

Course Syllabus – Department of Biblical and Religious Studies, Messiah College
THEO 205: Introduction to Christian Theology
Summer 2011 (Online, Section 01)

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Course Description

This course meets the General Education requirement in Christian Beliefs, and is a survey course dealing with the history and present expressions of classic Christian understandings of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, humanity, creation, redemption, etc. Issues of theological method are introduced, especially as this relates to the integration of faith and learning in various academic disciplines.

Student Objectives

- A. To develop a familiarity with the vocabulary and basic ideas of Christian theology, and to reflect theologically in writing assignments.
- B. To explore the historic creeds and their continuing impact on theological dialogue.
- C. To learn how to think 'theologically,' (i.e., how to balance the claims of scripture, tradition, reason, and experience in thinking about God, the world, and one's self).
- D. To develop a tolerance toward differing Christian ideas while clarifying one's own particular beliefs.
- E. To facilitate the development of theological convictions.
- F. To understand Anabaptist, Wesleyan/Holiness, and Pietist theological distinctives, while being sensitive to the different ways the Christian faith can be articulated.
- G. To build a foundation for reflection on the integration of faith and learning in different major programs of study.

Required Texts and Course Resources

Migliore, Daniel L. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Second Edition. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2004). ISBN: 9780802827876.

Netflix Membership or another means to access movies to be used as 'texts' for discussion and forum conversations. Additional documents and course materials, such as internet articles and links, book chapters, and video clips can all be found at the 'Resources' tab on the course Sakai site.

While Bible readings are not explicitly indicated in the syllabus, they will be assigned as we progress through the course. NRSV, TNIV, and other translations will be utilized.

Course Design

This course is comprised of fifteen (15) units, two units per week (with the exception of the final week of class). Within each unit, there will be academic journal assignments and forum participation requirements for every student in the class.

Course Requirements

- A. Exams: Students will take two exams – exam questions will be taken from the readings and forum discussion. Further instructions will be posted on Sakai. 100 points each.
- B. Personal Theological Belief Paper: As a final project, students will construct their own statement of theological beliefs, structured according to the theological topics covered in the context of class activities. Further instructions will be posted on Sakai. 200 points total.
- C. Academic Journal Entries: Students will compose responses to assigned readings of approximately 250 words each. Journal entries are designed to facilitate student's interaction with class assignments, and will occasionally be specifically directed by the professor. Further instructions will be posted on Sakai. 150 points total (15 class units, 10 points per unit).
- D. Forum Participation: Owing to the fact that we are not able to interact in a 'traditional' classroom, forums are designed to facilitate discussion, dialogue, and rigorous academic debate. Each of the forums will be based upon one of the units, 15 forums total. Students are required to make four 'meaningful' contributions to each forum, 60 posts total. Full, conscious, and active participation in the forums is critical to student success in this online course. Further instructions will be posted on Sakai. 300 points total.

Course Policies

All assignments and exams must be turned in by 11.59 pm on the due date for full credit, unless there are extenuating circumstances that have been discussed with the professor (via e-mail) prior to the due date. Extensions will be granted only if there are significant circumstances beyond the student's control. Owing to the online educational environment, keeping up with one's assignments is critical.

Grading

Grading Scale:

Numerical Grade		Points	Letter Grade
100 – 94	=	701-750	A
93 – 90	=	675-700	A-
89 – 87	=	649-674	B+
86 – 84	=	626-648	B
83 – 80	=	596-625	B-
79 – 77	=	574-595	C+
76 – 74	=	551-573	C
73 – 70	=	522-550	C-
69 – 60	=	447-521	D
59 – 0	=	446-0	F

Course Expectations

Students should anticipate at least 15 hours per week spent on readings, watching films, preparing assignments, and forum participation. The two 'at-home' exams will require approximately four hours to complete (exams will be open-book/open-notes, thus the time spent studying for and taking a traditional exam are incorporated into the same overall process). This is an 8-week course, with online considerations approximating the amount of time spent in a normal Fall or Spring semester three-credit course (we'll have no time in an actual classroom, and no time spent studying for exams).

Messiah College Academic Integrity Policy

www.messiah.edu/academics/advising_handbook/academic_policies/integrity.pdf

Professor Availability

My e-mail address - dcurry1@messiah.edu – is considered the primary address and contact method. My cell # is 717.887.1804, and if absolutely necessary my home # is 717.502.8740. With the exception of a few travel days with my family, I will check my e-mail daily. I will be in consistent contact with the entire class through Sakai for the duration of the summer online course session.

Disability Statement

Accommodations for students with disabilities will be made in coordination with the Office of Disability Services. Any student requiring accommodation should inform me immediately.

System Requirements

The following list represents configurations that provide the best performance with our learning management system and synchronous software. These are the configurations the college is ready and able to support. Although students may find that other configurations may work as well, those configurations may not be supported by Academic Technology Services.

Students who enroll in an online course must have basic computer skills as described on Messiah's portal, MCSquare. You must have access to a computer, the internet, a web browser, and other software necessary to complete course requirements. See <http://www.messiah.edu/academics/online/fags.html>.

Internet Connection Required: High speed or broadband cable

Browser: Mozilla Firefox 3.0 or higher

Operating System Version:

Ⓢ Windows® (XP, Vista, Windows 7)

Ⓢ MAC (10.4 and higher)

Processor: 2.0 - 4.0 GHz

Memory (RAM): Minimum 2 GB of RAM

Hard Disk Space: Minimum 40 GB of free space

CD-ROM/CD-RW drive: DVD or combo drive helpful

Office Suite: Ex. Microsoft Office 2007 or newer, OpenOffice 3.1, or Google Docs

Course Dates

May 30, 2011 – July 22, 2011

Course Assignment Outline

Unit One: What is Theology?

Forum One: May 30 – June 2

Assignments/Resources:

Migliore, Chapter 1; youtube clip, 'Tradition';

McLaren and Campolo, 'Missing the Point: Theology'

Unit Two: Theology and Humility

Forum Two: June 3-5

Assignments/Resources:

Taylor, 'The Myth of Certainty', chapters _____

Unit Three: Revelation and the Authority of Scripture

Forum Three: June 6-8

Assignments/Resources:

Migliore, Chapters 2 & 3; N. T. Wright - 'How can the Bible be authoritative?'
found at http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright_Bible_Authoritative.htm

Unit Four: Who is God?

Forum Four: June 9-11

Assignments/Resources:

Migliore, Chapter 4; Movie: *Bruce Almighty*

Unit Five: God – Providence...and the Mystery/Problem of Evil

Forum Five: June 12-14

Assignments/Resources:

Migliore, Chapter 6; Movie: *Shadowlands*

Unit Six: The Person and Divinity of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit

Forum Six: June 15-17

Assignments/Resources:

Migliore, Chapters 8 & 10 (pp. 223-235);
Movie: *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*

Unit Seven: Creation, Humanity, and the Imago Dei

Forum Seven: June 18-20

Assignments/Resources:

Migliore, Chapters 5 & 7

*Exam One – Due no later than June 20, but can be turned in as early as June 18.

Unit Eight: The Christian Life, and the Church

Forum Eight: June 21-23

Assignments/Resources:

Migliore, Chapter 10 (pp. 235-247), Chapter 11

Unit Nine: The Church – Sacramental Theology and Worship

Forum Nine: June 24-26

Assignments/Resources:

Migliore, Chapter 12; *The Worship Sourcebook*; What is worship?

Unit Ten: Jesus Christ as Lord...and Religious Pluralism

Forum Ten: June 27-29

Assignments/Resources:

Migliore, Chapters 13, 9

Unit Eleven: Heaven, Hell, and Eschatology

Forum Eleven: June 30 – July 3

Assignments/Resources:

Migliore, Chapter 14

Unit Twelve: Anabaptists, Wesleyans, Pietists

Forum Twelve: July 4-6

Assignments/Resources:

<http://bic-church.org/about/history.asp>

<http://www.messiah.edu/siderinstitute/>

(click on each respective link to the three theological traditions within unit twelve)

*Exam Two – Due no later than July 5, but can be turned in as early as July 3

Unit Thirteen: Theological Dialogues

Forum Thirteen: July 7-9

Assignments/Resources:

Migliore – Appendices A, B, and C

Unit Fourteen: Current Issues in Theology

Forum Fourteen: July 10-12

Assignments/Resources:

Unit Fifteen: Theology and Modern Christian Worship

Forum Fifteen: July 13-15

Assignments/Resources:

Creeds, songs, prayers, litanies, etc.

Unit Sixteen: Let's close in prayer...

Forum Sixteen: July 16-22

Assignments/Resources:

*Final paper due no later than July 22, and can be turned in as early as July 15.

