McMaster Divinity College

Essentials in Theology

Fall 2024 | Fridays, 2:00-3:50pm
TH 3P1050| available as TH 5P1030 (DPT)
MDiv, MTS, MATM, MACSC, CertCS
Specializations CC/CW/PS

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, T/R 11:00-13:00 or by appointment
(Zoom appointments are also available by request)

Email: wenc20@mcmaster.ca

II. Course Description

This in-person lecture and discussion-based course will explore essential topics and conversations in Christian theology spanning the loci of theological method and revelation, the doctrine of God, Christology, soteriology, theological anthropology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, and eschatology.

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 figures, themes, concepts, ongoing debates and discussions, and practical life and ministry implications regarding theological method and revelation, the doctrine of God, Christology, soteriology, theological anthropology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, and eschatology.

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 "essentials of theology" 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 essential topics and conversations of theology.

- 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.

While students are strongly encouraged to purchase the required books for the 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). While a select bibliography of recommended resources can be found below, a more complete bibliography for the course will be made available online via the course's A2L site during the first week of class.

Required Readings

MCTI = McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction.* 25th anniversary 6th edition. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016. [DTL]

MCTR = McGrath, Alister E., ed. *The Christian Theology Reader*. 25th anniversary 5th edition. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017. [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

Allen, Diogenes and Eric O. Springsted. *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*. 2nd ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007. [DTL]

Allen, Diogenes and Eric O. Springsted, eds. *Primary Readings in Philosophy for Understanding Theology.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992. [DTL]

Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics*. 4 vols. Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003-2008. [DTL v1, v2, v3, v4]

Berkhof, Louis. *Systematic Theology.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996. [DTL]

Bird, Michael F. *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction.* 2nd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020. [DTL]

Bloesch, Donald G. *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*. 2 Vols. New York: Harper & Row, 1978-79. [DTL]

Boyd, Gregory A. and Paul R. Eddy. *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology.* 3rd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2022. [DTL]

Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology.* 3rd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013. [DTL]

Finger, Thomas N. *Christian Theology: An Eschatological Approach.* 2 vols. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1985-1989. [Mills Library]

Gerrish, Brian A. *Christian Faith: Dogmatics in Outline.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2015. [DTL]

Grenz, Stanley J. *Theology for the Community of God.* Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000. [DTL]

Grenz, Stanley J. and Roger E. Olson. *Who Needs Theology? An Invitation to the Study of God.* Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996. [DTL]

Grenz, Stanley J. with Jay T. Smith. *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living.* 3rd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015. [DTL]

Gonzalez, Justo L. *Christian Thought Revisited: Three Types of Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989. [DTL]

Grudem, Wayne A. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine.* 2nd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020. [DTL (1994 1st edition)]

Gunton, Colin E., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. [DTL]

Horton, Michael. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011. [DTL]

Jenson, Robert W. *Systematic Theology.* Revised edition. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. [DTL v1, v2]

Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti. *A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World.* 5 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013-2017. [DTL v1, v2, v3, v4; Mills Library v5]

Migliore, Daniel L. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology.* 4th edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2023. [DTL]

Morris, Thomas V. *Our Idea of God: An Introduction to Philosophical Theology.* Reprint; Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 1997. [DTL]

Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Systematic Theology.* 3 vols. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993-1998. [DTL v1, v2, v3]

Porter, Stanley E. and Steven M. Studebaker. *Evangelical Theological Method: Five Views.* Spectrum Multiview. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018. [DTL]

Stackhouse, John G., Jr., ed. *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000. [DTL]

Tanner, Kathryn. *Jesus, Humanity, and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology.* Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2001. [DTL]

Thielicke, Helmut. *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*. Translated by Charles L. Taylor. Reprint; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016. [DTL]

Van der Kooi, Cornelius and Gijsbert van den Brink. *Christian Dogmatics: An Introduction.* Translated by Reinder Bruinsma with James D. Bratt. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017. [DTL]

Veeneman, Mary M. *Introducing Theological Method: A Survey of Contemporary Theologians and Approaches.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017. [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 85–89 80–84	A+ A A-	12 11 10	4.0 4.0 3.7	for work displaying mastery of the subject matter, creativity, and individualized integration of insights and their relationship(s)
77–79 73–76 70–72	B+ B B-	9 8 7	3.3 3.0 2.7	for work displaying a good level of competence and comprehension
67–69 63–66 60–62	C+ C C-	6 5 4	2.3 2.0 1.7	for work which meets basic course requirements but demonstrates a low level of comprehension
57–59 53–56 50–52	D+ D D-	3 2 1	1.3 1.0 0.7	for work that falls below minimum standards
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 D+ (i.e., C- 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%
MCTI & MCTR Reading Log	10%
MCTR Reading Journal	40%
Critical-Constructive Research Paper	40%
	100%

VI. Course Requirements and Expectations

Advanced Elective Students: Students taking this course for Advanced Elective credit (e.g., DPT) will be provided with a syllabus supplement outlining additional requirements that they must meet to receive credit towards their degree program. Advanced Elective students can expect their course requirements to include doctoral levels of reading and research-supported writing, as well as a presentation of their research in a format appropriate to the course. For any questions about what to expect for Advanced Elective requirements in this particular course, please contact the course instructor. **Note:** The syllabus supplement will be made available no sooner than ten days after enrollment in the course. Advanced Elective students are encouraged to register for this course as early as possible so as to ensure that they are made aware of their course requirements well in advance of the course start date.

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.

– MCTI & MCTR Reading Log (10% of Final Grade)

To meet the objective of developing the desired working knowledge of essential figures, themes, concepts, and ongoing debates and discussions regarding Christian theology (K), students are required to read MCTI and MCTR. On their honor, they will fill out an "MCTI & MCTR Reading Log" form (provided by instructor via the course's A2L site) which will allow them to demonstrate how much of each book was read prior to **this assignment's deadline (10:00pm on Friday, 12/06/2024).** The Reading Log can be submitted in any desired format (e.g., MS Word .doc or .docx, PDF, JPEG, etc.) using the course's A2L site.

– MCTR Reading Journal (40% of Final Grade)

Writing about what we are reading is one of the most important, if not primary, ways that can aid the absorption of knowledge (K), the transformational cultivation of a humble theological

tone as well as courage of conviction (B), and the use of one's own words to explain theological content and their significance while also critically and constructively engaging that content (D). As such, students are asked to keep an "MCTR Reading Journal" in which they freely *but formally* reflect upon different primary source selections that are found within McGrath's *Christian Theology Reader*.

The Reading Journal is to include ***three*** entries of 1,000-1,500 words each (3,000-4,500 words total) in a manner that meticulously conforms to the MDC style guide. ***Students are free to choose which *three* entries from the list of five below that they will submit for, but the deadlines listed below need to be adhered to (e.g., students will not have the option of writing about MCTR Parts 1&2 in week 8 when that particular entry was due in week 3, so please plan accordingly).*** For entries that exceed 1,500 words, I will stop reading at the 1,500 word mark. As the Reading Journal is expected to be a work-in-progress that grows as the semester unfolds, all journal entries should be contained in a singular MS Word document that expands with each new entry (rather than creating a new document for each new entry). To prevent students from "cramming" all three entries during the final week of the semester and so that I can offer students an initial assessment with formative feedback that can later guide revisions for the final draft, **initial drafts of journal entries will be due on the following dates and are to be submitted in MS Word (.doc or .docx) format via the course's A2L site:**

- **10:00pm on Friday, 09/27/2024:** MCTR Parts 1&2
- **10:00pm on Friday, 10/11/2024:** MCTR Parts 3&4
- **10:00pm on Friday, 11/01/2024:** MCTR Parts 5&6
- **10:00pm on Friday, 11/15/2024:** MCTR Parts 7&8
- **10:00pm on Friday, 12/06/2024:** Final Draft, including MCTR Parts 9&10*
  *(*due to time constraints, an initial assessment with formative feedback will not be offered for the MCTR Parts 9&10 journal entry if this one is chosen for submission, but also by this time in the semester, students should already have a relatively good idea of what they should be doing with this assignment)*

For initial drafts of the first four possible options, a provisional mark of √+ (an A-range response), √ (a B-range response), √- (a C-range response), or X (please see instructor for help) will be given along with formative feedback (if applicable). If students wish to revise journal entries, please note that (a) all revisions should be highlighted in yellow, and (b) I will only be looking at revisions after the final draft is submitted as per the due date stated above.

There are three different options for how journal entries may be written and students are free to choose between the following options without need for all of the entries to be of the same option (i.e., each entry can use a different if option desired). The only thing that students should be mindful of is that engagement with different primary source excerpts within the same journal entry should all be from the same Part (i.e., The journal entry for MCTR Parts 1&2 should ***either*** engage with excerpts from Part 1 ***or*** Part 2, but not both! Likewise, the journal entry for MCTR Parts 3&4 should ***either*** engage with excerpts from Part 3 ***or*** Part 4, but not both, etc.). In addition, *outside research should not be done for these journal entry assignments* (so that the focus remains on the primary source excerpts themselves)! Those caveats having been mentioned, the options are as follows:

1. Answer *one, some, or all* of the "Questions for Study" that have been provided by McGrath *for anywhere between two-to-four different excerpts within a given Part.* If two excerpts, the answers to the questions for each excerpt should be 500-750 words so that the total for both excerpts together will be 1,000-1500 words; if three excerpts, the answers for each of the question sets should be 333-500 words for a total of 1,000-1,500 words; if four excerpts, the answers for each of the question sets should be 250-375 words for a total of 1,000-1,500 words, etc. The answers to McGrath's questions should aim to be critical and/or constructive (D) while also being mindful of course objectives (K) and (B).

2. Place the viewpoints expressed by different excerpted authors in ***critical*** dialogue with each other (D), all the while being mindful of course objectives (K) and (B) as well as ensuring that equal word proportions are given to each of the different authors that have been chosen (I use the word "authors" instead of "excerpts" here because some MCTR Parts include more than one excerpt by the same author). The entry should be 1,000-1,500 words and should engage with no less than two excerpted authors, but also no more than four excerpted authors. The student's own position (e.g., overall agreement with the theological trajectory of which author) should also emerge by way of the argumentative reflection given in this type of journal entry and should be clearly stated in the entry's conclusion with reasons for why you are convinced of your position after dialoguing with the different primary source authors in question; the reasons stated can include reasons for why the other positions are not as convincing.

3. Place the viewpoints expressed by different excerpted authors in ***constructive*** dialogue with each other (D), all the while being mindful of course objectives (K) and (B) as well as ensuring that equal word proportions are given to each of the different authors that have been chosen (I use the word "authors" instead of "excerpts" here because some parts will include more than one excerpt by the same author). The entry should be 1,000-1,500 words and should engage with no less than two excerpted authors, but also no more than four. The constructive engagement should seek to dialogically analyze and/or synthesize the various viewpoints in a way that addresses a contemporary topic or issue that is of interest to the student (e.g., personally, culturally, ministerially, etc.). Practical implications arising from the constructive dialogue can also be mentioned in the conclusion of this type of journal entry. Those who are especially wishing to incorporate their program specializations (CC/CW/PS) may find this constructive option to be most attractive for some or all of their journal entries.

– *Critical-Constructive Research Paper (40% of Final Grade)*

A critical-constructive research paper of 3,750-5,000 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., theological method and revelation, the doctrine of God, Christology, soteriology, theological anthropology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, and/or eschatology) 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). 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., "Which view of Scripture is more convincing, J. I. Packer's or John Webster's, and what are the constructive implications for our contemporary situation?") rather than merely description (e.g., "What was J. I. Packer's view of Scripture?").

In terms of program specializations, the following are examples of research questions which can be written about:

- CC: How ought we to think of the church's relationship to the kingdom of God and what practical implications does this have for the church's relationship with culture (a.k.a. "the world")?

- CW: How ought we to think of Scripture's relationship to revelation and what practical implications this has for a Christian view of theological anthropology?

- PS: How ought we to understand the doctrine of the Trinity's practical relevance for Christian life and ministry (e.g., preaching)?

For professional students, a *minimum* of 8-10 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. (Research program students should consult a minimum of 18-20 academic sources.)

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, 10/18/2024:** 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, 11/22/2024:** 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.

- **10:00pm on Friday, 12/06/2024:** 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)

Week	Dates	Topic	Readings and Assignments
1	Sep 13, 2024	Course Introduction	MCTI Part 1 (Chs. 1-4, optional)
2	Sep 20, 2024	Theological Method and Revelation I	MCTI Part 2 (Chs. 5-8)
3	Sep 27, 2024	Theological Method and Revelation II	MCTR Parts 1&2 **Due: MCTR Journal #1**
4	Oct 4, 2024	Doctrine of God I	MCTI Chs. 9&13 / MCTR Part 3 [Advanced Degree Colloquy]
5	Oct 11, 2024	Doctrine of God II & Christology I	MCTI Ch. 10 & MCTR Part 4 **Due: MCTR Journal #2**
6	Oct 18, 2024	No Class - but students are expected to submit their research paper proposal by 10pm on 10/18.	**Due: Research Paper Proposal** [Reading Week (10/14-18)]
7	Oct 25, 2024	Christology II & Soteriology I	MCTI Ch. 11 / MCTR Part 5
8	Nov 1, 2024	Soteriology II & Theological Anthropology I	MCTI Ch. 14 / MCTR Part 6 **Due: MCTR Journal #3** [DPT Retreats]
9	Nov 8, 2024	Theological Anthropology II & Pneumatology I	MCTI Ch. 12 / MCTR Part 9
10	Nov 15, 2024	Pneumatology II & Ecclesiology I	MCTI Ch. 15 / MCTR Part 8 **Due: MCTR Journal #4**
11	Nov 22, 2024	No Class - but students are expected to submit a full first draft of their research paper by 10pm on 11/22.	**Due: Research Paper (Draft)** [ETS/SBL (Nov 20–26)]
12	Nov 29, 2024	Ecclesiology II	MCTI Ch. 16 / MCTR Part 9
13	Dec 6, 2024	Eschatology I	MCTI Chs. 17&18 / MCTR Part 10 **Due: MCTI/R Reading Log** **Due: MCTR Journal (Final)** **Due: Research Paper (Final)**
14	Dec 13, 2024	Eschatology II & 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).