report.doc. This makes it much easier for me to track your papers. As you can imagine, if I get 20 papers all called "research paper.doc" it is more likely that some will be misplaced.

VI. **Web Support**

All ACTS courses are supported with web pages through the TWU Moodle system (<https://learn.twu.ca>). I will use the course web page to post any course notes and other materials which I wish to distribute to the class. (For example, an essay you need to read for the class will be posted on the web page for you to download.) You will want to check the page periodically to watch for updates and announcements.

Note that I will not be distributing hard copies of course notes in class. They will be posted on the course website, allowing you to download and access them in hard or soft copy as you choose. I

recommend that you download notes and bring them along to class, as this will make it easier to follow lectures and add your own notes as we go.

You should have received information on the TWU virtual campus and Moodle system with your class registration materials. If you do not have an appropriate password, are unfamiliar with the system, or are having trouble making it work, please do not come to faculty for assistance, as I am not equipped to help you with in this area. You can get basic information from the Registrar's office, and can get more detailed help from the "esupport" people who specialize in such things. They can be reached at esupport@twu.ca, or 604-513-2148 (toll free at 1-866-614-4652).

VII. **Tentative** Course Outline (Contents subject to change)

| Date | Topic(s) | Chapters | Assignments Due |
|-------------|--|---|---|
| February 18 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus, preliminaries • Theology: what it is, why it matters • Theology as an academic discipline • Theology in my academic program and ministry area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stone & Duke chapters 1-4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Stone & Duke |
| February 19 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theology from an Evangelical perspective • What is the "Believers' Church?" | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stone & Duke chapters 5-9 | |
| February 20 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God, Revelation, and Scripture (part 1) • God, Revelation, and Scripture (part 2) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bloesch all | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Bloesch |
| February 21 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Believers' Church in Historical Perspective • Revelation, Scripture, and Mission from a Believers' Church perspective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buschart all | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Buschart |
| February 22 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Church and the World • The Church, the Gospel, and Culture(s) • Incarnating Believers' Church Theology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harper & Metzger | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Harper & Metzger |

VIII. Some recommendations on systematic theology texts

There are many fine texts on Systematic Theology from the Evangelical perspective. As part of your long-term development as a theological thinker, it is worth your while to become familiar with a number of these: general overviews, texts dedicated to specific topics, broad generic studies, presentations from a particular tradition or perspective, volumes old and new. For the purpose of this class, our goal is simply to help you become better acquainted with one or two such texts. (I have no objection to your reading from a number of sources, but I think the exercise will be more cohesive, helpful, and manageable if you focus on one primary text or at most two.)

I have listed several possible texts below. The choice is up to you, but I would request that you follow several basic guidelines:

Unless there is a special reason to do otherwise, I would strongly encourage you to use a text which is broadly evangelical for this particular assignment. There is a place and time to read Schleiermacher or Tillich, but this is not it. The goal is to help round out your exposure to the Christian faith from an Evangelical perspective, and to enrich your thinking on revelation and Scripture as these are viewed within the classic Christian tradition.

Some possible texts for your consideration

- Bird, Michael F. *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013. *An attempt by a NT scholar to build a systematic theology around the evangel as the core and organizing element.*
- Demarest, Bruce, and Gordon Lewis. *Integrative Theology*. Grand Rapids: Academie, 1987-. 230 *Creative attempt to do interdisciplinary theology. Many interesting insights, but sometimes a little "cluttered."*
- Finger, Thomas N. *Christian Theology: An Eschatological Approach*. Scottsdale: Herald, 1985-. 230.2 *Creative theology through a particular thematic grid.*
- Garrett, James Leo. *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990-. 230.2
- Grenz, Stanley J. *Theology for the Community of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994. *Recent, more attuned to postmodern concerns than many other Evangelical texts.*
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994. *Quite readable, very Bible-focused, fairly central/conservative in orientation (with a Vineyard element); a little basic but definitely usable.*
- Horton, Stanley M., *Systematic Theology*. Springfield Mo. Logion Press, 1995. 230.994.S97.
- McClendon, James W., *Systematic Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986-2000. BT75.2M39. *McClendon was a creative (ana)baptist theologian whose work follows a format more narrative than systematic and is quite a helpful resource for Baptists and Anabaptists alike.*

McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. 4th Edition. Malden MA: Blackwell, 2007. *Quite historically oriented, at times quite detailed; written for a broad university-style audience so presents options without arguing for a particular point of view; very current in terms of the issues it tackles.*

Pannenberg, Wolfhart, *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991-1998. 230.044P2613.

Williams, J. Rodman. *Renewal Theology*. Grand Rapids: Academie, 1990. 230.2 *One of the foremost theologians in the Pentecostal movement, represents that tradition well.*

Some other possibilities, mostly older (and less recommended unless you've done reading in the newer volumes already and you're looking for something different) ...

Berkhof, Louis. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939,41. (4th edition) 230.2 *A classic of Reformed theology. Not easy, but very thorough.*

Boettner, Loraine. *Studies in Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947. 230.2

Chafer, Louis Sperry. *Systematic Theology*. Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947. R 230.2 *Key figure in the U.S. Dispensational movement, useful as a representative of Dispensational theology.*

Hodge, Charles. *Systematic Theology*. (3 volumes) Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977 (=1872). 230.2 *Note the original publication date; a classic of the Old Princeton approach to Orthodoxy in a Reformed variation.*

Pieper, Francis. *Christian Dogmatics*. (4 volumes) St. Louis: Concordia, 1950-57. 230.2 *For those who would like a Lutheran angle on things.*

Shedd, William G.T. *Dogmatic Theology*. (3 volumes) Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1953. R 230.2 *An older Baptist classic.*

Strong, A.H. *Systematic Theology*. Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1912. R 230.2 230.2 *An even older Baptist classic—very detailed, not easy reading.*

Thiessen, Henry C. *Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979. (from 1949) R230.2

Wiley, H.O. *Christian Theology*. (2 volumes) Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1940. R 230.2 *As the publisher suggests, a text in the Nazarene tradition.*

Supplement: Important Academic Notes from ACTS

Web Support – Student Portal <https://www.twu.ca/students/current-students>

All students at TWU have a TWUPass username and password. This is determined at the time of an online application or can be managed through the computing services help desk or the link on the student portal. Your student email account is also available through this student portal and is vital for communication about grades, account statements, lost passwords, sign-up instructions, etc. If you do not know your account or password, there is a link at the login area called “I forgot my password.” When you click on that link, you will be walked through the process of retrieving your account information.

Campus Closure

In the event of deteriorating weather conditions or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to the following radio stations CKNW (980 AM), CKWX (1130 AM), STAR FM (107.1 FM), PRAISE (106.5 FM) and KARI (550 AM). As well, an announcement will be placed on the University’s campus closure notification message box (604.513.2147) and on the front page of the University’s website (<http://www.twu.ca> – also see <https://www.twu.ca/campus-notification> for more details).

An initial announcement regarding the status of the campus and cancellation of classes is made at 6:00 AM and covers all classes beginning before 1:00PM. A second announcement is made at 11:00AM that covers all classes which begin between 1:00PM and 5:00PM. A third announcement is made at 3:00PM and covers those classes which begin after 5:00PM.

Paper Formatting

Students need to adhere to Turabian Notes (Bibliography) format except for in counselling courses, for which APA format is used and for CanIL courses. Please refer to the TWU Citations Style Guides page (https://www8.twu.ca/library/style_guides.html) for information on different styles.

Students are strongly encouraged to use RefWorks (available through the library home page <https://www.twu.ca/library>) as their bibliographical manager and as a tool for formatting bibliographies. They will need to be aware of the need to “clean up” most bibliographies generated by this program. Students are encouraged to view the documents on the following websites for format samples: http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html or <http://www.macmillanlearning.com/catalog/static/bsm/hacker/resdoc/home.htm>. Note that in RefWorks the available formatting styles are those of Turabian (Notes), 7th edition, and APA – American Psychological Association, 6th edition. For Turabian, note that there are two formats –

Notes (or Bibliography Style) and Reference List (a short format citation style). ACTS uses the Notes (Bibliography) format, not Reference List.

Counselling students are expected to purchase the APA Publications Manual. More information found at the following website. <http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html>.

For free online programs that will enable you to create properly formatted bibliography citations, go to <http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/> ("Chicago stands for "Turabian") or <http://www.citationmachine.net/>.

Please check with your professor to see which one he/she recommends you use!!

Course Evaluations

Course evaluations are an important aspect of improving teaching outcomes and for students and faculty professional development. Therefore, completion of course evaluations are considered a course expectation. Professors will schedule time to fill out the online course evaluation (20-30 minutes) during their last scheduled class of the semester, for students to complete on their personal laptop or a collegium computer. Students who are absent or otherwise unable to complete the online course evaluation in the last class, will be expected to make every effort to do so by the last day of exams. Information about how to access online evaluation forms will be provided to the faculty and students prior to the last week of classes by the ACTS Administration.

Research Ethics

Please note that all research projects involving human participants undertaken by members of the TWU university community (including projects done by ACTS students to satisfy course or degree requirements) **MUST** be approved by the Trinity Western University Research Ethics Board. Information and forms may be found at <https://www.twu.ca/research/research-services/research-ethics>

Those needing additional clarification may contact the ACTS Academic Dean's office. Please allow at least three (3) weeks from the date of submission for a review of the application.

Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism at TWU

As Christian scholars pursuing higher education, academic integrity is a core value of the entire TWU community. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship at TWU. This includes, but is not limited to, avoiding all forms of plagiarism and cheating in scholarly work. TWU has a strict policy on plagiarism (see 2016-17 Student Handbook, pp. 48-50). Further details on this subject are contained in the ACTS Student Handbook in section 4.12. The handbook is available online on the ACTS

webpage (www.actsseminaries.com) at the following link: <http://www.actsseminaries.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ACTS-Catalogue-2014-15-Final-14-10-03.pdf>.

Learning what constitutes plagiarism and avoiding it is the student's responsibility. An excellent resource describing plagiarism and how to avoid it has been prepared by TWU Librarian William Badke and is freely available for download (PPT file) or used as flash (self-running) tutorials of varying lengths from:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/10ujmBKDRdb53SZ3XHRoXJF6M52Uhu-kr2CV8l654XeA/edit#slide=id.p4>

http://williambadke.com/Plagiarism_Spectrum_US_8.5x11.pdf
<https://prezi.com/dcbl-pnzuv9i/whats-the-big-deal-about-plagiarism/>

Equity of Access

It is the responsibility of a student with a learning disability to inform the ACTS Director of Student Life of that fact before the beginning of a course so that necessary arrangements may be made to facilitate the student's learning experience. To repeat: To ensure that instructors know to accommodate a student who has a learning access issue, the student must inform the Director of Student Life of a disability before the beginning of the class. After that is too late.