



## CM/THEO 641 Theology of Christian Worship Fall 2024

Professor: Geoff Dresser  
Email: [gdresser@briercrest.ca](mailto:gdresser@briercrest.ca)  
Phone: 204-218-1529  
Course Dates: October 21-25, 2024  
Course Delivery Method: In-Person Modular

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

Williams, Khalia J., Mark Lamport, and Melanie Ross. *Theological Foundations of Worship: Biblical, Systematic, and Practical Perspectives*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2021.

Ross, Melanie, and Mark Lamport. *Historical Foundations of Worship: Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Perspectives*. 1st edition. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2022.

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>) 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 diverse group of thinkers in the area of worship studies.
3. Consider personal actions in corporate and individual worship.
4. Develop a theology of worship.
5. 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. Broader appreciation of the wide spectrum of worship traditions.

### Skills

1. Articulate a biblical theology of worship.
2. Evaluate corporate worship considering 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. 20<sup>th</sup> 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**

Please submit all written assignments to Canvas.

***Pre-Course Assignments:***

**A. Reading Response:**

**Lex Orandi Lex Credendi.....10%**

“Lex Orandi Lex Credendi” means the law of prayer is the law of belief (see page 124 of *TFoW* for a further explanation of this Latin phrase). This principle extends to worship as well, in that how we worship affects what we believe. Read parts 1 and 2 of *Theological Foundations of Worship*. Select 3 chapters to focus on and then discuss how your own worship experience has shaped (for good or for ill) your beliefs concerning the topics addressed by your selected chapters. 1000-1500 words.

**Due: at or before 9AM, first day of class (October 21, 2024).**

**Note: there will be no extensions for pre-course work**

**B. Reading Response:**

**Contemporary and Early Church Worship.....10%**

Read Parts 1 and 2 of *HFoW*. Write a 1000-1500 word essay in which you compare and contrast Early and Late Patristic worship with your own worship context, then answer the following questions: should your church modify its worship practice in light of Early Church worship? Why or why not?

**Due: at or before 9AM, first day of class (October 21, 2024).**

**Note: there will be no extensions for pre-course work**

***Mid-Course Assignments:***

**Worship Service Practicum.....10%**

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.

**Due: During the week of class**

***Post-Course Assignments:***

**A. Reading Response:**

**Culture and Worship.....10%**

Read Part 3 of *TFoW*. Select three chapters and write a response (300-500 words) to each chapter. Post your responses in three separate posts to the discussion board on Canvas. Next, write substantive responses (approximately 100 words) to three other student posts.

**Original Posts Due Date: November 4, 2024**

**Responses Due Date: November 12, 2024**

**B. Service Observation and Evaluation.....20%**  
**Due: November 25, 2024**

**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 two 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 a more free-church tradition (i.e., 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.
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). Identify the distinctive aspects of worship for each tradition and comment on how those distinctives were reflected (or not) in the services you attended.

**Part 2—Evaluate, Reflect and Compare Services**

Compile your observations, reflections and research into a final document (1500-2000 words) which evaluates and contrasts the two worship services. This document should briefly identify and describe the traditions of the services attended. Most of this paper will contain reflection and theological analysis of the services. Further assignment details on Canvas.

**C. Worship Renewal Project Worksheet.....10%**  
**Due: November 18, 2024**

Students will complete the worksheet (available on Canvas) which will include:

1. Assessment of their church context
2. Analysis of potential area(s) of worship renewal. Possible areas include: *baptism, Communion/Eucharist, space/architecture, use of Scripture, preaching/teaching, prayer, singing, musical instruments, gifts of the Spirit, giving, icons, dance, drama, etc.*
3. Biblical texts related to the chosen area of worship renewal
4. Historical examples related to the chosen area of church renewal
5. Worship Renewal Essay Outline
6. Description of Proposed Intervention

**D. Worship Renewal Project.....30%**  
**Due: December 20, 2024**

**Part 1 – Worship Renewal Essay**

1. From your own church context, select an aspect of worship that would benefit from renewal (identified in your project worksheet).

2. Write an essay to your church leadership and members proposing a renewal change to this area of your worship practice.
3. Begin the essay by defining worship, then identify the area of worship in need of change and justify this change using both biblical and historical sources. Finally, propose the changes that your church could make to renew that aspect of your church's worship considering your biblical and historical arguments.
4. This essay must **be between 13-15 pages, not including the appendix**. The student will lose marks if the paper is outside these parameters.

### **Part 2 – Appendix: A practical application/intervention**

Create a practical application or intervention related to the worship renewal area chosen for the project. 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:

- A series (2 – 3) of sermons on the topic chosen – detailed outlines (2-3 pages each) of these sermons are acceptable
- A series of small group studies (3-5) on the topic chosen – detailed teaching outlines are acceptable
- An artistic response – i.e., a painting or sculpture in response to the study, a musical composition in response to the project, a dramatic play illustrating the tension chosen, a short story responding to the study, etc.
- Other: please feel free to interact with the instructor regarding other possibilities for this section of the assignment

Written appendices are included in the project after the paper and before the bibliography.

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, etc.)
- Quality and depth of the practical application component

### **Guidelines:**

- Along with Scripture and the two course texts, students will use and cite a minimum of *six additional sources* (include primary documents) as part of their research.
- 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.

### ***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 without instructor authorization 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.

Generative AI is an umbrella term for a type of machine learning and a group of algorithms that can create new content, such as text, code, images, videos, music, or a combination of all these formats. Generative AI produces output in response to a query or prompt using generative models such as Large Language Models (LLMs) that rely on large datasets. Generative AI features are also often embedded within tools such as Grammarly, allowing these tools to generate new content, such as the rewriting, paraphrasing, or summarizing of existing text. The generated responses of these tools are probabilistic, which can result in errors and biases in responses.

The use of generative AI to create audio or visual media, to produce outlines, to generate partial or complete drafts of assignments, to answer questions on quizzes or exams, or to edit the grammar of assignment drafts is considered unauthorized unless it is explicitly permitted by the course instructor in writing. All use of generative AI tools must be properly documented.

Students are responsible for ensuring they are using their sources and completing their assignments with transparency and honesty. For more details, consult the [Seminary Calendar](#) and the Briercrest Format Guide. 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](mailto: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).

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

See Canvas for an extended worship bibliography.