

BRIERCREST

CM/THEO 641 Theology of Christian Worship Fall 2020

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Course Dates: October 26-30, 2020

3 Credit Hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores a theological understanding of worship as it relates to Christian practice over the past two millennia. Current worship trends in North American churches will be evaluated in light of this theological and historical perspective.

COURSE INTEGRATION

The term “worship” defies simple definition. It can mean what we do as a church for an hour on Sunday. Some refer to the music portion of the service as “worship.” Still others say that worship is a lifestyle and encompasses anything and everything that we do. How should we define it? In this course we will examine this subject by looking at scripture through the lens of worship. We will survey both Old and New Testaments asking ourselves “What does the text have to say about how we should worship?” Secondly, we will examine the how the church throughout history has answered that question. Finally, we will apply what we’ve learned to our current context by looking at contemporary issues involving how worship is practiced in today’s churches.

COURSE TEXTS

Torrance, James B. *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

Peterson, David. *Engaging With God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992, 2006. ISBN 0-8308-2697-1

White, James F. *A Brief History of Christian Worship*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.

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

Thinking

1. Develop and refine a general understanding of biblical teaching about worship.
2. Interact with a number of thinkers in the area of worship studies.
3. Consider personal actions in corporate and individual worship.
4. Develop a theology of worship.
5. Develop a deeper historical perspective of current worship practices.

Valuing and feeling

1. Give increasing value to God as subject and object in personal and corporate worship.
2. Heighten awareness of the various theological tensions in worship.
3. Discern holistic worship as related to spirit and truth.
4. Cultivate a broader appreciation of the wide spectrum of worship traditions.

Skills

1. Articulate a biblical theology of worship.
2. Evaluate corporate worship in light of biblical teaching and examples.
3. Contribute to and participate in corporate worship in a more meaningful way.

COURSE OUTLINE AND CONTENT

NOTE: Aspects of the course outline and content are tentative and may be subject to change. If changes are necessary, this will be discussed with the class and agreed upon together.

1. Worship in the Old Testament

- a. Worship in Genesis – the Garden and the fall – Worship interrupted
- b. Worship in Mosaic Law and the Tabernacle
- c. The Psalms and Davidic Worship
- d. Worship in the temple
- e. Prophets and the call back to true worship
- f. Worship in exile

2. Worship in the New Testament

- a. Synagogue worship in the Gospels
- b. Worship according to Paul
- c. Worship according to Hebrews
- d. Worship in Revelation

3. History of Christian Worship

- a. Early patristic
- b. Late patristic
- c. Medieval
- d. Reformation
- e. Post Reformation
- f. 20th Century
- g. Contemporary Worship

4. Worship Renewal

- a. Current issues in worship ministry
- b. Planning and leading worship
- c. Leading today's church in worship renewal

ASSIGNMENTS

Pre-Course Assignments:

For each of the three textbooks (Torrance, Peterson and White), write a two to three page response/summary. This should include your sense of the strengths and weaknesses. Please include references to material (by page number) in the book. Parenthetical references may be used for textbook responses only. Include the author’s name in the initial reference and full bibliographic information at the end. It should be evident from your response that you have read the book in its entirety.

- A. Reading Response to Torrance.....10%
Due: at or before 9AM, first day of class. Note: there will be no extensions for pre-course work.
- B. Reading Response to Peterson.....10%
Due: at or before 9AM, first day of class. Note: there will be no extensions for pre-course work.
- C. Reading Response to White.....10%
Due: at or before 9AM, first day of class. Note: there will be no extensions for pre-course work.

Mid-Course Assignments:

Worship Service Practicum.....10%
Due: During the week of class

Students will participate in a practicum group to design and lead a worship service during the week. These worship services will emphasize specific theological themes as represented in course material. *Students should plan to keep Monday - Wednesday evenings available during the week of class for this worship service preparation.* More detail will be given regarding this practicum on the first day of class, including any adaptations due to social distancing requirements.

Post-Course Assignments:

- A. Service Observation and Evaluation.....20%
Due: December 18, 2020

PART 1—Observation and Research

1. **Read *A Rose by any other Name*** by Lester Ruth and ***My House Shall Be Called a House of...Announcements*** by Constance Cherry. These articles will be available on Canvas.
2. **Attend three contrasting worship services.** This may include your current church if desired, but you are encouraged to explore traditions outside of your own. One service should follow a more formal liturgy (i.e. Anglican, Lutheran, Catholic, Orthodox etc.) and the other more a free-church tradition (Alliance, Pentecostal, Apostolic, charismatic, community church etc.). Observe and record information about the service (*see full assignment details on Canvas*). Students may decide to make an audio recording (as appropriate) to refer to later, and are encouraged to take a picture of the worship space.

Be appropriately subtle. Note: Observing online services is acceptable if it is not possible to attend in-person.

3. **Research the traditions** represented by each service, tracing the history of each tradition back to the Reformation (if protestant) or further (if RC or Orthodox). Make a page or two of notes as necessary. Students will find *The Complete Library of Christian Worship Vol. 2* and *Protestant Worship* by James White helpful in this regard (among others).

PART 2—Evaluate and Compare Services

Compile your observations and research into a final document which evaluates and contrasts the three worship services. This document will include objective information about the services and traditions as well as discussion and analysis of the services theologically. Further assignment details on Canvas.

B. Post course reading:

DUE: December 18, 2020

Graded Value – Graded as part of the final project

Read *500 pages of reading* from the bibliography in this syllabus (below). Students will read a minimum of 100 pages from any one source (there will be a maximum of five sources reported on). This reading should be new material for you and should be reflected in the Major Project (below). Please prepare a reading response that includes complete bibliographic material and one to two paragraphs summarizing each source read. Please also specify which pages were read and totals for each source and a total for the assignment. This reading should inform your paper (below).

C. Major Research Project.....40%

DUE: December 18, 2020

Part 1: Write a research paper addressing a specific aspect of corporate worship biblically, historically and theologically, setting it in the context of a biblical theology of worship.

1. First present your definition of worship, briefly expanding on it and establishing a foundation for it biblically and theologically.
2. Next, identify a specific worship activity and explore biblical examples and instruction (if any) concerning the practice.

Possible topics include: *baptism, communion/Eucharist, space/architecture, use of Scripture, preaching/teaching, prayer, singing, musical instruments, gifts of the Spirit, giving, icons, dance, drama, etc.*

NOTE: Topics other than those listed above must be approved by the instructor.

3. Trace the historical development of the practice in the church over the past two thousand years being sure to discuss changing theological perspectives and practice. Finally, based on your biblical and historical overview, discuss the validity of the practice for corporate worship today and how (and if) it should be part of our worship today. If possible, identify a church tradition or stream that demonstrates use of the practice in a way that is faithful to your theological perspective.

Part 2 – Appendix: A practical application of the theoretical component of the project will be included as an appendix. This second part of the project will be substantial and reflect a ministry application of the work done. It is the intention that this could be immediately

applied to the student's current ministry context. Some examples of how this section could be structured are:

1. A series (2 – 3) of sermons on the topic chosen – detailed outlines (2-3 pages each) of these sermons are acceptable
2. A series of small group studies (3-5) on the topic chosen – detailed teaching outlines are acceptable
3. An artistic response – i.e. a painting or sculpture in response to the study, a musical composition in response to the project (submission on a CD or cassette tape), a dramatic play illustrating the tension chosen, a short story responding to the study, etc.
4. Other: please feel free to interact with the instructor regarding other possibilities for this section of the assignment
5. Written appendices are included in the project after the paper and before the bibliography.
6. For this course, except where noted above, please use footnotes for necessary referencing, not endnotes or parenthetical references.

The project grading will be based on the following:

- Thorough research, beginning with sources in the *Recommended Sources*
- Theology of worship clearly identified according to the chosen tension
- General quality of work (writing, grammar, format, or other relevant quality characteristics)
- Quality of the practical application component

Guidelines:

- Along with Scripture and the three course texts, students will use and cite a minimum of *four additional sources* (include primary documents) as part of their research. This does not include internet citations. Preference should be given to books on reserve in the library and the Complete Library of Christian Worship edited by Robert Webber available in the reference section.
- This paper must be **between 12-14 pages**. The student will lose marks if the paper is outside these parameters.
- This paper must be formatted according to the Chicago-Style Format Guide.

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

In order to benefit fully from a seminary education, to be good stewards of time and finances, and to be considerate of their classmates and faculty members, students must be in class at every opportunity.

Modular Courses

Students are expected to attend 100 per cent of each modular for which they register. If this is impossible due to extenuating circumstances, arrangements must be made with the course

professor before the first day of class. If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending class, a maximum of one (1) full day of class can be foregone. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Online Courses

If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending scheduled meeting times, then up to 20% of meeting time can be foregone. Students missing scheduled meeting times should make every effort to inform the course professor prior to any time missed. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Semester-Based Courses

All students missing more than two full weeks of a particular course from registration to the last day of classes will receive an automatic fail (0%). A student may appeal a course failure due to excessive absences. Successful appeals will be granted only in rare cases where all absences are clearly beyond the student's control. Appeals must be made through the Academic Appeal Process.

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 health condition who may need academic accommodations (permanent or temporary) should discuss them with the course instructor after contacting the Director of the Academic Resource Centre in person (L234 in the Library), by telephone (1-306-756-3230) or by email (academicresourcecentre@briercrest.ca). Documentation from a qualified practitioner will be required (i.e., medical doctor, psychologist, etc.).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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