Class time: Tuesdays, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
Location: CGR 2201

Instructor: Dr. Jeremy Bergen
Office: CGR 2122
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Office hours: I am in my office most days. Drop in anytime my door is open; make an appointment for any conversation of more than a few minutes.

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
This course is an advanced introduction to the main themes in theology, with attention to the nature of theological argumentation. Topics include Trinity, creation, theological anthropology, Jesus Christ, ecclesiology, other religions, eschatology, Anabaptist-Mennonite theology, political theology, modernity/postmodernity, and the vocation of the theologian.

Overview
Theology is not simply the sum of what Christians believe, but the dynamic interactions among actual beliefs, the foundational sources of Christian faith, and ever-changing contemporary circumstances. As an advanced introduction, this course therefore attends to theology as both content and practice. Regarding content, we will survey the traditional themes of systematic theology such as God, creation, Jesus Christ, sin, salvation, church, eschatology, etc., and read several brief works of constructive theology. As a practice, theology entails learning a language and participating in various ongoing conversations about the normative character and content of the faith. Theology engages with biblical studies, church history, philosophy, practical theology, experiences in ministry, and other disciplines of knowledge.

In our study of additional books and articles, we give particular attention to how theological arguments are made, especially the sources, norms and methods employed, as well as the contexts from which the arguments have arisen and to which they are addressed. Classes will consist of lectures, discussions, and seminars. Assignments are designed to develop a variety of skills necessary for “thinking theologically.”

Course Objectives
- to practice what it means to think and speak theologically, especially regarding the development of a theological argument
- to survey the traditional themes of Christian theology and to engage in the historical and
contemporary debates that have occupied theologians and critics
• to read theological texts carefully and critically
• to become self-aware of one’s own contexts and commitments as a theologian
• to make connections between theology as a specialized discourse of church and academy, and the faith lives of ordinary Christians
• to develop various modes of written and oral theological communication, including those of personal reflection, integration, exposition, argumentation, research, and facilitation of group discussion
• to develop skills in theological research
• to situate theological arguments in concrete communities of interpretation, attentive to persons thereby included or excluded

Required Texts
• All other readings are available through ATLA, UW library e-journals or posted on LEARN.

The three required textbooks are on reserve (3-hour) at the Grebel library. Students often purchase TS texts through online sources such as Amazon or Indigo. The books have also been ordered through the UW Bookstore.

You may wish to purchase a theological dictionary. There are many options out there, including
• Stanley Grenz et al., Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

The following book is strongly recommended (and not very expensive.) It will be of use throughout your study in the TS program:

Course Requirements (summary):
• Attendance and engaged participation (value: 5%)
• Contexts and commitments paper, due January 22 (value: 10%)
• Article summary and critical reflection paper, due February 12 or earlier (value: 15%)
• Research exercise, due February 26 (value: 15%)
• Second reflection paper/creative project, due March 19 or earlier (value: 15%)
• Research paper, due April 15 (value: 40%)

Course requirements (description):
1. Attendance and engaged participation in class, including required readings and balanced involvement in class discussion. At the graduate level, attendance in all classes is
expected. If you must be absent, please let the instructor know in advance. Students who miss two or more classes will find their learning in the course may be compromised.

2. *Contexts and commitments paper*, around 4-5 pages, double-spaced. Write a personal paper in which you reflect on your own place in the religious/Christian landscape; your basic spiritual questions, convictions, and doubts; your economic and social location; any substantial life-events, experiences or influences which may shape your approach to doing theology. You do not need to disclose any personal information which you are not comfortable sharing, but anything you do disclose will be held in confidence. Some examples of “context and commitment” statements, by prominent theologians, are available in the “Content” section of LEARN. Due: January 22.

3. *Article summary and critical reflection paper on one article*, 5-6 pages, double-spaced. Two-thirds of the paper should be a summary of the article. Focus on the big picture—the thesis and the argument that supports and develops the thesis. Critical reflection is not primarily a report on whether or not you “like” the paper or agree or disagree with it. Central to the task of criticism is the capacity to consider an argument from different perspectives—in the first instance, from the author’s perspective. If you do disagree with some aspect of the article, it is important that you first demonstrate a genuine understanding of the argument and author’s intentions, and that you not respond to a “straw man.” Critical engagement also imagines how an article might be read by individuals with very different perspectives and social locations. Criticism might involve analysis of what is distinctive or important in the argument, or of possible implications of the argument. It might involve explaining that the author makes a problematic claim, fails to consider relevant evidence, or fails to anticipate important objections. If you are in substantial agreement with an article, critical engagement might entail extending the argument in some way, perhaps developing implications the author did not discuss or by responding to potential objections. While I want to know what you think, and you should be mindful of your own contexts and commitments, this is not primarily an exercise of “personal” response. You are practicing the skill of entering into a scholarly conversation. Finally, it is usually better to develop one or two critical observations rather than itemize and deal superficially with many points.

The following articles may be selected: Cobb, Cunningham, McFague, Tanner, Kwok chapter 1 or 2, Jones, Williamson, Jenson, Van Dyk, Knitter, DiNoia, Mouw, Peters. *The paper is due at the class in which the article is being discussed,* and by Feb. 12 at the latest.

4. *Research exercise*, due February 26. Generate a bibliography of 10 to 12 entries, most of which will be scholarly books and articles (one or two may be “popular” works, but should be indicated as such). Explain in a sentence or two after each entry what the text is about and why it is important to include. You do not need to summarize the content of the sources. Your sources must be listed in Chicago style. You do not need to read the sources you list, but you will need to scan them in order to assess their value. The key is this exercise is getting to the core of the scholarly debate on a particular topic. Write two pages in which you identify what you take to be the core, or “state of the question,” on your topic, and reflect on your process of research including what you may have decided to exclude.

The following are possible topics of this assignment:
- Reinhold Niebuhr’s understanding of sin
- The doctrine of the communion of saints
- God in Black theology
- Atonement and violence
- Apostolicity as a mark of the church
• The “state” in Mennonite peace theology
• The Catholic-Lutheran agreement on “The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification”
• The Holy Spirit within the science and theology debate
• Climate change and theology
• Jürgen Moltmann on the suffering of God
• Jesus Christ in the work of Gustavo Gutierrez
• Believers baptism
• Theology and cognitive disability
• Emmanuel Katongole on reconciliation
• Womanist critique of feminist theology
• Creation ex nihilo

• Shelly Rambo on theology and trauma
• Muslim-Christian dialogue
• Atonement as recapitulation
• Jesus Christ as judge
• A theology of migration
• A theology of the Sabbath
• Amos Yong on Pentecostal hermeneutics
• William Cavanaugh on religious violence
• Theological critique of empire
• Palestinian liberation theology
• Open theism
• Missio dei as mission paradigm
• Theological anthropology in queer theology
• A theology of animals

5. Second reflection paper/creative project. You have choice here. If you did not do very well on “article summary and critical reflection paper,” then you are strongly encouraged to follow the same template with a different article. In some cases, the instructor may require that you do this. If you pursue this option, indicate this explicitly in your submission. Be sure that you engage with a required reading for the course and submit the paper prior to or on the day that the reading will be discussed in class.

Alternatively, you may pursue a project that invites your critical and creative reflection on particular reading(s), themes, and/or class discussion. You are encouraged to integrate your own personal experiences, ministry experiences, questions, doubts, etc., into this assignment. This may be a paper or you may choose a different mode of expression (poetry, short story, visual art, music, etc., together with a brief [a few pages] written explanation). You may choose to focus on a particular reading, a theme or themes emerging from a set of readings, or the class discussion. While there is wide latitude here, your reflection must be somehow rooted in a required text (other than one that was the subject of your second reflection paper) and/or in class, demonstrate understanding of the issue(s) at hand, and reflect critical engagement. Due: March 19 (or earlier if reflecting on article for an earlier class).

6. Research paper on a theme arising from the course. Around 12-14 pages in length, double-spaced (see separate handout for further details). Key features of this assignment are: additional reading, development and defense of a particular thesis, critical engagement, effective writing. You may select the topic that you developed for the research exercise. A provisional statement of the thesis, how you intend to argue for the thesis, and a working bibliography is due March 26, but you are welcome to submit it much earlier than that (submit by email). Final paper is due at noon on Monday, April 15. Submit the paper in hard copy to the main office reception desk during office hours.
Further notes about assignments:
- Citation of sources **must** be Chicago Style (Turabian), footnote/bibliography format. An online version is available through the UW library website: Resources for Research / Online reference shelf / Citation and Style Guides / Chicago Style / Chicago Manuel of Style Online
- Use inclusive language (e.g. humankind rather than mankind) when referring to people.
- Add page numbers.
- Proofread your papers.
- Please note that all assignments must be submitted in hard copy. The only exception is that the provisional thesis statement and working bibliography for the final paper due November 24 should be submitted electronically.
- Late submission of any assignment will be penalized 3% per calendar day if other arrangements have not been made.

**Class schedule and required readings**

**Week 1. January 8** – Introduction to the Course: Modernity, Theology, Method

**Week 2. January 15** – God, Trinity; Modernity (continued)
Placher, “What Do We Mean by ‘God’? The Doctrine of God”

**Week 3. January 22** – Creation, Providence; Theological Anthropology, Sin
Placher, “Is God in Charge? Creation and Providence”
Introduction, Sallie McFague, Kathryn Tanner, 93-131.
Placher, “What’s Wrong with Us? Human Nature and Human Sin”

*Contexts and commitments paper due*

**Week 4. January 29** – Research and writing seminar; Postcolonial theology
Browse the following:
Atlantic School of Theology, *A Wholly Reliable Guide...*, Wholly Reliable Guide link
Kwok, Introduction, chapters 1-2, 1-76.

**Week 5. February 5** – Jesus Christ; Church
Placher, “How Does Jesus Make a Difference? The Person and Work of Jesus Christ”
Introduction, Robert W. Jenson, Leanne Van Dyk, 183-220.

**Week 6. February 12** – Non-Christian Religions; Eschatology
Introduction, Paul F. Knitter, J.A. DiNoia, 297-328.
Placher, “Where Are We Going? Eschatology”

*Reflection paper due (or earlier, if reflecting on a reading for a previous week).*
[Reading Week]

Week 7. **February 26** – Supersessionism: the problem
Soulen, Preface, Part One, ix-106
*Research exercise due*

Week 8. **March 5** – Supersessionism: one solution
Soulen, Part Two, 109-177

Week 9. **March 12** – Mennonite theology
[Called Together to be Peacemakers link]
Jeremy M. Bergen, “The Ecumenical Vocation of Mennonite Theology.” [posted in LEARN]

10. **March 19** – Decolonizing theology
Kwok, chapters 3-5, 77-149
*Second reflection paper/creative project due (or earlier, if reflecting on a reading for a previous week).*

11. **March 26** – Reconstructing theology
Kwok, chapters 6-9, 150-230
*Research paper thesis and preliminary bibliography due (email).*

12. **April 2** – Theology in the life of the church
Panel of pastors/chaplains

*Final paper due April 15.*

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 [Academic Integrity link] and [Ethical behaviour link]

*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 Services link](#)

**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 link](#), 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. [Medical Clinic link](#)

**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 link](#)