

Conrad Grebel University College
University of Waterloo

TS 690 – Seminars in Theological Studies: ATONEMENT
Winter 2023

Class time: Wednesdays, 1:00 p.m.–3:50 p.m.

Room: 2201

Instructor: Dr. Jeremy Bergen

Email (preferred): jbergen@uwaterloo.ca

Phone: 519-885-0220 x24234

Office hours: I am in the office Tuesday-Friday during regular business hours. Feel free to stop by. If you would like to talk for more than a few minutes, please make an 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 and Overview

In contemporary theology, “atonement” has come to name that part of Christian doctrine that is concerned with how the person and work of Jesus Christ brings about and/or reveals the salvation of human beings. In some writings, atonement is more narrowly concerned with the soteriological implications of the death of Jesus, or is identified with the “penal substitutionary” model. However, in this course, we will consider a broader perspective, an approach evident already in the earliest systematic reflection on the Bible.

Because of the wide range of motifs and metaphors of atonement in the Bible, and because these motifs have implications for how Christians think about the character of God, the nature of the problem that needs repair, the role of violence and suffering, and ethical implications, there has been rich and varied reflection on the atonement in recent years. The first part of the course will consist of a study of several influential classic theological texts on the atonement. The second part will be an introduction to some recent critiques and revisions of aspects of the tradition. The third part will consist of student presentations and critical evaluation of specific contemporary proposals.

Course Objectives

- to understand the major historical approaches to and debates about the connection between Jesus Christ and salvation, i.e. “atonement” (relates to [MTS Program Objectives 2, 3](#))
- to carefully and critically read the texts of major theologians in the tradition, understanding their concerns, frameworks, and approaches in context, and consider their relevance for today (1, 3, 4)
- to understand and evaluate contemporary theological proposals (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- to think critically about the interrelation of various doctrines (1, 2, 3)
- to reflect on the nature and limits of theological concepts and language (especially “models” or “theories” of atonement) in relation to the realities they attempt to name (2, 3)

- to identify practical, ethical, and pastoral implications of theologies of atonement (4, 8)
- to develop skills in theological communication and dialogue (1, 7)

Course format, access, and culture

In this course, we want to make the most of the fact that we will be together in person. Class time will be used primarily for large and small group discussions of the readings and other interactive activities. I will do some lecturing to set the context for our readings, and some of these lectures may be in the form of recorded videos. I will use LEARN to outline the order of activities before and after each class meeting, provide access to readings, and share seminar papers.

I recognize that the Covid-19 pandemic remains an unpredictable reality. We will need to adjust to any guidelines or regulations [determined by the university](#), for example in relation to masking. It is possible that there will be more absences from class for illness than would have been the case pre-pandemic. Please note that we are not typically able to operate as a “hybrid” class, with some in-person and some online.

The perspectives that each person brings because of their race, ethnic identity, class, age, gender, sex, religious commitments, ability, culture, and origins (and other dimensions) all contribute to the rich theological dialogue we seek to foster. I am committed to examining issues of power, privilege, oppression, and abuse in our program, and to seek the peace and justice within the classroom and beyond. Since the church has long discriminated against LGBTQ+ people, I seek to the advance the public, intentional and explicit welcoming of people with diverse genders and sexual orientations. The MTS program strives to create leaders who will advocate for justice and inclusion of all God’s people in the church and our world. This is difficult work to which I invite your commitment.

Required Texts

All required materials will be provided through LEARN. For those who prefer to read on paper rather than screens, most of the readings can be printed. All of the books for the seminar presentation are available from the Grebel library.

Course Requirements

1. Engaged attendance and participation (5%)

All students are expected to complete all required readings each week and to engage in informed, critical, balanced (in the sense of not speaking too little or too much) and sensitive ways with the instructor and other students. For the seminar presentations, the papers of other students are required reading. It is expected that all students will attend the weekly class meeting in person. If you must be absent, please let me know in advance. *Students who miss two or more class meetings should initiate a conversation with the instructor about additional writing on the readings for the missed class(es).*

2. Serve as “lead respondent” to one set of readings. (5%)

Take 5 or 6 minutes to briefly identify the distinctive concerns and constructive approach of the author, and reflect on *one* of the following “questions for consideration.”

Questions for consideration: (Not all questions are relevant for all texts. These questions will be helpful to keep in mind as you read any text in the course.)

- a. From what do we—persons, members of a group, all of humanity, all of creation—need to be saved (redeemed, liberated, reconciled)? What is the basic problem (or problems) that atonement aims to solve?
- b. Of what does salvation (redemption, liberation, reconciliation) consist? What does it “amount to” or “look like”? What difference does it make in this life, in the next life, or both?
- c. What does God do? What does atonement reveal/affirm about who God is?
- d. What role does Jesus Christ have in bringing about this salvation? How are the divine and human natures of Jesus relevant? And what does Jesus’ suffering and death have to do with human salvation?
- e. How do humans participate in, respond to, or receive the benefits of Christ’s work? What practical “this world” implications are drawn from atonement for human life (e.g. repentance, ethics, law, church, sacraments, mission, etc.)?
- f. In what sense is a particular author criticizing other approaches to the atonement?
- g. How is the diversity of biblical images of atonement handled (through metaphors, models, theories, etc.)? What is the value in developing “models” of atonement, and what are the limitations of that approach? What does a study in atonement reveal about theological language?

3. Two critical reflection papers of four pages each ($2 \times 15 = 30\%$).

These are short papers with a very specific structure. One page should be a summary of the key idea or approach. While this will be a high level account, it should also be attentive to the unique approach of the author. Don’t assume that all historical writers are essentially doing the same thing, or that all contemporary critics are raising the same objections. Three pages should be a critical reflection on one issue raised by the author. This issue doesn’t need to be the “main point” but should not be trivial. Your reflection should be engaged with the text, not simply “inspired” by the text. If you disagree with the author, you should seek to do so in a sympathetic and constructive way. Note: if you are the “lead respondent” to a particular reading, that reading cannot be the subject of a critical reflection paper.

- First paper, on one of: Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Anselm, (not Abelard), Rashdall, Aquinas, Calvin, Barth. *Due on the day that the reading is discussed.*
- Second paper, on one of the articles in Part II except Muzorewa or Heim. *Due on the day that the reading is discussed.*

4. Seminar paper of about 15 pages on a recent book (35%).

More information in a separate document, in the “Assignments” section of LEARN.

5. Analyze the “atonement” dimensions of an official statement of faith, a hymn/worship song, or an artistic work (novel, movie, etc.), about five pages (15%).

It will be important to select a statement, song, or artistic work that has some substance with which to engage. Some possible statements of faith (such as by a denomination, parachurch organization, or educational institution) will be provided in the “Assignments” section of LEARN. In your analysis, consider how the more explicit atonement dimensions are related to what is said about revelation, God, the person of Jesus Christ, sin, human beings, etc. Consider also the practical/pastoral/ethical dimensions, as well as the context to which the statement or song speaks. If you identify significant problems or gaps in the statement or song, you may wish to suggest some alternate wording. Please include a link to the source material, if available, or a copy of the lyrics. This assignment can be submitted at any time between March 8 and April 5.

6. Final reflection on learning in the course, about five pages (10%).

After having completed all of the required readings and assignments, and participated in all class meetings and seminars, including the engagement of other students with your seminar paper, reflect on what you have learned in the course. You will not have the space to reflect on all of these questions, but you will want to consider some of the following: What key themes have emerged? What are the most pressing issues with respect to theologies of atonement? Has your mind changed at all? How should “models” or “theories” function in the discussion? What directions would you recommend the church and/or theologians to pursue? How should the atonement be addressed in preaching, teaching, and worship (liturgy, hymnody, etc.)? Due April 12.

Further notes about all assignments:

- Assignments should be submitted via the LEARN Dropbox and will returned in the same format as they were received, with comments added.
- Assignment should be in MS Word or PDF formats, and *not* a link to Google Doc. You may find that it will be easier to see comments in MS Word (which is available to all UW students).
- Reading instructor feedback is an expected and required part of the course. If you do not see comments on a returned document, please contact the instructor.
- All page lengths assume double-spaced, standard font size and margins and do not include title page (which isn’t necessary) or bibliography. Remain within +/- 15% of the page-length guidelines.
- Citation of sources *must* be Chicago Style (Turabian), footnote/bibliography format. See the [Theological Studies subject guide](#) on UW library website for more details.
- Use inclusive language (e.g. humankind rather than mankind) when referring to people. This is a requirement, not a suggestion. If quoting directly from source material that uses exclusive language, you may either choose to keep the original wording, or change it in square brackets: “...for all of [humankind].”
- Add page numbers.
- Proofread your papers. Reading your paper out loud can be one strategy for identifying awkward phrasing, missing words, etc.
- Late submission of any assignment will be penalized 3% per calendar day if other arrangements have not been made. If you do request other arrangements (extensions), please be sure that a new deadline has been confirmed, in writing.

Weekly outline and required readings

Part I – Classic texts

1. January 11 – Introduction, Biblical foundations

Paul R. Eddy and James Beilby, “The Atonement: An Introduction” in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, ed. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006): 9-21.

Joel B. Green, “Theologies of the Atonement in the New Testament,” in *T&T Clark Companion to Atonement*, ed. Adam J. Johnson (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 115-134.

2. January 18 – Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa

Athanasius, “On the Incarnation,” no. 1-32.

- In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, volume 4, ed. Philip Shaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 36-53. Originally published 1892.
- In Saint Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, trans. John Behr (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011), 49-83.

Gregory of Nyssa, “Address on Religious Instruction,” no. 5-28.

- In *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. E. R. Hardy and C. C. Richardson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), 275-307.

3. January 25 – Anselm

Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo?* [Why God Became Human], book 1, chapters 1–15, 19–25 and book 2, chapters 1-15, 18-22.

- In *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and Gillian Evans, trans. Janet Fairweather (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 260-289, 300-336, 348-356.
- In *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, ed. and trans. Eugene Fairweather (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 100-125, 134-165, 176-183.

4. February 1 – Abelard, “Abelardianism,” and Thomas Aquinas

Abelard, “Exposition on the Epistle to the Romans,” in *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, ed. and trans. Eugene Fairweather (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 276-287.

Hastings Rashdall, “The Truth of the Atonement,” in *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology* (London: Macmillan, 1920), 435-464.

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q.1, a.1-2; III, q.46, a.1-3; III. q.49, a.1-5

- In *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (1920), and other versions.

5. February 8 - Calvin

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* [1559 ed.], vol. 1, book 2, chapters 12, 14-17.

- In *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 464-474; 482-535.

6. February 15 – Barth

Karl Barth, Chapter 13, §58, “The Doctrine of Reconciliation (Survey),” in *Church Dogmatics, IV/1*, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 79-154. Originally published 1956.

Karl Barth, Chapter 15, §64, no. 2, “The Homecoming of the Son of Man,” in *Church Dogmatics IV/2*, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 20-31. Originally published 1958.

Last class to submit first critical reflection paper

[reading week]

Part II – Critiques and revisions

7. March 1 – Feminist, Womanist, and Postcolonial critiques

Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker, “For God So Loved The World?” in *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), 1-30.

Delores S. Williams, “Black Women’s Surrogacy Experience and the Christian Notion of Redemption,” in *Cross Examinations: Readings on the Meaning of the Cross Today*, ed. Marit Trelstad (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 19-32.

Wonhee Anne Joh, “The Crucified God: The Way of *Jeong*,” in *The Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 71-90, notes 143-145.

8. March 8 - Rethinking sacrifice

Gwinyai H. Muzorewa, “Salvation Through the Sacrifice of God’s Firstborn Son,” in *Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross*, ed. Mark D. Baker (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 163-171.

S. Mark Heim, “Visible Victim: Christ’s Death to End Sacrifice,” *Christian Century*, March 14, 2001, 19-23.

James Alison, “God’s Self-Substitution and Sacrificial Inversion,” in *Stricken by God: Nonviolent Identification and the Victory of Christ*, ed. Brad Jerzak and Michael Hardin (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 166-179

Kathryn Tanner, “Incarnation, Cross and Sacrifice: A Feminist-Inspired Reappraisal,” *Anglican Theological Review* 86, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 35-56.

9. March 15 – Atonement and other theological themes

Khaled Anatolios, “Salvation as Liturgy: Alexander Schmemann’s Liturgical Theology and the Renewal of the Joy of Salvation,” Fr. Schmemann Memorial Lecture, St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary (2022), www.youtube.com/watch?v=vryNCX7paRI&t=593s

Stephen R. Holmes, “A Simple Salvation? Soteriology and the Perfections of God,” in *God of Salvation*, ed. Murray A. Rae (Farnham, UK: Ashgate: 2011), 35-46.

Randy Woodley, “God’s First Discourse: Connected to Creation,” in *Shalom and the Community of Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012): 41-66.

Daniel A. Madigan, “Who Needs It? Atonement in Muslim-Christian Theological Engagement,” in *Atonement and Comparative Theology: The Cross in Dialogue with Other Religions*, ed. Catherine Cornille (New York: Fordham University Press, 2021), 11-39.

Last class to submit second critical reflection paper

Part III – Contemporary constructive approaches

10. March 22 – seminar presentations

11. March 29 – seminar presentations

12. April 5 – seminar presentations

Last class to submit atonement analysis of faith statement, song/hymn, or artistic work

Final reflection due April 12.

UWaterloo 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. See the [Office of Academic Integrity webpage](#) 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 professor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate associate dean. 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 their 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](#).

Note 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.

Other information

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.

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](#).