

BRIERCREST

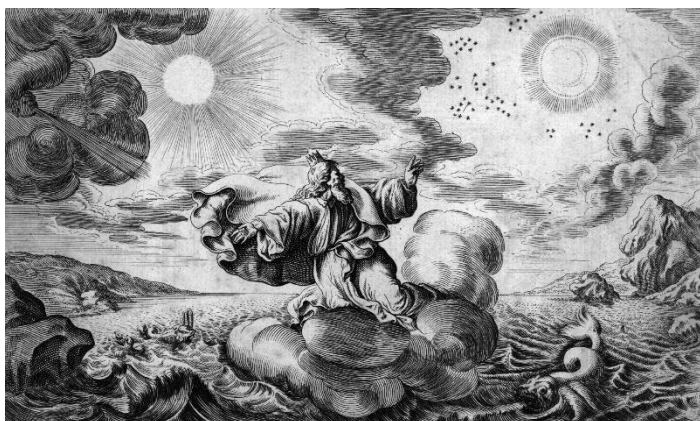
THEO 650 Theology of God and Creation Fall 2023

Professor: Dr. Joel Houston
Email: jhouston@briercrest.ca
Phone: 306-756-3245
Course Dates: December 11-15, 2023
Course Delivery: On Campus modular

3 Credit Hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This foundational course introduces the task and importance of systematic theology for Christian teaching and ministry. Special focus is given to outlining, biblically and historically, the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of God as Creator and Lord of Creation, and the doctrine of humanity.



COURSE INTEGRATION

Often, when we consider what it means to be human, our eyes turn heavenward. This is not to say that there are no answers as we look within ourselves, yet mightier questions compel us. Why are we here? What is our meaning and purpose? And so we discover that to learn about ourselves truly, we must look to God. As we do this, we learn about ourselves as created beings, but more importantly, we learn about our Creator. And so, as Lewis Carroll remarked, we must “begin at the beginning...”. THEO 650 explores the ground and foundation of all Christian Theology, God and His works. This course is, therefore, both a class in theology proper (the doctrine of God), theological anthropology (included in the works of God), creation care, and the beginning of *systematic theology*—the discipline of constructing a framework of Christian doctrine and teaching, seeking coherence, understanding, and even beauty.

COURSE TEXTS

Dolezal, James. *All That Is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017.

McFarland, Ian A. *From Nothing: A Theology of Creation*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014.

All assignments must conform to the Chicago Style Guide, available as a PDF document 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

- 1) Students will be familiar with the historical-theological antecedents that underwrite the evangelical doctrines of God and Creation.
- 2) Students will be able to articulate salient aspects of both the character and attributes of God (communicable and incommunicable).
- 3) Students will know, understand, and articulate the historic language concerning the trinity, including “person”, “hypostases”, “perichoresis”, “immanent and economic”, etc.
- 4) Students will develop and expound a theology of creation that demonstrates an integrated understanding of the relationship(s) between God, his people, and creation more generally speaking.
- 5) Students will develop a basic approach to theological anthropology in the tradition of covenantal hermeneutics.

COURSE OUTLINE AND CONTENT

A full course outline, including modules, assignments, extra-curricular reading, and discussions will be posted to Canvas in advance of the course. Students are encouraged to become familiar with the Canvas page for this course early on and check it often.

ASSIGNMENTS

Please submit all written assignments to Canvas.

Pre-Course Assignments:

Text Reading and Critical Review – 25%

Students will read both Dolezal and McFarland in their entirety, making notes and highlighting as needed/appropriate. After completing both readings, students will submit a critical review of Dolezal or McFarland and a statement of the reading completion percentage for the other text. Critical reviews are to be 1000 words in length (~3 pages) and should demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the contents of the work. This paper is not to be a simple summary of the book chosen but rather a critical assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the text. After the reviews, a short reflection regarding personal applicability (or lack thereof) is welcome. For the reading completion percentage, students may include a statement at the end of their review indicating how much of the second text they read.

Assignment Weight:

Text-Critical Review: 15%

Reading Completion: 10%

Mid-Course Assignments:***Forum Participation, Reading, and Engagement – 25%***

Students will be evaluated on their daily participation in both the in-class sessions and the assignments, readings, and contributions expected in the daily modules section of the Canvas course.

In-Class Contributions:

Students are expected to respond to questions and offer their insights in class. Furthermore, students are expected to interact with other students' comments and points of view (respectfully!). Regular, thoughtful, and *vocal* contributions are expected.

Pre-Class Readings:

Students are expected to read the primary source readings posted to Canvas *before* class that day. These readings will be posted well in advance. Furthermore, students must come to class prepared to discuss the readings with their insights, questions, or comments.

Forum Contributions:

Questions, writing prompts, and additional curricular activities will be posted to Canvas in the daily modular sections. Students must respond to these prompts and interact with other students as required.

Students will receive daily grades on their class participation and feedback about where to improve if necessary. This is to ensure that students accurately understand what is required and may seek to meet those requirements satisfactorily.

Assignment Weight

In-Class Contributions: 10%

Pre-Class Readings: 5%

Forum Contributions: 10%

Forum Participation, Reading and Engagement Due Date: Daily Throughout Course

Post-Course Assignments:***Theological Synthesis Paper – 50%***

THEO 650 deals primarily with three distinct heads of doctrine: God (Theology Proper), Creation (the works of God), and Humanity (Theological Anthropology). Students will write a 3000-word (~10 pages) paper that seeks to synthesize and present what they believe are the most salient or essential aspects of these doctrines and how they might be understood to “work together” (i.e., what does our understanding about the person and nature of God mean for humans created in community and charged to care for creation?). The boundaries for this paper are broad, so creativity is encouraged, but students are encouraged to consult the instructor of record to refine their argument and accumulate appropriate resources. Students must consult at least 5 resources and demonstrate a robust understanding of the doctrines discussed. Excellent papers will show a command of theological language, deep and wide reading, and creative presentation.

Assignment Weights and Due Dates:
Preliminary Topic and Hypotheses (10%): 8 January 2024
Tentative Thesis and Bibliography (minimum five sources) (10%): 22 January 2024
Completed Paper (30%): 9 February 2024

SEMINARY CALENDAR

Students are expected to be aware of the policies that govern coursework 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 percent 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 only succeed in the course if 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

Modular 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

As members of the Briercrest learning community, students have a responsibility to conduct themselves with integrity and honour. Students who cheat on exams, plagiarize, inappropriately collaborate, or use generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT) without instructor authorization in the preparation and/or submission of their assignments violate the trust placed in them by their instructors, fellow students, and the seminary. Any such actions constitute a breach of academic honesty and will result in serious consequences, such as failure of an assignment, failure of a course, or expulsion from the seminary.

Plagiarism, whether intentional or involuntary, is the submission of the work of others, published or unpublished, in whole or in part without acknowledgment or proper documentation. All information, ideas and/or direct quotations taken from other primary or secondary sources must be documented appropriately. Students are responsible to ensure they are using their sources with transparency and honesty. For more details, consult the [Seminary Calendar](#). In addition to being familiar with these pages, instructors assume that you have completed the Briercrest Academic Integrity course on [Canvas](#) and understand the information contained in it.

Academic Accommodations

Any student with a disability, injury, or health condition (mental or physical) who may need academic accommodations (permanent or temporary) should contact the ARC Coordinator in person (L234 in the Library), by phone (1-306-801-6159), or by email (arc@briercrest.ca). Documentation from a qualified practitioner will be required (i.e., medical doctor, psychologist, etc.). It is recommended that students meet with their professors to discuss the requirements of their accommodations (i.e., how the student will receive lecture notes or how the professor wants to receive extension requests).

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

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The Doctrine of God

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The Doctrine of the Trinity

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