

University of Waterloo
Conrad Grebel University College

Religious Studies 152
INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Winter 2020

Class time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30 – 3:50 p.m.
Location: CGR 1300

Instructor: Dr. Jeremy Bergen

Office: CGR 2122

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Phone: 519-885-0220 ext. 24234

Office hours: Thursdays 1:00-2:15 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 other courses in Religious Studies and/or Theological Studies

Required Texts

- Justo L. González and Zaida Maldonado Pérez, *An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002).
- Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World, and Global Warming* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008).
- James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011).
- 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, and avoid eating meals in class. Use laptop/tablets 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. Brief reading reflections (7 x 2%): 14%

Each reading reflection should be one page in length, double-spaced (about 300 words). Do not be concerned with “covering” everything in the text. Rather, focus your reflections on one of the main ideas in the reading. It doesn’t need to be “the” main idea, but neither should it be an obscure or minor point. In a few lines, summarize what the author is saying. Then engage with a key idea or two. You should not do additional research—just focus on the text at hand. If this author is primarily presenting information (as in the Introduction to Christian Theology text), what are some of the implications of what is being presented? Draw connections between the reading and other material we are discussing in this course, or material learned from other courses. If the author is making an argument, trying to convince the reader of something (as in the books by McFague and Cone, or the article), then you may want to consider the strengths and/or weaknesses of the argument, assumptions, or implications? If you disagree, can you appreciate why the author, or the Christian tradition more generally, makes that argument? If you agree, explain why. Be sure to include one critical, open-ended question. It could be a question you’d like to ask the author, or a question that would prompt a good discussion in class.

There are ten readings for which you may submit a reading reflection. Only the first seven that you submit will be marked and credited toward your final grade (i.e. there is no bonus for doing more than what is required).

This is intended as a “low stakes” writing exercise, and it is possible to receive full marks (which doesn’t imply that your work is perfect). In general, my rubric is as follows:

2/2 – good content, good writing

1.5/2 – content or writing is good, the other is minimally acceptable

1/2 – content and writing are minimally acceptable

Due in LEARN Dropbox *by 1:00 p.m.* on the day the reading will be discussed in class.

3. One test: 18%

The test may include True or False questions, multiple choice questions, short answers (paragraph), and a short essay question, *February 13.*

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

See attachment for specific guidelines. Each short essay will be a critical engagement with a specific theological text. Due *February 25* and *March 12*. Submit in hard copy (in class ideally, or at the front desk of Conrad Grebel University College), not through Dropbox.

5. Final Exam: 28%

The exam will consist of T/F and short answer questions (covering material introduced since the last test) and short essay questions (some may cover 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 the [Registrar's exam website](#) for more information.

Late submission policies

Brief reading reflections

If you submit up to 48 hours late, you will be able to receive a maximum of 1 out of 2. After 48 hours, you will receive 0 out of 2. (Since the Dropbox will not accept late submissions, these should be emailed to the instructor.)

Short essay assignments

Each of the short essay assignments are due *at the start of class*. It 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.

- Email communications – These are generated from LEARN and sent to students' uwaterloo email accounts.
- Content – All handouts provided in class, including the lecture outlines, will be posted in LEARN 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. Some required readings will also be posted under “Content.”
- 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.

- Submission of brief reading reflections – By Dropbox on LEARN.
- 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.

* = a reflection paper may be done on this reading

1. January 7 – Introduction to the course
2. January 9 – History and context
3. January 14 – What is theology?
*González and Maldonado, 9-31
4. January 16 – Revelation /Bible
González and Maldonado, 33-49
*William C. Placher, “Is the Bible True?” *Christian Century*, October 11, 1995, 924-928.
(posted in LEARN)
5. January 21 – God
González and Maldonado, 49-54
6. January 23 – Creation
*González and Maldonado, 55-64
7. January 28 – Anthropology
González and Maldonado, 64-76
*Tim Basselin, “Why Theology Needs Disability,” *Theology Today* 68, no. 1 (April 2011): 47-57. (posted in LEARN)
8. January 30 – Jesus Christ
González and Maldonado, 77-83
9. February 4 – Atonement
*González and Maldonado, 83-95
10. February 6 – Church
*González and Maldonado, 97-118
11. February 11 – Sacraments
González and Maldonado, 119-137
12. February 13 – *In-class test*

[reading week]

13. February 25 – Hope
González and Maldonado, 139-158
First short essay due
14. February 27 – Theology and climate change
McFague, 1-40
15. March 3
McFague, 43-80
16. March 5
McFague, 81-97
17. March 10 – Catholicism and Protestantism
*Robert Barron and Roger Olson, “Grace First or Grace Alone? What Catholics and Protestants Now Agree on, and What Still Divides Us,” *Christianity Today*, April 2017, 43-46. (posted in LEARN)
18. March 12 – Christianity and other faiths
Second short essay due
19. March 17 – Race, Power, Atonement
*Cone, xiii-29
20. March 19
*Cone, 30-64
21. March 24
Cone, 65-92
22. March 26
*Cone, 93-119
23. March 31
Cone, 120-166
24. April 2 – review for the exam

University of Waterloo policies

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. Check the [Office of Academic Integrity website](#) for more information.

Discipline

A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. [Check [the Office of Academic](#)

[Integrity](#) for more information.] 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 instructor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate associate dean. For information on categories of offences 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](#).

Cross-listed courses

Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

AccessAbility Services, located in Needles Hall, Room 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 [AccessAbility Services](#) at the beginning of each academic term.

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 the [Writing and Communication Centre website](#).

Mental Health Support

The faculty and staff in Arts encourage students to seek out mental health support if they are needed. Details can be found online on the Faculty of Arts [Mental Health Support website](#).