Winter 2017, Tuesdays, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. Room: CGR 2201
Instructor: Dr. Jeremy Bergen Office: CGR 2122
Phone: 519-885-0220 ext. 24234 Email: jbergen@uwaterloo.ca
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.

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 revelation, 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. This course will also reflect renewed attention within the discipline to substantial engagements with “ordinary theology.”

There are two main textbooks. One (Placher) provides historical orientation to each theological theme, followed by contrasting essays that give an indication of the diversity of thought and practice. The other (Soulen), is a model of an extended theological argument. Drawing on biblical, historical, theological and pastoral perspectives, Soulen diagnoses a profound theological problem, supersessionism, and proposes a new non-supersessionist framework. 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 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 situate theological arguments in concrete communities of interpretation, attentive to persons thereby included or excluded

Required Texts
• Other articles available in ATLA or e-journals (through the UW library website) or posted on LEARN.

Students often purchase TS texts through online sources such as Amazon or Indigo. Some copies have 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:

Requirements:
1. Engaged participation in class, including required readings and balanced involvement in class discussion (5%). 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...

2. Two précises of required readings (2 x 10 = 20%). A précis is a brief summary (in this case it must be between 2 and 2.5 pages, double-spaced) of the thesis and argument of a longer piece of writing. Write using the author’s voice—do not refer to the author in the third person. For example, “The main problem with contemporary Christology is...” rather than “Robert Jenson argues that the main problem with contemporary Christology is....” A précis therefore does not include a critical response. This is an exercise in careful reading and concise writing. Write a précis of any two of the following essays: Cobb, Cunningham, McFague, Tanner, Jones, Williamson, Jenson, Van Dyk (these are all from Placher), Cone, Volpe, Ezigbo. The précis is due prior to the class in which the essay will be discussed, i.e. Jan. 10, 17, 24, or 31. Submit the précis electronically, in Word format (not PDF), which is how it will be returned.

3. Lead class discussion and evaluate your contribution (15%). Lead class discussion on one specific reading. A list of available readings will be circulated by email after the first class. (Please do not write a précis on the same article you present to the class.) Provide a brief account of the argument, identify major issues (developing a handout is strongly encouraged), pose several open-ended questions that emerge from the text, actively facilitate class discussion. Your presentation may also “situate” the author’s argument in some way, though avoid excessive
attention to the author's biography. If your own presentation does one thing, it should help the class zero in on what is at stake in the article, that is, the big picture. Remember: assume that your classmates have read the article, so you do not need to summarize all the details. You will have about 25 minutes in total—your introductory comments should be between 8-10 minutes. Then, evaluate what you did and how it went. Did you effectively communicate the key elements of the argument? Did you lead the discussion towards the key issues? Were your questions both focused and open-ended? How did you facilitate the class discussion? Did something unexpected arise from the class? What would you do differently if you did this again? Etc. The written evaluation should be around two pages in length, and must be emailed (in Word, not PDF) by the Friday noon after you led discussion.

4. Ordinary theology exercise (20%), 5-7 pages, hard copy due in class, February 28. The purpose of this assignment is to engage in an intentional conversation or “interview” with someone who does not have formal academic training in theology. The conversation could be with someone you know well, or with an acquaintance. Be sure to explain the nature of the assignment and obtain the consent to the interviewee. Neither the conversation nor the written reflection on the conversation should be critical of the faith of the interviewee. Listening attentively is much more important than responding, let alone “correcting.” The conversation should aim to uncover a point of “ordinary” theological dissonance as a potential constructive resource for renewed theological thinking.

The primary prompt for the conversation or interview (about which you may want to alert your interviewee in advance) is this: Identify a point of dissonance between what you believe and what you take to be the primary or dominant theological position on the issue. It is assumed here that the interviewee is aware of the dissonance or has a perception that dissonance may be present.

(It might be around the divinity of Jesus Christ, the “mechanics” of salvation, the theological significance of non-Christian religions, what does or does not happen at the Lord’s Supper, the belief in heaven, or hell, or a particular practice of worship. It may be a disconnect between theology/theory and practice. It may also be around an ethical issue. While a strong distinction between theology and ethics is problematic, it is the case that this course does not have a primary focus on ethics, and as you reflect on a conversation about ethics, make explicit connections to themes in theology. The essays by Williamson and McFague are two examples of how this might be done).

In your conversation, probe the dynamics of this dissonance. You may wish to ask the interviewee some of the following questions:

- Did it emerge at a particular point in time? Under what circumstances?
- What do you (the interviewee) take to be the implications of the dissonance?
- How would you describe the “source” of the dissonance (a truth of experience, inconsistency with an understanding of the witness of Scripture, etc. There might be an expectation that the answer simply be “the Bible” – but press for specifics – the Bible as so-and-so preached it, the way my mother used to tell certain stories about Jesus, etc.)
- Does this dissonance affect other beliefs?
- Is this particular dissonance troubling for you? Why? How?
- How do you make sense of it in your own life of faith?
- What about the dominant theological position—what do you understand that to be? How have you experienced its dominant character?

Don’t be too concerned about covering a series of questions. Rather, focus on having a wide-ranging conversation that probes the dissonance from a variety of perspectives.
The paper you will write will be primarily (perhaps 2/3) a description of this conversation. There should also be a more reflective part of the paper in which you add your own perspective.

- What do you think is at stake in the theological dissonance identified?
- How does the fact that an “ordinary theologian” expresses this dissonance present a challenge and an opportunity for theology? Again, the point is not to criticize the theological position of your interviewee, or seek to correct it, nor is it necessarily to simply laud the position either. Rather, wrestle with how the very fact that this position exists is an occasion for creative theologizing.
- What is the value of this exercise? What are the dangers or drawbacks?

You are welcome to draw on the readings you have already done for this course—Healy and chapters from Placher book, including those not assigned, may be especially helpful—but this is not a research paper and no additional reading is required.

5. Research paper (40%) on a theme arising from the course, around 13-15 pages, double-spaced. Key features of this are assignment: additional reading, and critical engagement. A statement of the thesis, how you intend to argue for the thesis, and a working bibliography is due Friday, March 17 (submit by email). Final paper is due Monday, April 10. 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 when referring to people.
- Add page numbers.
- Please note the instructions about which assignments are to be handed in electronically, and which hard copy.
- There is no binding rule about the number of sources to use in the research paper. It is often better to use a few sources well than to cite a dozen books and/or journal articles superficially. For the research paper you should expect to do significant reading, including both peer-reviewed journal articles and scholarly books, beyond the required readings discussed in class.
- My general rubric for marking research papers is as follows: 1/3 for a fair and accurate representation of your sources, 1/3 for your critical analysis, 1/3 for the quality of writing.
- Late submission of any assignment will be penalized 3% per calendar day if alternate arrangements have not been made.
Outline
Readings indicated with an asterisk will be posted in LEARN. Other readings are available through ATLA or the UW library's E-journals, as marked. Please bring a hard copy or electronic version of all the required readings for that day to class.

1. Jan. 3 – Introduction to the Course: Modernity and Theology

2. Jan. 10 – God, Trinity; Modernity (continued)
Placher, “What Do We Mean by ‘God’? The Doctrine of God”

3. Jan. 17 – Creation, Providence; Research seminar
Placher, “Is God in Charge? Creation and Providence”
Introduction, Sallie McFague, Kathryn Tanner, 93-131.

Browse one of the following:
Anderson University, Guide to Graduate Theological Research and Writing,
Atlantic School of Theology, A Wholly Reliable Guide...,
www.astheology.ns.ca/webfiles/wholly_reliable_guide1.pdf

4. Jan. 24 – Theological Anthropology, Sin
Placher, “What’s Wrong with Us? Human Nature and Human Sin”

5. Jan. 31 – Jesus Christ
Placher, “How Does Jesus Make a Difference? The Person and Work of Jesus Christ”
Introduction, Robert W. Jenson, Leanne Van Dyk, 183-220.

6. Feb. 7 – Non-Christian Religions, Eschatology
Introduction, Paul F. Knitter, J.A. DiNoia, 297-328.
Placher, “Where Are We Going? Eschatology”

7. Feb. 14 – Church
[reading week]

8. Feb. 28 – Theology in context [possible guest]
[Additional reading to be determined]

Ordinary theology exercise due (hard copy, in class)

9. Mar. 7 – Anabaptist-Mennonite Theology
*Malinda E. Berry, “Extending the Theological Table: MCC’s World Community Cookbooks as Organic Theology,” in A Table of Sharing: Mennonite Central Committee and the Expanding Networks of Mennonite Identity, ed. Alain Epp Weaver (Telford, PA: Cascadia, 2011), 284-309.

Soulen, preface, chapters 1-4, ix-106

Thesis/outline/bibliography due Friday, March 17 (sent electronically)

11. Mar. 21 – Reframing Non-supersessionist Theology
Soulen, chapters 5-8, 109-177

12. Mar. 28 – The Future of Theology

Final paper due April 10 (hard copy, to main reception desk)
**Academic integrity**
To create and promote a culture of academic integrity, the behaviour of all members of the University of Waterloo is based on honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. All students are expected to know what constitutes an academic offense, to avoid committing academic offenses, and to take responsibility for their academic actions. When the commission of an offense is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed in accord with Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline). For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students are directed to consult Policy #71: www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71Sept2008.htm.

If you need help in learning how to avoid offenses such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, or if you need clarification of aspects of the discipline policy, ask our course instructor for guidance. The website, “Avoiding Academic Offences” (http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html) is very helpful. Other resources regarding the discipline policy are your Academic Advisor, the Director of Theological Studies, or the Dean of Conrad Grebel University College. Students who believe that they have been wrongfully or unjustly penalized have the right to grieve; refer to Policy #70: www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70Sept2008.htm.

**Note for students with disabilities**
The 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 the AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.