

BRIERCREST

THEO 601 Christian Theology Overview Winter 2021

Professor: Dr. Amanda Hackney
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Course Dates: January 11–March 29, 2021

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. For MATS and MABLE students, this course may be used in the core by permission of the program coordinator.

A Note about the Course Format:

This is an online course that is focused on in-person interaction and discussion. We will meet “live” via Zoom on Mondays from 7pm-10pm SK time. See course assignments below for more information. Instructions for how to log into Zoom will be posted to Canvas.

COURSE TEXTS

Jones, Beth Felker. *Practicing Christian Doctrine: An Introduction to Thinking and Living Theologically*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014.

Bird, Michael F. *What Christians Ought to Believe: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine Through the Apostles' Creed*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016.

Johnson, Keith L. *Theology as Discipleship*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015.

All other readings will be provided in Canvas.

All assignments must conform to the Chicago-Style Format Guide.

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

At the end of this course students should be able to:

- Understand and define major theological concepts and terms
- Do research using theological resources
- Identify the diversity and similarity of ideas across various streams of the Christian tradition
- Articulate and defend their own statement of faith and understand how it relates to the broader Christian tradition
- Have the tools and resources to begin putting together the doctrinal component of their graduation portfolio
- Appreciate the relationship between theological doctrine and Christian practice
- Charitably read and critically examine theological primary source texts

COURSE OUTLINE AND CONTENT

| Week and Topic | Preparatory Textbook Readings (Read these chapters before each week's class to help orient you to that week's lecture) | Group Discussions and Assignments (The readings for each group discussion will be posted in Canvas one month before the start of class) |
|--|---|--|
| January 11 th Introduction: Why Theology and Sources of Theology | Jones chapters 1 & 2 Bird chapters 1-3 | No group discussions this week. |
| January 18 th Doctrine of God: Revelation | Jones: N/A Bird: N/A | Group Discussion #1 |
| January 25 th Doctrine of God: Trinity | Jones: chapter 3 Bird: chapter 4 | Group Discussion #2 "Why Theology?" Assignment due Friday |
| February 1 st Doctrine of Creation | Jones: chapter 4 Bird: N/A | Group Discussion #3 Mini-Assignment #1 due Friday |
| February 8 th Doctrine of Humanity | Jones: chapter 5 Bird: N/A | Group Discussion #4 |
| February 15 th Doctrine of Christ: Person of Christ | Jones: chapter 6 Bird: chapters 5-7 | Group Discussion #5 Mini-Assignment #2 due Friday |
| February 22 nd Doctrine of Christ: Work of Christ | Jones: chapter 7 Bird: chapter 8-11 | Group Discussion #6 |
| March 1 st Doctrine of the Holy Spirit | Jones: chapter 8 Bird: chapter 12 | Group Discussion #7 Mini-Assignment #3 due Friday |
| March 8 th Doctrine of Scripture | Jones: N/A (or re-read chapter 2) Bird: N/A | Group Discussion #8 |
| March 15 th Doctrine of the Church | Jones: chapter 9 Bird: chapter 13 | Group Discussion #9 |
| March 22 nd Doctrine of Last Things | Jones: chapter 10 Bird: chapter 14 | Group Discussion #10 |
| March 29 th | | Major Assignment due Friday |

ASSIGNMENTS

Please submit all written assignments to Canvas.

Participation 15%:

We will meet weekly via Zoom from 7pm-10pm SK time. Students are expected to attend all lectures. Understanding that there may be extenuating circumstances, students are permitted no more than 2 absences from the live lecture periods. Students are expected to participate and demonstrate that they have read the textbook readings (from Jones and Bird), as well as the group discussion readings for that week. For any weeks missed, students are required to watch the recorded session, and post a minimum 500 word summary and response essay to the discussion forums.

Primary Source Bullet Points 15%:

In the second half of each session, the class will be divided into groups to discuss the assigned primary source reading for that week. **The list of primary source readings and how to access them will be posted one month before the start of class.** For each primary source reading, students will prepare 4 bullet points: two summative and two evaluative. These bullet points will be due at the beginning of the class and will be used to jump start the group discussions. A template for how to do these bullet points is posted on Canvas.

Key questions that you may want to engage during the discussion:

- Why does this doctrine matter?
- Why is it complicated?
- What does it change?
- Where can it go wrong?

"Why Theology?" Essay 20%:

Read Johnson's *Theology as Discipleship*. Write a 4-page essay answering the question, "Why theology?" In other words: Why is theology important for the life and mission of the Christian and/or the Church?

The first two pages should be a substantive summary of the key ideas and arguments in the texts. The last two pages should be an attempt to integrate or apply what students have read to their current ministry, educational, or vocational context. Why does theology matter for you, the counselling student? the leadership student? Why does theology matter in your current career (especially if your career is in a secular field or discipline)? Students will be expected to show mature engagement with Johnson in this reflective portion.

This assignment must be formatted according to the Chicago-style format guide and uploaded to the assignment tab on Canvas.

This assignment is due on Friday January 29th, by 11:59pm SK time.

Mini-Assignments 15%:

To help prepare students to write their major assignment, there will be 3 mini-assignments that are ladderred into the final project.

Mini-Assignment #1: Writing Papers in Seminary (5%)

- Students will complete a series of brief exercises posted in Canvas that engage the Briercrest Chicago-Style Format Guide, the Seminary Writing Guide, the Passive Voice guide, and a tutorial on creating a robust thesis statement. More information is posted directly in Canvas.
- This assignment is due Friday February 5th, by 11:59pm SK time.

Mini-Assignment #2: Compare and Contrast (5%)

- Using the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and two contemporary statements of faith (e.g., one should be from your home church, or from a ministry organization where you hope to work), write a three page analysis.
- This analysis should engage the following questions:
 - What themes or doctrines are found in all of them?
 - What themes or doctrines are found in some of them?
 - What themes or doctrines are missing altogether?
 - What is the significance and/or implications of the inclusion and/or exclusion of specific doctrines?
- Upload copies of the two contemporary statements of faith along with your analysis (or, if they are available on the internet, provide a weblink).
- This assignment is due Friday February 19th, by 11:59pm SK time.

Mini-Assignment #3: Finding Resources (5%)

- In light of mini-assignment #1, create a first draft of your own personal statement of faith (Instructions on what needs to be included are found below under "Major Assignment").
- Create an annotated bibliography shaped by your statement of faith. Under each line or point of the doctrinal statement list your 3 theological sources, properly formatted. Under each statement and its corresponding 3 sources, include a one paragraph explanation or justification for why you are using these sources (as opposed to other sources). How do these sources help you? Are certain sources specific to your denominational or theological background?
- Students should use the "Assessing Theological Resources" document provided in Canvas to determine the appropriateness of your proposed sources.
- Students should also consult the library webpage on how to access resources from the library catalogue as an off-campus student.
- This assignment is due Friday March 5th, by 11:59pm SK time.

Major Assignment: Statement of Faith and Exposition 35%:

All Briercrest students complete a graduation portfolio in the final year of their program. A significant component of this portfolio is the doctrinal statement. The assignment in this class is designed to give students the building blocks so that they can continue to refine and revise their statement of faith, resulting in a document that they can use, not only for the graduation portfolio but also for applications for jobs in various ministry fields (pastorate, missions, lay ministry, music, and Christian education).

Therefore, for this final assignment, students will write and defend a statement of faith.

Students are welcome to use and/or adapt an existing statement of faith provided that they properly cite the original statement of faith and provide a one paragraph reason for using that (or these) particular statement of faith(s). (e.g., "I am adapting (or adopting) the PAOC statement of faith because I am working towards ordination within the denomination.")

Your faith statement should include references (in brackets) to the relevant passages of Scripture for each articulation. E.g., I believe in God, the Father Almighty (cite verses that refer to God as Father; that refer to God as the Almighty), creator of heaven and earth (cite verses that demonstrate that God creates). Your statement of faith should not be one large paragraph, or essay. It should have clearly demarcated points/separations/paragraphs/sections.

Your statement of faith must include a statement on each of the following:

- The Triune God
- The person and work of Jesus Christ
- The Holy Spirit
- Creation
- Humanity and Sin
- Salvation (including statements on election, faith, justification and sanctification)
- Scripture
- The Nature of the Church
- The Mission of the Church (including statements on baptism and the Lord's Supper)
- Last Things (including personal and cosmic eschatology)

Attached to the statement of faith, students will include a 2-page exposition/defense FOR EACH component/section of the doctrinal statement. Each exposition must cite a minimum of 3 scholarly, theological sources (and students must cite a minimum of 10 different scholarly, theological sources overall). Each 2-page exposition must also:

- Include an explanation of why you include each statement
- Include an exposition of key theological terms used (e.g., "inspired"; "justification"; "atonement"; "Trinity"; "persons", etc)
- Include a brief discussion of particular distinctives in your tradition/denomination concerning the doctrinal point and how they relate to the broader Christian community. (e.g., if your church/denomination specifies a particular mode of baptism, unpack why that mode is theologically significant and how it relates to other modes of baptism. Is another mode a "deal-breaker" for you and/or your denomination, why or why not?)

If students have adapted a doctrinal statement from a pre-existing statement of faith, their exposition should also, briefly, address why/how they have adapted the statement on that particular doctrinal element.

This assignment must be formatted according to the Chicago-Style format guide, including footnotes and a bibliography, and must be uploaded to the assignment tab on Canvas.

NOTE: A tutorial on how to complete this assignment will be posted to Canvas.

This assignment is due on Thursday April 1st by 11:59pm SK time.

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

Systematics and Methodology

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Doctrine of God and the Trinity

- Bray, Gerald L. *The Doctrine of God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
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Creation and Anthropology

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Christology

- Baker, Mark D., and Joel B. Green. *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011.
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Pneumatology

- Badcock, Gary D. *Light of Truth & Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997.
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Ecclesiology

- Allison, Gregg R. *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
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Scripture

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