

University of Waterloo
Conrad Grebel University College

Religious Studies 152
INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Winter 2018

Class time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00 – 2:20 p.m.

Location: CGR 1302

Instructor: Dr. Jeremy Bergen

Office: CGR 2212

Email: jbergen@uwaterloo.ca

Phone: 519-885-0220 ext. 24234

Office hours: Thursdays 2:30-3:30 p.m., and by appointment

Land acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we are living and working on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River.

Course Description

Introduction to the classical themes of Christian theology (revelation, God, creation, sin, Jesus Christ, salvation, church, etc.) and their interrelationship, critical reflection on these beliefs, and examination of debates about the meaning of Christian beliefs in contemporary contexts.

Course Objectives

- to introduce the history, language, sources, norms and methods of theology
- to understand the basic content of Christian belief and to enter into debate about this content
- to practice what it means to think, speak, and write theologically
- to read theological texts carefully and critically
- to make connections between Christian theology and contemporary issues
- to understand the diversity of practices and beliefs in the contemporary church
- to develop interest in advanced courses in theology/religious studies

Required Texts

- Ian S. Markham, *Understanding Christian Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2017). Student must use the second edition, not the first edition.
- D. Brent Laytham, ed., *God Does Not . . . Entertain, Play “Matchmaker,” Hurry, Demand Blood, Cure Every Illness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009). This book is out of print. A reprint is available from the UW Bookstore. Students are also welcome to find used copies.
- Occasional articles and chapters, posted on LEARN.

Requirements

1. Engaged participation and responsibility for your own learning

This means careful and critical reading of assigned texts before class, attending class, taking notes during lectures, asking questions, contributing your ideas and opinions in a respectful way. You will not do well in this course if you do not do the required readings and attend class. If you miss a class, you are responsible for the material that was covered. All handouts, including lecture outlines will be posted on LEARN, usually several hours before class. I will not give mini-lectures on what you missed, nor will I distribute my own lecture notes.

Please consider others: do not come and go during class, switch off all phones/smartphones, use laptop/tablet for taking notes only. *If you use phones/computers inappropriately during class, you may be asked to leave.* There may be legitimate reasons for exceptions (medical conditions, devices to support specific learning needs, etc.); please speak to the instructor in advance.

2. Occasional unscheduled reading quizzes: 12%

These unscheduled (“surprise”) quizzes will be held during the first 5 minutes of class, and *cannot be written at any other time.* If you arrive late, you can start writing the quiz but will not be given extra time. There will be a total of 7 quizzes, the best 6 of which will count. All quizzes that count will be weighted equally. These quizzes are not designed to trick you and will not be testing obscure information. If you have read the texts in a careful and critical way, it will be possible to get a perfect score on the quizzes.

3. One test: 20%

The test will include T/F, short answer (paragraph), and a short essay question, *February 15.*

4. Two short essays, 5-6 pages each, 2 x 20%

See attachment for specific guidelines. Due *March 2* and *March 22.*

Option: If you have interest in researching a particular topic related to the course, you may write one research paper (10 pages, worth 40%) in lieu of the two short essays. Due *Mar. 21.* *You must have the specific approval of the instructor by Feb. 28 in order to take this option.* Guidelines for the research paper will be provided on LEARN. Note: it is an academic offence to submit a paper for this course that has been submitted for credit in another course.

5. Final Exam: 28%

The exam will consist of short answer questions (covering material introduced since the last test) and short essay questions (covering the entire course). An exam review sheet will be distributed in class but will *not* be posted on LEARN. This exam will be scheduled by the university and is subject to all university regulations for exams, including changes for conflicts. *Student travel plans are not acceptable grounds for granting an alternative final examination time.* See www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/exams/index.html.

Submission policy

All papers are due *at the start of class.* All assignments must be submitted in hard copy, double-spaced, standard margins and 12-point font, with no report covers. *Include page numbers.* Late assignments will be penalized 3% per 24-hour period or portion thereof (including weekends), and can be accepted no later than the last day of classes except in exceptional circumstances for which documentation is required. Late papers must be submitted to the Grebel front office during regular business hours (M-Th, 8 a.m.-7:30 p.m.; F, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.). You may “stop the clock” by emailing an assignment to me over the weekend, but **only** if you submit it in hard copy to the front office on the next business day. (E.g. A paper is due Thursday in class, that is,

at 1 p.m. If you email me a copy on Saturday morning, and hand in a hard copy on Monday, it will be considered 2 days late. However, if you email me a copy on Saturday but hand in a hard copy on Tuesday morning, then it will count as submitted on Tuesday morning, that is, 5 days late.) I will make every effort to return as soon as possible papers that have been submitted on time. Papers will be returned in class, or left with the Grebel reception desk for pick-up.

If you have questions or concerns about any of the tests or assignments, please contact me before the due dates. *There are no “make-up assignments” in this course.*

LEARN

I will be using LEARN for several elements of this course. All students must familiarize themselves with the LEARN platform and check it regularly: learn.uwaterloo.ca

- Email communications – These are generated from LEARN and sent to students’ uwaterloo email accounts.
- Content – All handouts in class, including the lecture outlines, will be posted in LEARN, usually prior to class. *If you miss a class, there is no need to ask me for a handout.* If you wish to record lectures, please check with me first.
- Discussion – There is no requirement to participate in any online discussion. However, I will start by making two forums available. “Ask a Question” is the place to ask the instructor about course content and/or course requirements. “Start/continue a conversation” is a place to start or continue a conversation about a particular topic. This forum is primarily for students, though the instructor will monitor it, and may contribute from time to time. I encourage you to make use of these forums, and may occasionally “seed” a discussion with a particular question or comment.
- Grades – All grades will be recorded and calculated in LEARN.

Outline of classes and required readings

Please bring a copy of the required readings for the day (hard or electronic copy) with you to class.

* = posted in LEARN.

1. Jan. 4 – Introduction / What is a theologian?
2. Jan. 9 – Historical points of reference
3. Jan. 11 – Finding a Way In
Understanding Christian Doctrine, 1-3, 5-21
4. Jan. 16 – The Theistic Claim
Understanding Christian Doctrine, 23-47
5. Jan. 18 – Revelation, Bible, and “Starting Points” in Theology
Understanding Christian Doctrine, 49-58, 73-76
*William C. Placher, “Is the Bible True?” *Christian Century*, October 11, 1995, 924-928.
6. Jan. 23 – The Nature of God
Understanding Christian Doctrine, 50-71

7. Jan. 25 – The Trinity
Understanding Christian Doctrine, 77-88
God Does Not..., 131-150
8. Jan. 30 – Problem of Evil
Understanding Christian Doctrine, 89-101
9. Feb. 1 – Creation
Understanding Christian Doctrine, 103-112
10. Feb. 6 – Theological Anthropology, Sin
Understanding Christian Doctrine, 113-117
 *Tim Basselin, “Why Theology Needs Disability,” *Theology Today* 68, no. 1 (April 2011): 47-57.
11. Feb. 8 – Jesus Christ
Understanding Christian Doctrine, 119-133
 *Victor Ezigbo, “Jesus as God’s Communicative and Hermeneutical Act: Africa Christians on the Person and Significance of Jesus Christ,” in *Jesus Without Borders: Christology in the Majority World*, ed. Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, and K.K. Yeo (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 37-58.
12. Feb. 13 – Jesus Christ (continued)
 Popular conceptions and misconceptions of God
 Discussion of the short essay assignment/review for the test
God Does Not... 9-19, 83-105
13. Feb. 15 – **TEST**
- [Reading week]
14. Feb. 27 – Salvation
Understanding Christian Doctrine, 135-148
15. Mar. 1 – Holy Spirit
Understanding Christian Doctrine, 149-157
 *Estrelida Y. Alexander, “The Spirit of God: Christian Renewal in African American Pentecostalism,” in *Spirit of God: Christian Renewal in the Community of Faith*, ed. Jeffrey W. Barbeau and Beth Felker Jones (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 128-146.
16. Mar. 6 – Faith and History: Resurrection of Jesus as Test Case
FIRST SHORT ESSAY DUE
17. Mar. 8 – Church
Understanding Christian Doctrine, 157-165

18. Mar. 13 – Sacraments and the Life of Virtue
Understanding Christian Doctrine, 167-177
*William T. Cavanaugh, “The Body of Christ: Eucharist and Politics,” *Word & World* 22 no. 2 (Spring 2002): 170-177.
19. Mar. 15 – Religious Diversity
Understanding Christian Doctrine, 179-193
20. Mar. 20 – Christianity and Judaism
*R. Kendall Soulen (interviewee) and David Heim (interviewer), “Nearest Kin: R. Kendall Soulen on Christians and Jews,” *Christian Century*, June 12, 2013, 28-31.
21. Mar. 22 – Atheism
SECOND SHORT ESSAY DUE
22. Mar. 27 – Hope Beyond the Grave
Understanding Christian Doctrine, 195-204
23. Mar. 29 – The End of the Age
Understanding Christian Doctrine, 205-216
24. Apr. 3 – Wrapping Up, and Review
Understanding Christian Doctrine, 217-221
Tara Isabella Burton, “Study Theology, Even If You Don't Believe in God,” *The Atlantic*, October 30, 2013, [The Atlantic online](#)

FINAL EXAM – to be scheduled by the University during the exam period.

UWaterloo Policies:

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See the [UWaterloo Academic Integrity webpage](#) and the [Arts Academic Integrity webpage](#) for more information.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisory, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean of Arts. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71 - Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read [Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances](#), Section 4. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to [Policy 72 - Student Appeals](#).

Other information

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

The AccessAbility Services office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term. [AccessAbility webpage](#).

Counselling Services

Counselling Services provides free confidential counselling, in both individual and group sessions, with qualified professionals to help registered students, faculty and staff with personal concerns, educational career decisions, and strategies to studies and exams: [Counselling Services webpage](#), ext. 33528, NH Room 2080.

Accommodation for Illness

A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the “University of Waterloo Verification of Illness” form or it will not be accepted. More information can be obtained from Health Services and the form is available in pdf. [Health Services webpage](#).

The Writing and Communication Centre

Writing and Communication Centre staff offer one-on-one support in planning assignments and presentations, using and documenting research, organizing and structuring papers, and revising for clarity and coherence. Make an appointment or drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit [Writing and Communication Centre webpage](#).