

Grace in the Christian Life
TH 3XG3/5XG5/6XG6
CC/CW/PS

McMaster Divinity College
Winter 2019
Wednesday 7:00-9:00pm
Office: 216

Steven M. Studebaker, Ph.D.
Phone: 905.525.9140 ext. 20097
Email: studeba@mcmaster.ca
Hours: Mon 1:00–2:00 & 1:00–2:00

I. Description:

This course explores the biblical, historical, and contemporary ways that Christians understand Christian redemption. Considering the nature of human brokenness (sin) is part of this discussion. It considers historical issues related to atonement theology and traditional doctrines of justification and sanctification. It also explores contemporary ways Christians endeavor to participate in God's grace through various ministries and cultural activities.

II. Course Objectives:

A. Knowing:

1. Know a variety of biblical, historical, and contemporary ways Christians have understood grace and its meaning for the Christian life and ministry.
2. Know some of the key challenges and controversies on Christian understandings of grace and salvation (e.g., the challenge of proclaiming Christ in a post-Christendom cultural context).
3. Know some of the contemporary new directions and emphases in Christian views of grace and salvation and how they shape contemporary visions for Christian life and ministry.

B. Being:

1. Appreciate that theology is a dynamic and contextual effort to discern appropriate ways to embody the redemption revealed in Jesus Christ.
2. Embrace a deeper sense of your own Christian identity and how to live your Christian life vis-à-vis contemporary culture.

C. Doing:

1. Analyze contemporary culture from a Christian perspective.

2. Be able to develop responses to culture that are both credible within the culture and authentic to the Gospel.
3. Develop skills in academic analysis, writing, and presentation of research.

III. Required Texts:

1. Peter Schmiechen, *Saving Power: Theories of the Atonement and Forms of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).
 2. Gene L. Greene, Stephen T. Pardue, and K. K. Yeo, eds., *So Great a Salvation: Soteriology in the Majority World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017).
- Additional reading may be assigned

IV. Course Performance Criteria:

❖ **Research degree students, see Appendix 1 for advanced program requirements** ❖

Assignment	Percent	Due
A. Biblical Vision of Grace:	20%	1/28
B. Historical Vision of Grace:	20%	11/3
C. Major Paper/Projects:	55%	One week after presentation
1) Presentation	20%	
2) Paper	35%	
D. Reading:	5%	12/14
E. Participation:	X	
	Total: 100%	

V. Assignment Descriptions (research degree students consult appendix 1):

General Guidelines:

- Submit papers to the assignment folder on Avenue to Learn. Use the following format for file names: your last name.assignment name.docx [Studebaker.InterpretingCulture.docx]. PDF files may not receive electronic comments.
- Papers and assignments may be submitted early for feedback from the professor and resubmitted on the due date for grading.

- All assignments marked according to the Grading Criteria Form attached to the syllabus
- All papers and assignments should conform to (and will be marked against) the MacDiv Style Guide

A. Biblical Vision of Grace:

1. Purpose:

This assignment provides the opportunity to interpret a biblical vision of grace. The biblical passage, story, image, or theme can be from either the Old or the New Testaments.

2. Description:

- This essay should describe the theological content of the selected passage and identify what it contributes to a Christian theology of grace. When detailing the contribution of the theology of grace do so in light of your area of degree specialization: e.g., what does the theology of grace mean for Christian Worldview, Church and Culture, and Pastoral Studies?

2) Length: 5–6 pages.

3) Sources: six to eight sources (combination of books and journal articles). Endeavor to draw on sources that reflect different approaches and theological viewpoints.

B. Historical Vision of Grace:

1. Purpose:

This paper provides the opportunity to explore a vision of grace from the history of the church and details its importance for the church today. You can select a movement, figure, practice, or theology from the early church through the modern period.

2. Description:

- The essay has two primary parts/goals:

- 1) Describe the selected topic, figure, or practice.

- 2) Details its significance for Christian life, thought, and or ministry today.

- b. Length of the essay is 7–8 pages.

- c. Use appropriate academic research sources—e.g., journal articles, book essays, and monographs. Use a minimum of six to seven resources.
- d. Although not determinative for grading, students will share their interpretation of their church in a small group and/or full-class setting.

C. Grace and Redemption Project/Paper:

1. General guidelines:

This assignment constitutes the “major paper” and presentation of the course. The purpose of the paper/project is vocational development. It should advance your vocational trajectory. Selecting whether to prepare a project or a paper is an important step in the process. If you anticipate further graduate work or writing a thesis as part of your MTS or MDiv, then an academic research-thesis paper is an excellent option. A research-thesis paper provides skill development in conducting the concentrated study on a particular research topic necessary for advanced academic work. If your vocational track is vocational ministry or an alternative professional field, then a project may be an effective option. Completing a project provides skill development in contextualizing and applying the fruit of theological research and reflection.

If you have an idea for a paper or creative project that does not neatly fit into the parameters of the assignment, please come and discuss your idea with me. I am open to papers/projects that cohere with the essence of the course and are suited to your research field and interests.

2. Specialization focus:

a. *Christian Worldview*

This specialization relates to the intellectual environment—historical, contemporary, and global—of contemporary Christianity. Engage a topic related to grace and redemption that addresses an element of Christian worldview. The paper/project should be constructive and not only descriptive. The heart of this assignment is your creative interaction with a way culture impacts Christian worldview.

Possible topics: Grace and Identity Politics.

b. *Church and Culture*

This specialization focuses on the intersection of the church and its cultural setting. Developing the ability to interpret culture *and* to specify an appropriate Christian response and interaction with it is the purpose of this assignment. Discerning appropriate ways to embody the Gospel of Jesus Christ in terms of our specific cultural location is an essential aspect of Christian discipleship and ministry and this assignment seeks to facilitate this process. The paper/project analyzes an element of contemporary culture from a Christian perspective on

grace and redemption. Careful and accurate description of the cultural area, as well as thoughtful assessment and response from a Christian perspective is essential. This paper/project should be prepared for your particular vocational venue—if you anticipate further graduate or thesis work, then a thesis paper is a sensible option; if you anticipate professional ministry, then a paper/project geared toward a ministry application is appropriate.

Possible topics: Grace and the culture of consumerism (e.g., human dignity in a culture that commodifies human beings according to market forces).

c. *Pastoral Studies*

This specialization focuses on vocational ministry. The paper/project should address an issue related to God and culture from the perspective of vocational ministry. The paper/project should emphasize the impact of the cultural issue on Christian ministry. Theological reflection is essential, but the focus of the paper/project is the concrete and practical way the cultural issue shapes, challenges, and provides an opportunity for the practice of Christian ministry.

Possible topic: Public ministry (e.g., social justice ministries) in a context of post-Christendom, secularism, and religious pluralism.

3. Description of presentation and paper:

a. Class presentation:

You will present and facilitate a discussion of your paper/project (I encourage multi-media, audio, audio-visual methods when appropriate). Length of presentation and discussion will be determined based on final class roster. Normally presentations are 15-20 minutes followed by 5-10 minutes of class discussion (for a total time of 20-30 minutes)

b. Paper:

- The paper should be attentive to the following categories of assessment (description categories below correspond to those of the grading rubric):

1) Content:

- A detailed development of the topic.
- Thoughtful reflection and creative contribution to the issue.
- Careful use of appropriate sources.

2) Argument:

- a) Detail a clear thesis (the view that your paper supports).

Example of a thesis statement: the Emergent church movement is an authentic Christian way of being the church in a postmodern and post-Christian culture.

- b) Describe your topic under consideration.
- c) Write an essay that coherently demonstrates your view.
- d) Detail major alternatives and/or criticisms of the position and interact with them vis-à-vis your view.

3) Presentation:

- a) Write a stylistically clean and academic paper—e.g., avoid colloquialisms (academic is different than conversational voice), passive voice (use active). Research-thesis papers must have a thesis statement (stated in the introduction), and introduction, content, and conclusion sections of the paper.
- b) Use and document a *minimum* of ten scholarly resources.
- c) Accurately document sources according to the College's Style Guide. [Link](#) to Style Guide.
- d) Paper length: 10–12 pages.
- e) Provide a bibliography (list only the books cited in the footnotes of the paper).

D. Reading:

- Please read the texts books assigned or in cases such as Vanhoozer the chapters specified.
- The professor may at times assign supplementary readings.
- Submit a reading report that states the percentage of reading completed for each assigned book.

VI. Lecture Outline (*tentative*):

Week	Date	Topic	Reading Assignment & Presentation Schedule						
1	1/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the Course • Our Stories of Grace 							
2	1/16	I. The History of Grace A. Old Testament Case Studies (e.g., the creation accounts)							
3	1/23	B. New Testament Case Studies (e.g., implications of the Incarnation for a theology of culture)	Schmiechen, chs. 1–3						
4	1/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Discussion: Is Wright, Right? C. Early Theology (theology and practices) 							
5	2/6	D. Medieval Theology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group discussion: Biblical Vision of Grace 	Schmiechen, chs. 4						
6	2/13	E. Protestant Theology (e.g., justification, sanctification, atonement theology)	Schmiechen, chs. 5–7						
7	2/20	<i>Reading Week</i>	Schmiechen, chs. 8–10						
8	2/27	E. Continued.							
9	3/6	E. Continued <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group discussion: Historical Vision of Grace 	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>1.</td> <td>Paper:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2.</td> <td>Paper:</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	1.	Paper:		2.	Paper:	
1.	Paper:								
2.	Paper:								
10	3/13	II. Grace and Contemporary Issues: A. Human Identity & Activity (<i>Imago Dei</i>)	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>3.</td> <td>Paper:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>4.</td> <td>Paper:</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	3.	Paper:		4.	Paper:	
3.	Paper:								
4.	Paper:								
11	3/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Discussion of <i>So Great a</i> 	Schmiechen, chs. 11–12 Complete <i>So Great a Salvation</i> by class time						

		<i>Salvation</i>							
12	3/27	B. Creation Care	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>5.</td> <td>Paper:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>6.</td> <td>Paper:</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	5.	Paper:		6.	Paper:	
5.	Paper:								
6.	Paper:								
13	4/3	C. Theology of Religions	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>7.</td> <td>Paper:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>8.</td> <td>Paper:</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	7.	Paper:		8.	Paper:	
7.	Paper:								
8.	Paper:								
14	4/10	III. Conclusion & Evaluation							

VII. Policies:

A. Textbook Purchase:

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

B. Academic Honesty:

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. <https://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty.

C. 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 the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

D. 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/sites/default/files/documents/mdcstyleguide.pdf>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

VIII. Late-Assignment and Exam Policy:

- A. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified in the syllabus.
- B. Students take exams on the date and at the time scheduled in the syllabus.
- C. Late assignments are reduced five percentage points for each day late (e.g., if the grade is 90 and it is one day late, the grade will be reduced to 85).
- D. Assignments and exams will be accepted without penalty after the specified date in the syllabus **only** in the case of an excused absence. If a student misses an exam or assignment submission due to a reason that he/she believes is excusable, then he/she must notify the instructor and schedule an exam date and/or late-assignment submission date within twenty-four hours of the beginning of the missed class session.
- E. Assignments and exams will not be accepted late on the basis of the student's involvement with school-approved activities. If you are not able to be in class for an exam or assignment submission, then you must pre-arrange with the instructor to take the exam and/or submit the assignment before the scheduled date in the syllabus.

Please Note: This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.

Appendix 1: Research Degree Requirements

I. Grace and Redemption Paper/Project:

A. Description:

Research degree students will write an academic thesis paper or prepare a cultural engagement project. If you have an idea for a paper or creative project, please come and discuss your idea

with me. I am open to papers/projects that cohere with the essence of the course and are suited to your research field and interests.

B. Purpose:

This assignment gives you experience writing article, essay, and chapter length theological papers and presenting research in an oral form similar to that performed at academic conferences.

C. Guidelines for the Paper:

The paper should include (description categories below correspond to those of the grading rubric) . . .

1. Content and argument:

a. Detail a clear thesis (the view that your paper supports).

- Example of a thesis statement: the Emergent church movement is an authentic Christian way of being the church in a postmodern and post-Christian culture.

b. Describe your topic.

c. Write an essay that coherently demonstrates your view.

d. Detail major alternatives and/or criticisms and interact with them vis-à-vis your view.

2. Presentation:

a. Write a stylistically clean and academic paper—e.g., you should avoid excessive first person discourse, colloquialisms (academic is different than conversational voice), passive voice (use active).

b. Use and document a *minimum* of fifteen scholarly resources.

c. Accurately document sources according to the College's Style Guide ([link](#)).

d. Paper length: 20–25 pages. Not to exceed 7,000 words.

e. Provide a bibliography (list only the books cited in the footnotes of the paper).

f. Use footnotes.

D. Guidelines for the Class Presentation:

1. Time:

The paper presentation takes a thirty-minute segment of the class. Each presentation includes two parts:

- a. The paper presentation (15–20 minutes)
- b. The response and facilitation, which is led by another student (10 minutes, see below for more details on the response and facilitation).

2. Presentation content:

You should articulate the paper's thesis, topic, and argument. You can use PowerPoint, etc. if you wish. The purpose of this assignment is to give you experience with presenting papers as might at an academic conference. You should prepare and present your paper for that type of venue. I encourage you to consider presenting your paper for this class at a conference and/or the Theological Research Seminar of the Divinity College.

II. Response and Facilitation (due day of presentation):

A. Purpose:

Provides experience in responding to and moderating academic presentations and discussions, such as one might do at an academic society meeting.

B. Description:

Each student *prepares a critique* and *facilitates a discussion* of a thesis paper presentation.

1. The critique:

- a. Remember to be charitable; not only Christian, but since academia is a small guild, it is self-preservation.
- b. Critical (includes highlighting and discussing problems *and* strengths):

The critique should explore the following sorts of issues:

- Does the paper have a thesis?
- Does the content develop and support the thesis?
- Does it use appropriate sources?
- Does it interact with the relevant secondary literature?

2. The discussion:

You should keep the presentation to time limit and effectively manage student

discussion (do not let one person dominate the interaction; move on to a new issue if discussion begins to go off on tangents and run down rabbit trails). Be sure to elicit comments from all people present. You might want to have some prepared questions and discussion prompts to facilitate the initial discussion.

C. Guidelines:

1. Each student paper presentation will take approximately fifty minutes (one segment of a class session).
2. The presentation and discussion typically includes the following items:
 - a. Presenter presents the paper: approximately thirty minutes.
 - b. Response: approximately fifteen minutes.

You can go through point by point as a monologue or start by raising and offering your thoughts on the paper's primary contributions and arguments and invite discussion based on your remarks and interaction with the paper and then so forth through the rest of the points you have identified.

- c. Class discussion of the paper and response: approximately five to ten minutes.
3. A written submission/outline is not required, but is encouraged as it may be beneficial to other students in the course.

II. Lecture & Discussion: (due day of scheduled presentation):

A. Purpose:

The purpose of this assignment is to give students experience with developing and presenting lectures. *This assignment fulfills one of the requirements on the Mastery Checklist.*

B. Description:

You will present a lecture on one of the topics listed in the course outline (or an approved alternative topic). Lecture topic and major paper topics can be coordinated.

- Lecture topic and major paper topics can be coordinated

C. Guidelines:

1. Research:

a. Research for the lecture will account for the supplemental reading for advanced degree students (approximately 5,000-6,000 pages)

b. Documentation of reading:

Please provide an annotated bibliography of the reading consulted in the preparation of the lecture (the annotations for the texts should be about one paragraph—identify the key thesis and contributions of the text).

2. Lecture:

a. The lecture should present and discuss the primary content points of the topic (or sub-topic)

b. Lecture handouts/outlines and PowerPoint/Prezi are helpful, but not required

c. Length:

The lecture and discussion will take a fifty-minute period of the course.

D. Evaluation:

Grading of the lecture and discussion session will be based on the following . . .

1. Please submit to the professor a copy (electronic or hard copy) of your lecture notes and annotated bibliography used to develop the lecture.
2. Does the lecture accurately present and discuss the topic?
3. Does the lecture engage in critical evaluation/discussion of the content?
4. Does the lecture highlight the transcendent value of the material—e.g., does it have value for contemporary Christian thought, life, and ministry?
5. Does the lecture facilitate student discussion?

III. Class Leadership:

A. Purpose:

A significant part of your future or current work will likely include teaching in an academic and/or church context. Taking a leadership role in the course will provide an opportunity to develop teaching skills for your current/future vocational work.

B. Description:

1. Group discussions:
 - a. The course will have regular in-class group discussions of the assignments and readings.
 - b. Advanced students will have the opportunity to facilitate these group discussions. You do not need to play the role of expert, but facilitate the discussion by asking questions, offering short insightful thoughts on the subject, and drawing on course readings that will relate to the discussion and spark group discussion.
2. De-brief meetings:
 - a. Advanced students will meet three times (probably weeks four, nine, and twelve) during the semester with the professor to discuss teaching style, content, purpose of chosen content, rationale of approach, experience leading the group discussions, evaluation of lectures, etc.
 - b. I envision these meetings as times when we can prompt each other to consider and hone our teaching styles, approach to teaching the content for this course, and theological viewpoints
 - c. Length: approximately thirty minutes.

IV. Course Performance Criteria:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Due</u>
A. Grace & Redemption Paper/Project: (a.k.a. presentation and paper)	50%	One week after presentation
1. Presentation	20%	
2. Paper	30%	
B. Lecture and Discussion:	30%	Day of lecture
C. Annotated Bibliography: * See lecture assignment	5%	Day of lecture
D. Response and Facilitation	15%	Day of presentation

Total: 100%

