

BRIERCREST

THEO 601 Christian Theology Overview

Spring 2019

Professor: R. Dale Dawson
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Course Dates: June 3-7, 2019

3 Credit Hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A basic overview of the central doctrines of the Christian faith, designed for those who have no previous, formal training in Christian theology, or for those who need a refresher. Students develop a basic understanding of the method and content of systematic theology as presented in the Apostles' Creed and the classical evangelical tradition. This course may only be used in the core of MATS and MABLE by permission of the program coordinator.

COURSE INTEGRATION

This course offers a survey of the essential theological teachings of the Christian faith, with a particular focus on its Protestant and Evangelical expressions. Fundamental Christian doctrines will be explored with reference to their biblical foundations, historical development and systematic cohesiveness. Consideration will be given to the formulations of the ecumenical Christian creeds and councils and their relation to the doctrinal articulations of contemporary denominational groupings. Special attention will be given to the manner in which core doctrines provide an indispensable theological framework for life and mission in the contemporary world.

COURSE TEXTS

Bird, Michael F. *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.

Students are expected to refer to Briercrest Seminary's Format and Style Guides and Guide for Writing Research Papers, available as PDF documents here: <https://www.mybriercrest.ca/seminary/documents/>.

These texts are available in store and online at the Briercrest Bookstore: <http://briercrest.ca/bookstore>.

Students are responsible for course materials and communication on Canvas (<https://briercrest.instructure.com>; cf. <http://briercrest.ca/online/canvas>) and their myBriercrest.ca email account.

COURSE OUTCOMES

Anticipated outcomes for students of this course of study include:

1. The ability to articulate the core teachings of Christian Theology, as well as its role and significance for the individual believer, the church and society as a whole.
2. A knowledgeable appreciation of the biblical, historical and theological underpinnings of the major doctrines of the Christian church.

3. The ability to critically assess various theological positions and proposals on the basis of sound biblical and theological reasoning.
4. An appreciation of the importance, depth, and power of Christian Theology for ecclesial life and mission in the world.
5. A deepened commitment to the gospel and its message of hope for the world.
6. A substantial basis for the composition of the doctrinal portion of the student's graduation portfolio.

COURSE OUTLINE AND CONTENT

DATE	THEME & CORE READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS & PRESENTATIONS
June 3, am	ORIENTATION & SYLLABUS INTRODUCTION Reading: Bird, 16-26	Due: Reading Report Due: Doctrinal Assessment
June 3, pm	PROLEGOMENA HOLY SCRIPTURE SOURCES, NORMS, AND METHODS Reading: Bird, 27-86	Discussion Paper #1 Discussion Paper #2
June 4, am	THE TRIUNE GOD GOD THE FATHER Reading: Bird, 87-139	Discussion Paper #3 Discussion Paper #4
June 4, pm	CREATION, REVELATION & PROVIDENCE HUMANITY, SIN AND EVIL Reading: Bird, 140-231; 649-695	Discussion Paper #5 Discussion Paper #6
June 5, am	GOD THE SON (PERSON OF CHRIST) Reading: Bird, 341-384	Discussion Paper #7 Discussion Paper #8
June 5, pm	GOD THE SON (WORK OF CHRIST) Reading: Bird, 385-487	Discussion Paper #9 Discussion Paper #10
June 6, am	SALVATION GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT Reading: Bird, 489-607; 609-648	Discussion Paper #11 Discussion Paper #12
June 6, pm	THE CHURCH Reading: Bird, 697-805	Discussion Paper #13 Discussion Paper #14
June 7, am	LAST THINGS EPILOGUE Reading: Bird, 233-339; 807-811	Discussion Paper #15 Discussion Paper #16

ASSIGNMENTS

The desired learning outcomes of this course will be achieved through attending the lectures, reading the required materials, and successful completion of the class assignments. The greater the investment students make in this regard, the greater the learning.

Student Evaluation will be based on the following:

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| 1. Reading Report (10%) | Due: 9:00am, June 3, 2019 |
| 2. Doctrinal Assessment (10%) | Due: 9:00am, June 3, 2019 |

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| 3. Discussion Paper & Presentation (15%) | Due as assigned in mid-course schedule |
| 4. Doctrinal Position Paper (25%) | Due: 11:59pm, June 21, 2019 |
| 5. Major Research Paper (40%) | Due: 11:59pm, Aug 2, 2019 |

For all written assignments please see "Guide for Writing Research Papers at Briercrest Seminary":
<https://www.mybriercrest.ca/doc/?ID=220>

Pre-Course Assignments:

1. **Reading Report (10%)** Due: 9:00am, June 3, 2019
Each student will read **ALL** the assigned readings from Michael Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, before the beginning of class. Students will complete the Reading Report at the end of the syllabus and submit the report online.
(Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 4, and 5)
2. **Doctrinal Assessment (10%)** Due: 9:00am, June 3, 2019, submitted to Canvas
Each student will secure a copy of the "Statement of Faith" of their own church or denomination or tradition (or of that church/denomination/tradition with which the student aspires to serve/associate). The Statement of Faith should be a minimum of 500 words, and should contain statements on most if not all of the doctrinal themes listed below.

Students will compose a 2000 word (approx. 8 pages) critical commentary on the Statement of Faith. Carefully scrutinize the Statement of Faith, reflecting at each point upon its biblical foundation and theological consistency. Note the particulars of structure, substance and emphasis. What is included and what is not? What is the purpose and significance of these details? As you analyse, identify where you are in full agreement with the Statement of Faith, where you disagree, and where you may have questions. Articulate these and other observations in an orderly fashion as you work systematically through the following major doctrinal themes:

- The Holy Scriptures
- God and the Trinity
- Creation
- Human Beings and Sin
- The Person of Christ
- The Saving Work of Christ
- Salvation (Election, Justification, Faith and Sanctification)
- The Holy Spirit
- The Church (its nature and work)
- Baptism and the Lord's Supper
- Last Things
- The Final State of Human Persons

Note: The purpose of this exercise is not to solve all of the doctrinal questions you have, but to raise the most important ones and to initiate a quest for greater understanding. Include the original Statement of Faith with your Doctrinal Assessment.
(Learning Outcomes 1 and 6)

Mid-Course Assignment:

3. **Discussion Paper and Presentation (15%)** Due as assigned in the mid-course schedule.
Each morning or afternoon session at least one student will be responsible to summarize, critique and lead a class discussion on an additional reading assigned for that session. Your presentation must include: i) a ten minute oral presentation introducing the major ideas and arguments propounded in the reading; ii) a two page (single spaced, printed and distributed to each class member) critical summary of the key themes arising from the material; and iii) a facilitated discussion by means of questions and observations designed to guide the class progressively through the material (with the assistance of the instructor and the participation of class mates). Think of your discussion presentation along the lines of a "script" for a provocative or interesting interchange on the most important issues arising from the readings. Excellent discussion papers will be clear, informative, concise, creative, accurate (representing the material well), and worthy of debate! (Learning Outcomes 1-3)

VERY IMPORTANT: Topics/Readings for Discussion papers will be posted on the Canvas course page no later than May 5, 2019. Beginning on May 6, 2019 and no later than May 27, 2019, please email the instructor at ddawson@briercrest.ca indicating your top two choices for which reading you wish to present to the class. The instructor will attempt to give each student's first choice, but no guarantee can be made that you will receive your first choice, or your preferred texts. Sign-ups will be on a "first come, first served" basis. The instructor reserves the right to reassign your choices.

Prepare enough copies for each person in the class. This must be handed in as a hard copy (i.e., no emailed copies accepted for this assignment).

Evaluation: Because these are meant to be papers designed to get the class talking about theological issues raised in the course texts, the marking will emphasize the effectiveness of the *presentation* and not just its written quality. Thus 75% of the grade per paper will be on the presentation and guided class discussion, while 25% of the grade will be on the written paper itself. Consequently, it is just as important to think about *how* you are going to foster discussion as it is *what* you are going to present.

(Learning Outcomes 3, 4 and 5)

Post-Course Assignments:

4. **Doctrinal Position Paper (25%)** Due: 11:59pm, June 21, 2019, submitted to Canvas
On the basis of the Doctrinal Assessments and the learning achieved throughout the course, each student will prepare his or her own personal Doctrinal Position statement, complete with clear, concise and balanced affirmations and parenthetical supporting biblical references. Papers will be organized according to the same major doctrinal themes:
- The Holy Scriptures
 - God and the Trinity
 - Creation
 - Human Beings and Sin
 - The Person of Christ
 - The Saving Work of Christ

- Salvation (Election, Justification, Faith and Sanctification)
- The Holy Spirit
- The Church (nature and work)
- Baptism and the Lord's Supper
- Last Things
- The Final State of Human Persons

The purpose of this assignment is for each student to present his or her own theological commitments as developed and refined throughout the course. This is not a research project per se, though consultation of two or three key systematic sources is strongly recommended. The Doctrinal Position Paper will not be a repeat of the Doctrinal Assessment, but rather a personal statement of beliefs using the precision of developed theological language to express, as fully and accurately as possible, the student's own convictions and conclusions.

Excellent Doctrinal Position Papers will be clear, concise, cogent and theologically consistent. They will include accurate explanations of key theological terms (such as "Trinity," "persons," "inspiration," "atonement," "justification," etc.) and their significance. They will be judicious in content and coverage. Students are welcome to use and/or adapt an existing statement of faith provided that they properly cite the original statement of faith, and give ample evidence of a thorough reworking and personal assimilation of the assertions made. The Doctrinal Position Paper must be the student's own work, and not a simple reproduction of another's work, all the while using precise theological language and formulae.

Doctrinal Position Papers should be roughly 2500 words (approx. 10 pages).

Note: It would be wise for each student to keep this assignment in mind--taking notes, collecting insights and reflecting on these themes--as the mid-course lectures and discussions proceed through this material.
(Learning Outcomes 1, 4, 5 and 6)

5. **Major Research Paper (40%)** Due: 11:59pm, Aug 2, 2019, submitted to Canvas

Discuss one of the important doctrinal themes addressed in this course, offering a detailed and thoughtful account of its biblical, historical and theological aspects. Your paper must interact with some of the most influential authors on the topic. Your paper may take the form of an historical analysis, a theological exposition of a particular theme, a comparison of two distinct theological traditions on a theme, an exposition of a particularly problematic aspect of a theme, or exploring a constructive theological proposal on a theme.

All essays topics should be agreed upon in advance with the Instructor. Unless otherwise arranged with the Instructor, essays should conform to the Chicago style. See the Briercrest Seminary Chicago-Style Format Guide at: <https://www.mybriercrest.ca/doc/?ID=208>

All essays and other written assignments shall be written at the Seminary level with respect to grammar, style and structure. All essays must be typed and printed on one side of the page only. All essays should include a title page, body of the essay including footnotes, and a bibliography. For the most part, Times New Roman or Arial 12 point font is to be used. A

single typed page should contain approximately 250 words. Use margins of one inch on all sides. The essay should be double-spaced (but not the notes or the bibliography which are usually single-spaced), with no extra blank lines between paragraphs. The first word of each paragraph should be indented one-half an inch.

You should make use of 10–12 sources, including:

- at least one article from a Biblical/Theological Dictionary or Encyclopedia,
- at least one peer reviewed article,
- at least six respectable works on the theme from the library shelves.

Be discriminating if you choose to use online sources. Use of unqualified or inferior sources will reflect negatively on your work.

Major Research Papers should be **3000 words** (approx. 12 pages).
(Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5)

SEMINARY CALENDAR

Students are expected to be aware of the policies that govern course work at Briercrest Seminary, all of which are published in the current Seminary Calendar:
<https://www.briercrestseminary.ca/academics/calendar/>.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend 100% of each modular for which they register. If this is impossible, arrangements must be made with the course professor. A maximum of 1 full day of class can be foregone. Students should request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit if additional time is missed.

Course Schedules

Classes begin at 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning and run a minimum of 30 hours through the course of the week. The schedule is determined by the course professor. Students should check the syllabus for specifics. When the syllabus does not state class times, students are responsible to check with the professor prior to making travel plans.

Assignment Submission

All assignments must be submitted no later than eight weeks after the last day of class as stated in the syllabus. The correct due dates will be clearly noted in the syllabus and each faculty member will state in their syllabus how assignments should be submitted. Assignments submitted within a week after the due date will be accepted with a 10 per cent penalty. For additional information refer to the late assignment policy or the extension policy in the [academic calendar](#).

Return of Graded Assignments

Professors are expected to return graded assignments within six weeks of the due date. If they fail to do so, students may submit an inquiry to the [Seminary](#). If an extension is granted, the professor is no longer obligated to meet this deadline.

Academic Honesty

Students are accountable to perform each task according to principles of academic honesty. Please refer to pages 24-25 in the [academic calendar](#) for more information.

Academic Accommodations

Any student with a disability, injury, or illness who may need academic accommodations should discuss them with the course instructor after contacting the Student Success Centre in person (located in the Library), by telephone (1-306-756-3230) or by email (studentsuccesscentre@briercrest.ca).

BIBLIOGRAPHY**Confessions of Faith:**

Apostles' Creed: <https://www.anglican.ca/about/beliefs/apostles-creed/>

Nicene Creed: <https://www.anglican.ca/about/beliefs/nicene-creed/>

Athanasian Creed: <https://www.anglican.ca/about/beliefs/athanasian-creed/>

Augsburg Confession (Lutheran): <https://www.stpls.com/uploads/4/4/8/0/44802893/augsburg-confession.pdf>

Anglican (39 Articles): <https://www.anglican.ca/about/beliefs/39-articles/>

Westminster Confession: https://reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/

Reformed Baptist: <https://www.reformedontheweb.com/confessions/1677-89-london-baptist-confession-of-faith.pdf>

Arminian: <http://evangelicalarminians.org/statement-of-faith/>

Wesleyan: <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/confession-of-faith>

Free Methodist (Canada): <https://www.fmcic.ca/our-ethos/articles-of-religion/>

PAOC: https://paoc.org/docs/default-source/fellowship-services-documents/statement-of-fundamental-and-essential-truths.pdf?sfvrsn=153a1d6a_0

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God and the Trinity:

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THEO 601 Christian Theology Overview

READING REPORT

This course requires that you read the textbook, Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction*, in its entirety. That is a total of 811 pages. This form is an official statement of the amount of the required reading you have accomplished prior to 9:00 am, June 3, 2019. Your signature indicates that you are providing a true and accurate account of your reading.

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