

**TH 3ST3**  
**Systematic Theology**  
**CW/CC/PS**

McMaster Divinity College  
Fall 2022  
In-Person/Livestream  
Mondays 11:00am–12:50pm

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1:50pm, also available via Zoom and by  
appointment

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**I. Description:**

How do our beliefs about God, the Bible, and Jesus Christ impact our Christian life and ministry? How do we relate our Christian faith to the changing world of today? This course addresses these questions through an exploration of the rich content of Christian theology and its application to contemporary issues of Christian life and ministry. Intersecting biblical faith with the multiple dimensions of our lives is vital for a flourishing relationship with God. I invite you to join me on an investigation of the ways that our views of the task of theology, revelation and Scripture, the Trinity, Christ, theologies of creation and human beings as divine image bearers, the church, and eschatology can open up new horizons of Christian formation and ministry.

Specializations:

- Christian Worldview
- Church and Culture
- Pastoral Studies

**II. Course Objectives:**

A. Knowing:

1. The process of theological development.
2. A range of Christian perspectives on the major categories of systematic theology.
3. Key Christian thinkers and theological traditions.

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 Christian identity vis-à-vis the diverse trajectories of Christian theology.
3. Reflect on how alternative theologies and spiritualities can positively contribute to your process of spiritual formation.

- C. Doing:
1. Develop skills in the art of theological reflection and expression.
  2. Identify and describe the dynamic and personal nature of theology.
  3. Engage in the process of constructive theological reflection by describing the way(s) the class (readings, lectures, etc.) has shaped your understanding of what it means to be a Christian.

### III. Required Text:

- Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

### IV. Course Performance Criteria:

Assignment	Percent	Due
A. Annotated Bibliography	20%	Oct 31
B. Theology Paper/Projects	45%	
1. Mini-Presentation (in -class)	10%	Nov 28
2. Paper (submit on Avenue)	35%	Nov 28
C. Spiritual Formation Essay	35%	Dec 5
E. Participation	X	
Total: 100%		

### V. Course Outline (*tentative*):

Week	Lecture Topics and Class Activities	Due Dates and Reminders
1 Sept 12	Introduction to the Course  <b>I. The Nature and Task of Theology</b>	
2 Sept 19	Nature and Task of Theology continued  • Small group discussion of Christian Formation topic	• McGrath, chs 5–6
3 Sept 26	<b>II. Revelation and Scripture</b>	• McGrath, chs 7–8
4 Oct 3	<b>III. The Triune God</b>  • Small group discussion of major paper/project	• McGrath, chs 9–10

	• Small group reading and discussion of John Donne’s sonnet “Batter My Heart, Three Person’d God”	
5 Oct 10	<i>Thanksgiving</i>	
6 Oct 17	Triune God continued  • Small group discussion of providence and free will	
7 Oct 24	<b>Reading Week and Hybrid Intensive Week</b>  <i>No class</i>	
8 Oct 31	<b>IV. Christology</b>	• McGrath, chs 11–12  • Annotated Bibliography due Oct 31
9 Nov 7	Christology continued	
10 Nov 14	<b>V. Theology of Creation</b>	
11 Nov 21	<b>VI. Redemption</b>	• McGrath, chs 13–14
12 Nov 28	<b>VII. Ecclesiology</b>  • MDiv/MTS Mini-presentation of paper/project  • DPT Paper presentations  • PhD paper presentations	• McGrath, chs 15–16  • Final Paper/Project due Nov 28
13 Dec 5	<b>VIII. Eschatology</b>	• McGrath, ch 18  • Spiritual Formation Essay due Dec 5

## VI. Assignment Descriptions

### General Guidelines:

- Submit your assignments in the relevant folder on Avenue to Learn. I prefer Word docs rather than PDFs. PDF files may not receive electronic comments—I find them clunky and difficult to deal with.

- Use the following format for file names: your last name.assignment name.docx [Studebaker.AssignmentName.docx]. PDF files may not receive electronic comments—I find them clunky and difficult to deal with.
- Papers and assignments may be submitted early for feedback from the professor and resubmitted on the due date for grading.
- All papers and assignments should conform to MDC’s Style Guide.

A. Spiritual Formation Essay:

1. Description

The assignment provides the opportunity to fulfill the objective of identifying and describing the dynamic and personal nature of theology. You accomplish this by tracking, during the semester, the development of their understanding of a theological topic/doctrine and its impact on their understanding of embodying the Christian faith.

Issues that you might address include the following . . .

- What is a Christian understanding of creation and eschatology and how do they relate to environmental concerns?
- What does it mean to be in but not of the world (John 17:13-19)? Should churches be involved with politics and social issues?
- What does it mean, “to be saved”?
- What is the relationship between prayer and God’s foreknowledge, between human initiative and divine providence?
- What is the nature of the human? Holistic? Body, soul, spirit? How does our view influence the way we approach ministry, discipleship, and our lives in this world?

2. Guidelines

- a. Part One: Detail your thoughts on the selected theological topic within the first week of the semester in order to obtain an accurate description of your views prior to reflecting on the issue in the course. You do not need turn in this part, but please do it.
- b. Part Two: Record/journal references to the theological issue heard in songs, worship, conversations, sermons, readings, lectures, etc. You should start your record as soon as possible. Include in your record a brief description of the theology explicitly or implicitly assumed in the statement. Your thoughts and reactions to the statement will also be helpful for the third part of the assignment.

Examples:

- Topic: Creation and the environment.  
A popular worship song contains the words, "...the universe declares your majesty, you are Holy, Holy..." This affirms the revelatory nature of creation. If creation declares the majesty of God, does this have applications for a Christian environmental ethic? Perhaps environmental involvement is a "spiritual" activity.
  - Topic: Theological anthropology/embodied existence.  
A pastor said, "I can't wait to leave this bag of bones behind and go to heaven." Does his statement marginalize the embodied nature of human existence and the body itself? Does it conflict with the creation narrative and thus a legitimate Christian anthropology? Does it perhaps reflect a gnostic strain in popular evangelical Christianity?
- c. Part Three: Write a revised essay that reflects any changes, nuances, and developments in your thoughts relative to the initial draft of the essay. The paper should present the narrative of where you started on the topic, your process of reflecting on the topic (in light of the various sources that prompted your thinking on the topic) and where you are on the topic at the time completing the assignment.
- d. Length and Style
- 1) First person discourse is Ok.
  - 2) Length: approx. 5–7 double-spaced pages in 12 point Times New Roman font.
  - 3) Document sources with footnotes and follow the MacDiv Style Guide.

## B. Annotated Bibliography

### 1. Description

Develop an annotated bibliography of 10 resources related to *the topic of your major paper or project*. The purpose of this assignment is to provide the research support for your paper or project.

### 2. Guidelines

- For each text, write a 100–150 word annotation that describes the content of the source and the way it you think it will support your paper or project.
- Follow the style guide for bibliographic sources.

- Sources can include books, chapters in edited volumes, journal articles, thoughtful web resources.

## C. Project/Paper—Class Presentation and Written Submission

### 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

#### ◆ Please consult the assignment focus for your degree specialization ◆

#### 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 a theology of grace 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.

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 a Christian theology of grace from the perspective of vocational ministry. The paper/project should emphasize the ways a theology of grace shapes Christian ministry. Theological reflection is essential, but the focus of the paper/project is the concrete and practical way the theology of grace 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. Mini-Presentation

a. Purpose

- Presenting your paper gives you the opportunity to share your major paper/project with your class colleagues.
- The final paper/project is due one week after the presentation of the paper to the class, so your presentation may not reflect the completed paper/project. Indeed, the gap between the presentation and final due date provides you the opportunity to incorporate feedback from your class colleagues (see below for Paper/Project Interaction).

b. Guidelines for the presentation

- 1) You will present a summary of your paper/project in a class session that introduces the paper/project's . . .
  - Topic
  - Why you chose your topic
  - Content development
  - Key resources
- 2) Length: 5 to 10 minutes.

4. Constructive Paper/Project

a. Guidelines for Paper

- 1) Content and argument
  - Detail a clear thesis (the view that your paper supports).
  - Describe your topic under consideration.
  - Write an essay that coherently demonstrates your view.
  - Detail major alternatives and/or criticisms of the position and interact with them vis-à-vis your view (where appropriate and in so far as space allows).
  
- 2) Style, format, and research
  - 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). They should include an introduction, content sections, and a conclusion.
  - Use and document a *minimum* of ten scholarly resources (books, journal articles, book essays). Internet resources can be utilized, if they are scholarly and/or professional sources.
  - Accurately document sources according to MDC Style Guide (<https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>).
  - Paper length: 10–12 pages.
  - Provide a bibliography (list only the books cited in the footnotes of the paper).

b. Guidelines for Projects/Sermons and Annotated Bibliography

- 1) Project content: for example, if you choose to prepare a sermon, you would submit a manuscript of your sermon/message that includes footnotes, which detail where and how you applied and adapted your theological research in the area of leadership. The sermon does not need to be a verbatim manuscript; a detailed and annotated outline works.
  
- 2) Annotated bibliography of research sources: An annotation is a paragraph or two (approx. 100 words) that describes the content of the book, essay, or article and how it relates to your research project. In addition to the



sermon outline, you will provide an annotated bibliography that details the content of the sources and ways they contributed to the sermon.

- 3) Double-spaced pages, 12 point Times New Roman font.
- 4) Use and document at least 10 scholarly resources (e.g., books, journal articles, and essays). Internet resources can be utilized, if they are scholarly and/or professional sources.
- 5) Document sources with footnotes and follow MDC Style Guide.

## 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](mailto: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.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty <https://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>.

### C. Gender Inclusive Language:

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

### 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 ([link](#)). Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

### E. Disclaimer:

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.

### 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.

### IX. Bibliography

- Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologiae*. Numerous translations and still substantial abridgements are available, (Roman Catholic).
- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975, (Reformed and Neo-orthodox).
- Bicknell, E. S. *A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles*. New York: Longmans, 1919, (Anglican).
- Bloesch, Donald G. *Christian Foundations*. This is a multiple volume set that began in 1992 with *A Theology of Word and Spirit: Authority and Method in Theology*. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, (Barthian Congregationalist).
- Burtner, Robert W. and Robert E. Chiles, editors. *John Wesley's Theology: A Collection From His Works*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983, (Wesleyan).
- Calvin, John. *The Institutes of the Christian Religion, Volumes I & II*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979, (Traditional Reformed).
- Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Image, 1995, (Roman Catholic).
- Chan, Simon. *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998, (Asian, with emphasis on the practice of personal transformation).

- Eck, Diana L. *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras*. 1993.
- Evan, James H. *We have been Believers: An African American Systematic Theology*. 1992.
- Finger, Thomas N. *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology: biblical, historical, constructive*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004 (Anabaptist/Moravian).
- Gonzalez, Justo L. *Mañana: Christian Theology from Hispanic Perspective*. 1990. (Post-Vatican II Catholic).
- Grenz, Stanley J. *Theology for the Community of God*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994, (Canadian Baptist, progressive evangelical).
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994. (Conservative and Charismatic evangelical)
- Lee, Jung Young. *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology*. 1995.
- Macchia, Frank D. *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005 (Contemporary Pentecostal).
- Maddox, Randy. *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994, (Wesleyan).
- McBrien, Richard, *Catholicism* (1980), BX 1751.2 .M24
- McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994, (Reformed Anglican).
- Oden, Thomas C. *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity: A Plain Exposition of His Teaching on Christian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994, (Wesleyan).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Systematic Theology: Volume 1 The Living God, Volume 2 The Word of Life, Volume 3 Life in the Spirit*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988, (Wesleyan, with particular interest in the early church fathers who founded the Eastern Orthodox traditions).
- Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991, (Lutheran).
- Peters, Ted. *God-The World's Future: Systematic Theology for the Post Modern Era*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992, (Lutheran, confessional, postmodern).
- Polkinghorne, John. *The Faith of a Physicist: Reflections of a Bottom-Up Thinker, The Gifford Lectures 1993-94*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, (Scientist and Anglican).
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*. 1993.
- Ryrie, Charles C. *Basic Theology*. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1986, (Dispensationalist).

Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *The Christian Faith*. New York: Harper & Row, 1963, (Classical Liberalism).

Yong, Amos. *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: The Possibility of a Global Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005, (Contemporary Pentecostal).

Williams, J. Rodman. *Renewal Theology: God, the World, and Redemption: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Academic Books, 1988, (Reformed and Charismatic).

Williams, Rowan. *On Christian Theology*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2000, (Contemporary Anglican).