



THEO 601 Christian Theology Overview Spring 2025

Professor: Joel Houston, PhD
Email: jhouston@briercrest.ca
Phone: 306-801-6457
Course Dates: June 9-13, 2025
Course Delivery Method: In-Person Modular

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

Beliefs about "ultimate reality" shape and guide our decisions in life: from simple, mundane choices to life-altering decisions, our ideas about God, the universe, and human existence are essential! THEO 601 presents an opportunity to think about these "big questions with the Christian tradition." Instead of rote repetition of doctrine, students are encouraged to think critically, read widely, and develop a theology that is at once orthodox, generous, and life-giving. Special attention is given in this class to how Christian theology applies to any number of vocations in life, not simply the career of the academic or the pastor.

COURSE TEXTS

Kapic, Kelly M. *A Little Book for New Theologians: Why and How to Study Theology*.
Downer's Grove: IVP Academic, 2001. (126 pages).

Strahan, Joshua. *The Basics of Christian Belief: The Bible, Theology, and Life's Big Questions*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020. (230 pages).

Course Reader. Weekly readings comprised of short excerpts of primary sources.
These readings will be made available via Canvas.

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

- 1) Students will articulate a personal approach to studying theology: not only *how* one studies theology, but why they do so, as well.
- 2) Students will understand the basic tenets of the orthodox Christian faith as summarized by the Apostles' Creed.
- 3) Students will understand the basic nature of systematic theology as a discipline.
- 4) Students will be familiar with a diversity of voices within the Christian tradition on a number of different doctrines. This familiarity will foster a posture of openness and receptivity to the unique streams of Christian thought and culture.
- 5) Students will have the opportunity to self-reflect and express why theology is important for their own vocational aspirations.

COURSE OUTLINE AND CONTENT

A complete course outline, including progression of topics and readings will be published to Canvas. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the course hosted on Canvas in advance of the synchronous class sessions.

ASSIGNMENTS

Please submit all written assignments to Canvas.

Pre-Course Assignments:

"Thinking about Theology" Reflection Paper – 35%

Students will read Kopic's *A Little Book for New Theologians* in its entirety. After finishing the reading, students will write a 2000-word (~6 pages) paper answering the following questions: what *is* theology? why should we study theology? And finally, *how* should we study theology (i.e., what are the characteristics of faithful theological study)? Students are free to synthesize and reflect on Kopic's work for this short paper but must also include their insights, thoughts, and opinions. Excellent papers will demonstrate careful and critical thought and an aspect of self-reflection, considering what Kopic argues. A signed attestation that indicates that the student has read the text in its entirety is required. This attestation can be a simple declaration after the paper.

Rubric for "Thinking About Theology" Reflection Paper

1. **Thoroughness of Content (40%)**
 - The paper clearly addresses all three key questions:
 1. *What is theology?*
 2. *Why should we study theology?*
 3. *How should we study theology? (What are the characteristics of faithful theological study?)*

- The student demonstrates a deep engagement with the entirety of Kopic's *A Little Book for New Theologians*, showcasing an understanding of key themes, arguments, and concepts from the book.
 - The paper should also reflect a well-thought-out synthesis of Kopic's work, **balanced with the student's own insights and reflections on theology.**
2. **Critical Thinking and Analysis (30%)**
- The student goes beyond summarizing the text to offer critical reflections on Kopic's arguments.
 - The student presents their own thoughts, insights, and opinions in response to Kopic's work, showing how the book has impacted their understanding of theology.
 - The paper should exhibit thoughtful analysis, including how the student personally engages with the concepts discussed in the book.
 - Self-reflection is present, considering how the arguments of Kopic apply to the student's personal or academic development in theology.
3. **Organization and Clarity (15%)**
- The paper is well-organized, with a clear introduction, body, and conclusion.
 - Each question is addressed in a cohesive and logical manner, with smooth transitions between points and ideas.
 - The writing is clear and concise, with a strong thesis or central argument guiding the paper.
4. **Quality of Writing and Grammar (10%)**
- The paper demonstrates a high level of proficiency in academic writing, including proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
 - The style of writing is appropriate for a formal academic paper, with attention to sentence structure and clarity.
5. **Attestation of Completion (5%)**
- The paper includes a signed attestation confirming that the student has read *A Little Book for New Theologians* in its entirety. This can be a simple statement at the end of the paper (e.g., "I attest that I have read Kopic's *A Little Book for New Theologians* in full").

Additional Notes:

- The paper should meet the length requirement of approximately 2000 words (~6 pages), excluding the attestation.
- Proper citation of Kopic's work is required when referencing specific ideas or passages, even though this is a reflection-based paper.

Assignment Weighting:

Completed Reading of Course Text: 10%

Reflection Paper: 25%

"Thinking About Theology" Reflection Paper Due: 09 June 2025

Mid-Course Assignments:

Forum Participation, Reading, and Engagement – 25%

Student engagement is an essential aspect of the educational experience. Students will be evaluated on their daily participation in both the in-class, synchronous sessions, as well as the daily assignments, readings, and contributions expected in the 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 contributions are expected.

Pre-Class Readings:

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

Forum Contributions:

Occasionally, questions or writing prompts will be posted to Canvas in the daily modular sections. Students are required to respond to these prompts and interact with other students as required.

Rubric for Forum Participation, Reading, and Engagement

1. In-Class Contributions (40%)

- **Frequency of Participation:** Students are expected to contribute regularly during synchronous class sessions by responding to questions and offering their insights.
- **Depth of Contributions:** Contributions should reflect careful thought, preparation, and insight into the course material. Students should demonstrate an understanding of the topics being discussed and engage meaningfully with the content.
- **Interaction with Peers:** Students are expected to respectfully engage with the contributions of others. This includes acknowledging and interacting with the points of view presented by classmates, asking thoughtful questions, and building upon discussions.
- **Respect and Professionalism:** All in-class contributions should be respectful of others' opinions, maintaining a constructive and collegial tone. Contributions that foster a positive learning environment will be valued.

2. Pre-Class Reading Preparedness (30%)

- **Completion of Assigned Readings:** Students must complete the required readings posted to Canvas before each class session.
- **Preparedness to Discuss Readings:** Students should come to class with thoughtful insights, questions, or comments on the assigned readings, showing engagement with the material. Demonstrating that the readings have been thoroughly understood and reflected upon is essential.
- **Integration of Readings in Discussion:** During class, students should actively use ideas from the readings to contribute to discussions, make connections with other course content, and answer questions.

3. Forum Contributions (30%)

- **Frequency of Participation:** Students are expected to respond to prompts and questions posted in the daily modules on Canvas in a timely manner.
- **Quality of Responses:** Responses should be thoughtful, well-written, and demonstrate a clear understanding of the subject matter. Contributions should reflect engagement with the course material, including the assigned readings.
- **Interaction with Peers:** Students should engage with the contributions of their peers in the forum, providing constructive feedback, asking questions, or building on their ideas. Mutual respect in all interactions is crucial.

Additional Notes:

- **Consistency:** Regular participation is essential. Sporadic or inconsistent engagement will result in lower marks in each category.
- **Timeliness:** Contributions to the forum and discussions should be posted within the deadlines outlined in each module, ensuring the flow of discussion remains active.
- **Respectful Dialogue:** Both in-class and forum contributions must maintain a respectful tone, even when differing opinions are presented.

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

Post-Course Assignments:

Doctrinal Statement and Rationale – 40%

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 1-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 1-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?)

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

Rubric for Doctrinal Statement and Rationale

1. Theological Rigor and Accuracy (40%)

- **Doctrinal Statement:** Each section of the doctrinal statement (covering the Triune God, the person and work of Christ, the Holy Spirit, creation, humanity and sin, salvation, Scripture, the Church, and eschatology) must be theologically accurate, comprehensive, and supported by relevant Scripture references.
- **Scriptural Integration:** The student carefully cites appropriate biblical passages (in brackets) to support each theological point. These references must be relevant and show clear evidence of careful scriptural research.
- **Scholarly Research:** Each doctrinal exposition is supported by a minimum of three scholarly theological sources. These sources must be reputable and relevant to the doctrine being discussed, showing that the student has engaged in rigorous theological research.
- **Key Theological Terms:** Critical theological terms (e.g., Trinity, justification, atonement) are clearly explained and defined in context. The student demonstrates an understanding of these terms and their significance within the doctrinal statement.

2. Exposition and Defense of Doctrinal Points (30%)

- **Explanatory Clarity:** For each doctrinal section, the student provides a clear and concise exposition that explains the rationale behind the statement. The reasoning must reflect deep engagement with theological concepts.
- **Tradition and Denominational Distinctives:** The student includes a thoughtful discussion of how their particular tradition or denomination approaches each doctrinal point, making connections to broader Christian perspectives. Where distinctives are present (e.g., baptism, Lord’s Supper), the student explains their theological significance and addresses potential variations between traditions.
- **Engagement with Broader Christian Thought:** The student demonstrates an awareness of how their tradition’s doctrines relate to or diverge from broader Christian theology, and discusses whether any differences are seen as essential (or “deal-breakers”) and why.

3. **Organization and Structure (15%)**
 - **Doctrinal Statement Format:** The statement of faith is well-organized with clearly demarcated points, sections, or paragraphs, making it easy to follow and reference.
 - **Exposition Structure:** Each exposition is written with a clear, logical flow and is no longer than one page. The explanations, theological terms, and denominational discussions are all presented in a structured and coherent manner.
 - **Chicago-Style Formatting:** The assignment adheres strictly to Chicago-Style format, with correct use of footnotes and a properly formatted bibliography.
4. **Research and Source Integration (10%)**
 - **Diverse and Reputable Sources:** The assignment uses a minimum of 10 different scholarly theological sources across the 10 sections of the doctrinal statement. These sources should be well-integrated into the expositions and demonstrate a wide engagement with theological literature.
 - **Quality of Sources:** The sources cited must be academically credible, reflecting a strong commitment to engaging with high-quality theological research.
 - **Source Attribution:** All sources are correctly cited in footnotes, and the bibliography is formatted according to Chicago-Style guidelines.
5. **Quality of Writing and Grammar (5%)**
 - **Clarity and Precision:** The student's writing is clear, precise, and formal in tone. Arguments are presented succinctly and without ambiguity.
 - **Grammar and Syntax:** The paper is free from grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors, contributing to the overall professionalism of the work.

Additional Notes:

- **Engagement and Depth:** The strongest papers will demonstrate deep engagement with both biblical texts and theological scholarship. The reasoning behind each doctrinal point should be robust, demonstrating a well-thought-out and researched faith position.
- **Timeliness and Consistency:** Papers should be submitted on time, with all components (doctrinal statement, expositions, citations) completed according to the guidelines outlined in the assignment.

Doctrinal Statement and Rationale Due: 08 August 2025

STATEMENTS ON THE USAGE OF AI

AI Use in this Course: Instructor Statement

In this course, I utilize AI tools, including ChatGPT, to assist with the development of course materials such as syllabi, assignments, rubrics, and other content. These tools are also used as part of the ongoing evaluation process throughout the course. However, please note that while AI may assist in generating content or providing insights, I personally review, modify, and make all final decisions regarding presentations of course material, assignments, grading, and feedback to ensure alignment with the course objectives and standards. AI tools are used to enhance the efficiency of course management but do not replace my direct involvement in the educational process.

AI Use in this Course: Guidelines for Students

In this course, you are encouraged to explore the use of AI tools, including ChatGPT, image generators, and other technologies, to assist with research, brainstorming, and creative exploration.

These tools can enhance your learning experience by providing additional perspectives, generating ideas, or helping you organize your thoughts. However, it is essential to approach AI usage thoughtfully and ethically.

Please keep the following guidelines in mind:

1. **Ownership and Responsibility:** While AI can assist with generating ideas or materials, you remain the primary author of your work. AI should serve as a tool to support your learning, not replace your role in the creation process. Your submissions must reflect your understanding and meet the academic integrity standards of Briercrest Seminary.
2. **Transparency:** If AI has meaningfully contributed to your work (e.g., generating outlines, suggesting solutions, or creating images), acknowledge its use in your submission. For example, a note in the footnotes or an appendix could explain how the AI assisted you. Where appropriate, use Chicago style citation format.
3. **Critical Engagement:** AI-generated content may not always be accurate, complete, or aligned with academic expectations. It is your responsibility to review, refine, and ensure the final product meets the standards for the assignment. Thoughtful editing and critical thinking are required to make AI-supported work truly your own.
4. **Avoiding Over-Reliance:** While AI is a helpful resource, learning in this course depends on developing your own skills. Ensure that AI use enhances—rather than undermines—your ability to engage with the material independently.
5. **Respect for Intellectual Property:** When using AI for creative purposes (such as generating images or texts), be mindful of any copyright, ethical, or citation requirements. Even when AI generates content, it may still draw on pre-existing work that carries intellectual property implications.

By following these guidelines, you can use AI tools in a way that aligns with academic integrity and fosters personal growth. If you have any questions or uncertainties about using AI for a specific task, please reach out for guidance.

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.

Modular 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

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.

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). 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).

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