

BRIERCREST

THEO 601 Christian Theology Overview Winter 2023

Professor: R. Dale Dawson
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Course Dates: Jan 9 – Mar 27, 2023

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.

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 FORMAT

This online course will have two components: There will be an eight (8) week intensive period that includes live lectures and a discussion forum; and there will be a four (4) week period for completing course assignments. During the first eight weeks, we will meet via Zoom on Mondays from 6pm-8pm SK time. See course assignments below for more information. During the last four weeks of the course, the instructor will host a series of "virtual office hours" sessions to assist students with any questions they may have concerning their major assignment. Details regarding the structure and timing of these sessions will be discussed during the week eight live lecture.

COURSE TEXTS

Bird, Michael F. *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction*. Second edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020.

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
Jan 9, 6-8 pm	ORIENTATION & SYLLABUS THE TRIUNE GOD; GOD THE FATHER Read: Bird, pp. 99-202 (§§ 2.1-2.3) Due: Doctrinal Assessment
Jan 16, 6-8 pm	CREATION, REVELATION & PROVIDENCE; HUMANITY, SIN AND EVIL Read: Bird, pp. 203-293 (§§ 2.1-2.3); pp. 729-800 (§§ 7.1-7.6)
Jan 23, 6-8 pm	GOD THE SON CHRISTOLOGICAL METHOD; THE LIFE AND DEATH OF CHRIST Read: Bird, pp. 395-493 (§§ 4.1-4.4)
Jan 30, 6-8 pm	GOD THE SON THE RESURRECTION, ASCENSION AND IDENTITY OF CHRIST Reading: Bird, pp. 494-548 (§§ 4.5-4.7)
Feb 6, 6-8 pm	SALVATION Read: Bird, pp. 549-663 (§§ 5.1-5.5)
Feb 13, 6-8 pm	GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT Read: Bird, pp. 665-728 (§§ 6.1-6.3)
Feb 20, 6-8 pm	THE CHURCH Read: Bird, pp. 801-911 (§§ 8.1-8.6)
Feb 27, 6-8 pm	LAST THINGS Reading: Bird, pp. 295-393 (§§ 3.1-3.7)
Mar 6, 6-8 pm	Virtual office hours (by appointment)
Mar 13, 6-8 pm	Virtual office hours (by appointment)
Mar 20, 6-8 pm	Virtual office hours (by appointment)
Mar 27, 6-8 pm	Virtual office hours (by appointment)

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:

Pre-Course Assignment:

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| 1. Doctrinal Assessment (10%) | Due: 6:00pm, Jan 9, 2023 |
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Mid-Course Assignment:

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| 2. Discussion Forum (15%) | Due weekly in class discussion |
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Post-Course Assignments:

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| 3. Reading Report (10%) | Due: 11:59pm, Mar 1, 2023 |
| 4. Doctrinal Position Paper (25%) | Due: 11:59pm, Mar 13, 2023 |
| 5. Major Research Paper (40%) | Due: 11:59pm, Apr 1, 2023 |

Pre-Course Assignment:

1. **Doctrinal Assessment (10%)** Due: 6:00pm, Jan 9, 2023, 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 analyze, 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:

2. **Discussion Forum (15%)** Each session students are expected to participate in the discussion forum, which will generally occur in the last portion of each meeting. Having completed the assigned readings for the class, each student is to identify a **“most intriguing/insightful passage”** which you would like to discuss further. Students must send an email to the professor prior to the beginning of class, indicating: 1) the passage (including a reference to page and paragraph), and 2) a leading question designed to engage the class in further discussion. Time may not permit every question to be taken up in the discussion, in which case the professor will select a few that will be discussed. Each student is expected to engage in the discussion regardless of whether or not your passage and question is under consideration.

Evaluation: Because these are meant to be questions designed to get the class talking about the most important theological issues raised in the course texts, the marking will take into account the quality of both the *questions* and the *contributions* of each student in the discussions. The grade for each student will be based upon your contributions as a whole upon the completion of our class meetings.

(Learning Outcomes 3, 4 and 5)

Post-Course Assignments:

1. **Reading Report (10%)** Due: 11:59pm, Mar 1, 2023, submitted by email
Each student is expected to read all the weekly assigned readings from Michael Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, before the beginning of each class. Students will submit a single Reading Report by the due date via email to the Professor at ddawson@briercrest.ca, indicating how much (“X” %) of the assigned readings you have completed. Your reading report will be a simple attestation such as the following: “Dear Prof. Dawson, This email is to attest that I have completed ___ % of the assigned readings for THEO 601 by Mar 1, 2023. Yours Sincerely, _____ (your name).”
(Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 4, and 5)
2. **Doctrinal Position Paper (25%)** Due: 11:59pm, Mar 13, 2023, 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)

3. **Major Research Paper (40%)** Due: 11:59pm, Apr 1, 2023, 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 essay 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

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

This is an online course. Classes run from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Mondays. The schedule is determined by the course professor. Students should check the syllabus for specifics.

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 Academic Resource Centre Coordinator in person (L234 in the Library) or by email (ntooke@briercrest.ca). Documentation from a qualified practitioner will be required (i.e., medical doctor, psychologist, etc.).

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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- Placher, William C. Ed. *Essentials of Christian Theology*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.
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God and the Trinity:

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