The mission of McMaster Divinity College is to develop effective evangelical Christian leaders for the Church, academy, and society through graduate-level education, spiritual development, and vocational formation.

I. Faculty Information

Name: Dr. Clement Wen

Office hours: Room 210, M/T 11:00-13:00 or by appointment
(Zoom appointments are also available by request)

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II. Course Description

This in-person research seminar course on the doctrine of the Trinity will provide an exploration of the key historical developments of the doctrine before turning towards an in-depth look at several important figures (some ancient, but mostly modern) who continue to carry significance with regard to the contemporary debate and discussion surrounding trinitarian thought. Students will take turns presenting and leading discussions about the assigned readings throughout the semester and will also write a major research paper on the doctrine of the Trinity that will be presented towards the end of the course.

III. Course Objectives

With respect to MDC's transformational paradigm of "Knowing…Being…Doing," by the end of the course, students will:

Knowing (K)

- Demonstrate a working knowledge of essential historical figures, themes, concepts, developments, ongoing debates and discussions, and practical life and ministry implications regarding the subject of Trinitarian Theology.

Being (B)

- Cultivate further awareness of the limits of one's own theological positions, so as to be self-aware of the continual need for humility and a pastoral dialogical posture with regard to theological engagement, even while having the courage to maintain theological convictions.
- Appropriate such developing convictions about the doctrine of the Trinity to oneself so as to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (cf. Romans 12:2).

Doing (D)

- Use their own words to explain relevant concepts and their significance concerning the various Trinitarian Theologies which will be explored.
- Engage critically and constructively with the essential discussions and themes which have to do with the aforementioned theological loci.

IV. Course Resources

All required and recommended books for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416.620.2934 or 416.668.3434 (mobile); or by email at books@readon.ca. The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

Due to the eclectic nature of this course, I have made every effort to ensure that all the required readings chosen are available full text through McMaster Divinity College's different online databases (or by way of other free resources that are available online). The assigned readings listed below are ordered in accordance with the suggested sequence for reading. A select bibliography of recommended resources can also be found below.

Required Readings

Weeks 2&3 (History of the Doctrine):

Holmes, Stephen R. *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012. [DTL]

Week 4 (The Classical "Western" Defaults"):

Augustine. *The Trinity.* Books 4, 5, and 15. [NPNF1, vol. 3; CCEL]

Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologica.* Part 1, Questions 27-30, 34-38, and 43. [CCEL]

Week 5 (The So-Called "Eastern" Counterpoint & A Medieval Relational Approach):

Zizioulas, John. "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity." In *Trinitarian Theology Today,* edited by Christoph Schwöbel, pp. 44-60. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995. [DTL]

Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Holy Spirit: Against the Followers of Macedonius* and *On "Not Three Gods": To Ablabius.* [NPNF2, vol. 5; CCEL]

Richard of St. Victor. *The Twelve Patriarchs, The Mystical Ark, Book Three of the Trinity.* Translation and Introduction by Grover A. Zinn. Classics of Western Spirituality. New York: Paulist Press, 1979; the assigned reading is "Book Three of the Trinity," pp. 373-397. [DTL, Mills Library]

Week 6 (Theological Structuring: The Examples of Calvin and Schleiermacher):

Butin, Phillip W. *Revelation, Redemption and Response: Calvin's Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995; the assigned reading is Part II: The Trinitarian Basis, Pattern, and Dynamic of the Divine-Human Relationship, pp. 50-94. [DTL]

Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion.* Edited by John T. McNeil. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. The Library of Christian Classics 20-21. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001; the assigned reading I.13. [DTL]

Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *Christian Faith: A New Translation and Critical Edition*. 2 vols. Edited by Catherine L. Kelsey and Terrence N. Tice. Translated by Terrence N. Tice, Catherine L. Kelsey, and Edwina Lawler. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016; the assigned reading is Chapter 2: Regarding the Method of Dogmatics, pp. 139-186; and Conclusion: Regarding Divine Threeness, pp. 1019-1037. [DTL]

==Alternatively,== students may read the older translation if they find it more accessible:

Schleiermacher, Friedrich, with an introduction by Paul T. Nimmo. *The Christian Faith.* 3rd edition. Cornerstones. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016; the assigned reading is Chapter 2: The Method of Dogmatics, 94-128; and Conclusion: The Divine Trinity, 738-751. [DTL]

Week 7 (Reading Week—optional reading for those interested in a recent treatment):

Sonderegger, Katherine. *Systematic Theology.* Vol. 2: *The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: Processions and Persons.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2020; the optional suggested reading is Chapter 4: Holy Scripture as Ground of Trinity, pp. 239-354. [DTL]

Week 8 (The 20th Century Retrieval):

Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. Vol. I/1. 2nd edition. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrikson Publishers, 2010; the assigned reading is Chapter 2, Part I, §8-9, pp. 295-383. [DTL]

Rahner, Karl. *The Trinity.* Translated by Joseph F. Donceel. Reprint; London: Burns & Oates, 2001; the assigned reading is Chapter 1 section C, pp. 21-24; and Chapter 3, pp. 80-120. [DTL]

Week 9 (The Trinity as History and Eschatology):

Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Systematic Theology.* Vol. 1. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991; the assigned reading is Chapter 5: The Trinitarian God, pp. 259-336. [DTL]

Jenson, Robert W. *Systematic Theology.* Vol. 1. *The Triune God.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997; the assigned readings is Part 2: The Triune Identity, pp. 63-161; and Part 3, Chapter 13, pp. 207-223. [DTL]

Weeks 10&11 (Social Trinitarianism):

Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God.* Translated by Margaret Kohl. 1981. Reprint; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993; the assigned reading is Part VI: The Kingdom of Freedom, pp. 191-222. [DTL]

Boff, Leonardo. *Trinity and Society*. Translated by Paul Burns. Theology and Liberation Series. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988; the assigned reading is Chapter 7: The Communion of the Trinity as Basis for Social and Integral Liberation, pp. 123-154.

Zizioulas, John. "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity." In *Trinitarian Theology Today,* edited by Christoph Schwöbel, pp. 44-60. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995; I list this here again as source material for this discussion, even though this was already read for Week 5 above. [DTL]

LaCugna, Catherine Mowry. *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life.* San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991; the assigned reading is Chapter 8: Persons in Communion, pp. 243-317. [DTL]

Volf, Miroslav. *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity.* Sacra Doctrina. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998; this optional reading is listed here because the book as a whole can serve as something of a summary for the social trinitarian view being discussed. [DTL]

Tanner, Kathryn. "Social Trinitarianism and Its Critics." In *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology: Disputed Questions and Contemporary Issues in Trinitarian Theology,* edited by Robert J. Wozniak and Giulio Maspero, pp. 368-386. London: T&T Clark, 2012; the assigned reading can be found in Chapter 16 of this book. [Mills Library]

Kilby, Karen. "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity." *New Blackfriars* 81:956 (October 2000): 432-45. [DTL]

Week 11 (A Feminist Interpretation of the Trinity):

Johnson, Elizabeth A. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse.* 25th anniversary edition. New York: Crossroad, 2017; the assigned reading is Chapter 10: Triune God: Mystery of Relation. [DTL]

Week 12 (The Trinity in Global/World Perspective):

Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti. *The Trinity: Global Perspectives.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007. Assigned reading is Parts 4 and 5 (pp. 257-400). [DTL]

*At the discretion of the instructor, other shorter journal- or chapter(s)-length readings might be assigned for specific weeks as the semester progresses.

Recommended Resources

Ayres, Lewis. *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. [DTL]

Begbie, Jeremy. *Theology, Music and Time.* Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. [DTL]

Bray, Gerald. *The Doctrine of God.* Contours of Christian Theology. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993. [DTL]

Davis, Stephen T., Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins, eds. *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. [DTL]

Fiddes, Paul S. *Participating in God: A Pastoral Theology of the Trinity.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000. [DTL]

Giles, Emery and Matthew Levering, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. [DTL]

Green, Gene L., Stephen T. Pardue, and K. K. Yeo, eds. *Majority World Theology: Christian Doctrine in Global Context.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020. **Please note:** The relevant section for this course is Part One: *The Trinity Among the Nations: The Doctrine of God in the Majority World* (this part was originally published as a stand-alone book by Eerdmans and then Langham in 2015; if you are able to find a new or used copy of the stand-alone book to borrow or purchase instead, that would be perfectly fine as the content is the same). [DTL]

Grenz, Stanley J. *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004. [DTL]

Gunton, Colin E. *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. [DTL]

Gunton, Colin E. *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*. 2nd edition. London: T&T Clark, 2003. [DTL]

Jenson, Robert W. *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982. [Mills Library]

Johnson, Darrell W. *Experiencing the Trinity.* Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2002. [Mills Library]

Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti. *The Doctrine of God: A Global Introduction—A Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Survey.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004. [DTL]; 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2017. [Mills Library]

McGrath, Alisterr E. *Understanding the Trinity.* Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1988. [DTL]

Olson, Roger E. and Christopher A. Hall. *The Trinity.* Guides to Theology. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002. [DTL]

Phan, Peter C., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. [DTL]

Powell, Samuel M. *The Trinity in German Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. [DTL]

Schwöbel, Christoph, ed. *Trinitarian Theology Today.* Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995. [DTL]

Sexton, Jason S. and Stanley N. Gundry, eds. *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity.* Counterpoints: Bible and Theology. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014. [DTL]

Smail, Tom. *Like Father, Like Son: The Trinity Imaged in Our Humanity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005. [DTL]

Torrance, James B. *Worship, Community, and the Triune God of Grace.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996. [DTL]

Torrance, Thomas F. *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three Persons*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996; reprint, 2016. [DTL]

Treier, Daniel J. and David Lauber, eds. *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, Worship.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009. [DTL]

Wainwright, A. W. *The Trinity in the New Testament.* London: SPCK, 1969. [DTL]

Zizioulas, John D. *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church.* Contemporary Greek Theologians 4. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985. [DTL]

V. Course Grading Scale and Activity/Assignment Weights

Grading Scale

Percent Grade	*Letter Grade	Grade Point (12pt scale)	Grade Point (4pt scale)	Grading Guidelines
90–100	A+	12	4.0	for work displaying mastery of the subject matter, creativity, and individualized integration of insights and their relationship(s)
85–89	A	11	4.0	
80–84	A-	10	3.7	
77–79	B+	9	3.3	for work displaying a good level of competence and comprehension
73–76	B	8	3.0	
70–72	B-	7	2.7	
67–69	C+	6	2.3	for work which meets basic course requirements but demonstrates a low level of comprehension
63–66	C	5	2.0	
60–62	C-	4	1.7	
57–59	D+	3	1.3	for work that falls below minimum standards
53–56	D	2	1.0	
50–52	D-	1	0.7	
0–49	F	0	0	unsatisfactory work and/or failure to meet course requirements

*Note that in order to earn credit for this course, you must pass with a grade higher than a C+ (i.e., B- or better). Please see the appropriate handbook for more information about the grading scale, esp. if you are an Advanced Elective (e.g., DPT) student.

Assignment Category Weights

Category	Weight
Class Attendance and Participation	10%
Reading Presentation and Discussion Facilitation (1)	20%
Reading Presentation and Discussion Facilitation (2)	20%
Oral Presentation of Research Paper	10%
Critical-Constructive Research Paper	40%
	100%

VI. Course Requirements and Expectations

Expectations and Requirements for ALL STUDENTS Regardless of Program or Specialization

– Class Attendance and Participation (10% of Final Grade)

As graduate-level students, you will be expected to attend all classes in person and actively participate in the interactive portions of the course. By way of in-class lectures and discussion, this component of the course incorporates all three categories of our course objectives as knowledge is built upon (K), the transformational cultivation of both humility and courage of conviction is exemplified in our interactions (B), and as the use of one's own words to express theological ideas and their significance as well as to critically and constructively engage in theological discussion is practiced (D). Due to the give-and-take nature of theological discussions, it is inevitable that there will be differing opinions that are held and expressed. While students (and instructor) are allowed to sincerely express their honest views, it is expected that such will be done respectfully, especially amidst instances of controversy and/or disagreement. As the course instructor, it is my responsibility to manage the classroom environment so that the classroom is a safe place for respectful theological conversation. In instances where an individual is dominating the discussion, I also reserve the right to ask them to take a step back for the purpose of allowing others ample opportunity to participate. Students who violate our classroom guidelines may be dismissed from class.

– Reading Presentation and Discussion Facilitation (1) (20% of Final Grade)
– Reading Presentation and Discussion Facilitation (2) (20% of Final Grade)

Due to the seminar format of this course, students will take turns leading portions of our in-class group discussion through a brief 10–15-minute summary presentation of the selected assigned reading material (more on this during the first day of class) followed by facilitation of the ensuing conversation through at least three or four questions for discussion. A one-to-two-page handout which serves as the presentation's outline and in-class discussion guide is also to be prepared for the entire group. Outside research beyond the assigned readings is encouraged if such will help students to understand the theological figure that they are presenting about.

This type of presentation and discussion facilitation fulfills our class objectives of helping students to absorb and consolidate knowledge (K), cultivate a humble theological tone as well

as courage of conviction, both of which are transformational in nature (B), and use one's own words to explain theological content and their significance while also critically and constructively engaging that content (D). Assessment will be based upon overall preparedness whose quality of presentation style and theological content, both orally and as written on the class handout/discussion guide, reflects the course objectives of (K), (B), and (D) while staying within allocated time limits.

Depending on final enrolment numbers, students should expect to play this role twice during the semester, each time counting for 20% of their final grade. Date and theological figure assignments will be allocated during the first or second week of the course.

– Oral Presentation of Research (10% of Final Grade)
– Critical-Constructive Research Paper (40% of Final Grade)

A critical-constructive research paper of 6,000-8,000 words which meticulously follows the [MDC style guide](#) can be on anything that is of interest to the student so long as it has something to do with the course content (i.e., the doctrine of the Trinity) and so long as it clearly argues a main thesis from beginning to end (with a proper "thesis statement" explicitly included in the introduction section of the paper). Unless otherwise approved by the instructor, students should choose one or two main theological figures to engage with in this paper regarding their (the figures') respective trinitarian thought and the implications of their trinitarian thought.

The research paper assignment fulfills the course objectives of demonstrating key knowledge (K), allowing transformational opportunity to further cultivate a humble theological posture, yet at the same time maintaining courage of theological convictions (B), and the use of one's own words to explain theological content and its significance while also entering into critical and constructive engagement with that content (D).

While a more comprehensive list of suggested topics for this research paper will be provided via [A2L](#), *students who wish to write about something else should ask me for permission prior to writing the paper or its proposal.* Along such lines, research questions should be framed in a way that leads to argumentation (e.g., "How should Miroslav Volf's social doctrine of the Trinity, and especially its ecclesiological, ethical, and political implications for society, be received?") rather than merely description (e.g., "What is Miroslav Volf's view of the doctrine of the Trinity?").

For research students, a *minimum* of 18-20 academic sources should be consulted (e.g., peer-reviewed books, chapters from edited volumes, journal articles, etc., and not devotional books, blog posts, Wikipedia, etc.) and along with footnotes, a full bibliography is to be included at the end of the paper which is inclusive of every source cited within the paper while *not including* sources which were not cited in the paper.

A "Research Paper Checklist" will be made available via the course's [A2L](#) site and more information about this assignment will be given on the first day of class. In the meantime, please keep in mind the following key dates:

- **10:00pm on Friday, January 24, 2025:** a research paper proposal of at least one paragraph that speaks to your proposed research question, tentative thesis statement, and motivation

for research is to be submitted via the course's A2L site along with a tentative bibliography at the end of the same document.

- **10:00pm on Friday, March 21, 2025:** a full first draft of the research paper is due via the course's A2L site so that I have the opportunity to give you formative feedback along with an initial grade for the assignment.

- **Mondays during class time on March 31 and April 7, 2025:** students will be assigned one of these two dates to orally present about their research papers to others in the class. The grade given for the oral presentations will be based upon overall preparedness whose quality of presentation style and theological content reflects the course objectives of (K), (B), and (D) while staying within the allocated time limit.

- **10:00pm on Friday, April 4, 2025:** the final draft of the research paper is due via the course's A2L site for those interested in making revisions to their earlier submitted first draft, as per the formative feedback received.

VII. Tentative Course Schedule
(subject to change, especially in consideration of final course enrolment)

Week	Dates	Topic	Readings and Assignments
1	Jan 6, 2025	Course Introduction	
2	Jan 13, 2025	History of the Doctrine (1)	Holmes
3	Jan 20, 2025	History of the Doctrine (2)	Holmes
4	Jan 27, 2025	The Classical "Western" Defaults	Augustine; Aquinas
5	Feb 3, 2025	The So-Called "Eastern" Counterpoint & A Medieval Relational Approach	Zizioulas; Gregory of Nyssa; Richard of St. Victor
6	Feb 10, 2025	Theological Structuring: The Examples of Calvin and Schleiermacher	Butin; Schleiermacher
7	Feb 17, 2025	No Class – Reading Week	Sonderegger (optional)
8	Feb 24, 2025	The 20th Century Retrieval	Barth; Rahner
9	Mar 3, 2025	The Trinity as History and Eschatology	Pannenberg; Jenson
10	Mar 10, 2025	Social Trinitarianism (1)	Moltmann; Boff; Zizioulas; LaCugna
11	Mar 17, 2025	Social Trinitarianism (2) / A Feminist Interpretation of the Trinity	Volf (optional); Tanner; Kilby; Johnson
12	Mar 24, 2025	The Trinity in Global/World Perspective	Kärkkäinen (Part 4)
13	Mar 31, 2025	Research Paper Presentations (1)	
14	Apr 7, 2025	Research Paper Presentations (2) Course Conclusion	

VIII. Course Policies.

It is the responsibility of the student to consult the student handbook(s)/catalogue for additional institutional policies.

Submission of Assignments – Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments are to be submitted via the A2L platform in MS Word (.docx) format so that I am more easily able to provide comments and feedback. Assignments submitted in PDF format may receive less comment and feedback. All written assignments will be run through TurnItIn (a plagiarism checking software).

Late Assignments – "Late" is defined as any time after the above stated deadlines (e.g., if the stated deadline is 10:00pm, 10:01pm on the same day counts as "one day late"; 10:01pm on the next day counts as "two days late," etc.). Assignments will be penalized 5 points per day late.

Style – All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses, https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/. Failure to observe appropriate form will result in points/grade reductions.

Illness Policy – If you need to miss any part of the course due to illness, please contact me as soon as possible so as to ensure that you do not get behind with regard to the course content (and, where applicable, especially when assignments are due).

Academic Honesty – Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one's own (regardless of the means of its production, including AI) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student's dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

A special note about AI: You are expected to do your own thinking and to write your own papers, etc., and not to have AI do this work for you. There may be value in using an AI tool to help you locate and collate resources or to help you "tidy up" your English grammar, usage, and mechanics, especially if English is not your native language. However, using AI to create content for you and then submitting that content *as if you created it* is considered plagiarism (i.e., submitting work that is not one's own as if it is one's own) and is a violation of the academic honesty policy.

AODA – In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for

the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

Gender Inclusive Language – McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as, for example, the following: NRSVue (2022), TEV/GNB/GNT (1976), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

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