ST 720: Contemporary Theology
Dr. Michael Allen
Monday
10:00-12:00

This course offers in-depth analysis of significant works in contemporary theology. Students will gain experience in engaging primary sources in modern theology capably as well as familiarity with broader trends, texts, movements, cultural issues, and pastoral concerns that have shaped theology in recent times.

Instructor
Michael Allen, Ph.D.
Email: mallen@rts.edu
Phone: 407-278-4445

Feel free to contact me whenever needed (preferably via email). When in doubt about protocol or anything regarding class material, write and ask. Also, feel free to stop by my office whenever the door is open.

Textbooks

To explore contemporary theology, we will read deeply in one theologian and read widely to survey and familiarize ourselves with broad movements. One textbook is required:


All other readings will be provided on Canvas in PDF format.

Requirements

1. Reading

Reading must be completed before the class in which it is to be discussed. Class discussions will focus on readings, so you must be prepared to talk.

Theology is an activity done largely through the process of good reading. Read carefully. Read charitably. Read with others. Read with the expectation that you will learn from others, even when you disagree with their main point. Read even when a text is dense and difficult, for you will learn perseverance and fortitude here. Read that which seems trite and obvious, asking how others might object or criticize. Most importantly, read because God was willing to reveal himself in written words, and because we can best witness to God’s grace with corresponding words. Read because words matter in God’s economy of grace.
This class is a reading course. The bulk of your work circles around careful reading. Focus your time and efforts on reading.

2. Reading Briefs

Students are expected to prepare a brief each week (on either one or two chapters). The purpose of the brief is to summarize the thesis, outline, and argument of that text, as well as to state one’s own analysis of it (in the form of questions, confirmations, objections, etc.). Briefs may include quotations from various points in the text (so long as page numbers are referenced).

Briefs should be no more than 350 words. They should be written in complete sentences and edited carefully.

Students are to bring a printed copy of their assigned briefs to class each week and to upload the document to Canvas by class time.

3. Final Paper

Students will write a 2000-2500 word analysis of a contemporary text (a significant journal article or book chapter). All topics must be approved by the instructor. Further instructions will be given in class; depending upon class size, we may have opportunity for students to present papers in class and receive feedback prior to submission for a grade (though such presentations are not required).

All papers are to be uploaded on Canvas.

The Grading Structure

Grades will be assessed as follows:

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Briefs</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>50%</td>
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The grading scale can be found in the Academic Catalog. As laid out in the catalog, a “B” is the work normally expected of a student. An “A” is given for someone who consistently outperforms expectations, and a “C” is given for persons who only minimally and occasionally meet expectations. Read the Academic Catalog to see what grades reflect.

Academic Honesty (adapted from Dr. Timothy Phillips of Wheaton College)

1. The assignments are designed to extend and deepen your comprehension and appreciation of Christian theology and to increase your facility with theological method. The processes of defining a topic, researching the results of others'
studies, critiquing those studies, and organizing your conclusions in a clear and cogent presentation provides valuable skills for your various leadership ministries. The use of sources is an essential step in appropriating the learning of the Church’s tradition in its relationship to cultures to help us understand and faithfully practice Scripture.

2. Using information obtained from a source without indicating it (whether by footnote, parentheses, or bibliography or some other appropriate reference, depending on the type of assignment) is plagiarism (intellectual thievery and lying). This applies to any information that you gain from someone that is not “common knowledge.” It does not apply only to exact quotations or precise verbal allusions. Altering the wording does not remove the obligation to acknowledge the source.

3. Cheating is the presentation of someone else’s work, which the student ought to have done personally. This includes submitting answers to test questions derived by some means other than that intended by the instructor. It also includes turning in written assignments composed in whole or in part by someone else.

4. Cheating or plagiarism results, at minimum, in the disqualification of that unit of the course affected. A student caught plagiarizing or cheating will forfeit that project. A second offense will result in the forfeiture of the course. Punishments may be more severe than the minimum depending upon the specific situation.

**Computer Policy (Modified from Dr. Alan Jacobs of Baylor University)**

Computers, tablets, and smart-phones are not allowed in class. Think I’m over-reacting? Think you’re a master of multitasking? You are not. No, I really mean it. How many times do I have to tell you? Notes taken by hand are almost always more useful than typed notes, because more thoughtful selectivity goes into them; plus there are multiple cognitive benefits to writing by hand. And people who use laptops in class see their grades decline — and even contribute to lowering the grades of other people. Also, as often as possible you should annotate your books.

Note that, in light of this policy, you will need to bring your textbook as well as any other materials (your brief and the PDFs from Canvas) to class in hard copy.

**Course Schedule**

Our class time each week will involve working through essays by John Webster together, which you do not need to read ahead of time. We will read them out loud together, I will offer commentary, and we will take time to discuss them as we move through them sequentially. You will prepare each week by reading one or two chapters from the *Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, which we will then discuss during class. In so doing, you will gain familiarity with a wide range of things going on in the world of contemporary theology (through OHST).
familiarity with how one person is working amidst that world (through the essays of Webster), and competence in critically engaging with both kinds of resources.

September 5 – Labor Day: No Class
Read OHST, chs. 33, 36; Webster, “Theological Theology”

September 12 – Introduction
Read OHST, chs. 35, 37
We will read “The Holiness of Theology” together in class

September 19 – The Gospel for Theology
Read OHST, ch. 34
We will read “Biblical Reasoning” together in class

September 26 – God (1)
Read OHST, chs. 1-2
We will read “Life In and Of Himself” together in class

October 3 – God (2)
Read OHST, ch. 3
We will read “Christology, Theology, Economy: The Place of Christology in Systematic Theology” together in class

October 10 – God and Creation
Read OHST, chs. 4-5
We will read “Trinity and Creation” together in class

October 17 – Fall Break: No Class

October 24 – Creatures
Read OHST, ch. 7
We will read “Dignity of Creatures” together in class

October 31 – Christ and Humanity
Read OHST, chs. 6, 8
We will read “Eschatology, Anthropology, and Postmodernity” together in class

November 7 – Salvation and Ethics
Read OHST, chs. 9-10
We will read “Where Christ Is: Christology and Ethics” together in class

November 14 – God and the Church
Read OHST, chs. 11, 16
We will read “On Evangelical Ecclesiology” together in class
November 21 – No Class: Academic Conferences
Read OHST, chs. 14-15

November 28 – Virtues and Vices
Read OHST, chs. 12, 17
We will read “Intellectual Patience” together in class

December 5 – Holy Scripture (1): Inspiration and the Nature of the Text
Read OHST, chs. 18, 19
We will read “Domain of the Word” together in class

December 12 – Holy Scripture (2): Illumination and the Reading of the Text
Read OHST, chs. 25, 29
We will read “Reading in the Economy Of Grace” together in class

December 14 – Final Paper Due (11:00 a.m.)
Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course:</th>
<th>ST 720: Contemporary Theology</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor:</td>
<td>M. Allen</td>
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<td>Campus:</td>
<td>Orlando</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Fall 2016</td>
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MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.

*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.

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<tr>
<th>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</th>
<th>Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.</th>
<th>Strong</th>
<th>Weekly writing as well as final paper. Classroom discussion each week.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td>Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Engagement of contemporary readings of Scripture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reformed Theology</td>
<td>Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Engagement of contemporary versions of Reformed theology in readings and discussions.</td>
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<td>Sanctification</td>
<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Discusses holiness and vocation in modern world.</td>
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<td>Desire for Worldview</td>
<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Addresses contextualization and questions of secularism in modern world head on.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winsomely Reformed</td>
<td>Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Offers Reformed commentary, learning from but also critically assessing, sources outside and inside the Reformed tradition.</td>
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<td>Preach</td>
<td>Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Addresses theological framework for contemporary ministry/ preaching but not task itself.</td>
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<td>Worship</td>
<td>Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Addresses theological framework for contemporary ministry/liturgy but not task itself.</td>
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<td>Shepherd</td>
<td>Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Addresses theological framework for contemporary ministry/ shepherding but not task itself.</td>
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<td>Church/World</td>
<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Weekly engagement of how doctrines have related to wider cultural issues in the modern world.</td>
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