

NALS/Trinity

Introduction to Theology I

ST660

Fall 2017

Mondays, 1:30-4:45

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CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION

An introduction to the practice and tradition of Christian theological reflection from a Lutheran perspective. The goal of the course is that students grow in their ability to articulate Christian teaching and a Christian view of the world clearly, scripturally, and in accord with sound doctrine, in receptive conversation with saints and teachers past and present. This course addresses the character and norms of Christian theology, the doctrine of God, and the person and work of Christ. Prerequisites: ST540 and ST550.

FURTHER DESCRIPTION

The two *Introduction to Theology* courses are the third and fourth courses in the theology sequence in the NALS curriculum, following *Creeds and Catechisms* (ST540) and *Lutheran Confessions* (ST550). The prior courses examined the apostolic rule of faith and its reception and elaboration by the ancient church and the Wittenberg Reformation. However, the Creeds, Catechisms, and Confessions do not “distill” Holy Scripture so that we can now receive the message of Scripture without engaging it for ourselves. Both Fathers and Reformers understood the rule of faith as orientation and formation intended precisely to enable fruitful participation in the church’s ongoing engagement with God’s inexhaustible word. This course will introduce students to the practice of Christian theology as an enterprise of reflection on the word of God carried out within and for the sake of the communion and mission of the church of Jesus Christ.

EPIGRAPH

“Among all the other good works that must also be practiced in the Christian community, there is no higher or more noble work or one that matters more both to God and to us human beings, than the cultivation and preservation of right Christian teaching. Where this is present, there God dwells with all His grace and it is not possible for things to turn out too badly. There one finds consolation, help, and joy, not as in the world, which lasts only for a time, but eternal consolation, eternal help, eternal joy. But where Christian teaching is either not present ... or else is impure and falsified ... even when there is no lack of temporal goods, what will ultimately follow is eternal misery, sorrow, and despair.” - Veit Dietrich (1506-1549), Preface to his *Kinder-Postille* (1546).

GENERAL OUTCOMES

The general set of desired course outcomes stated by Trinity includes the following:

1. The student will recognize and identify the biblical theology evident in the course work.
2. The student will be able to articulate an Anglican [or in our case, Lutheran] understanding of biblical, historical, systematic, and pastoral theology.
3. The student will be able to effectively communicate the Christian message to a diversity of people in order to advance the mission of God.

Our course will serve these ends in multiple ways. It will attempt to show how the doctrine of the church arises from Scripture and leads back to Scripture (1). It will articulate Lutheran concerns in the context of Scripture, the wider catholic tradition of the church, and modern ecumenical conversation (2). It aims to enable students to communicate the Christian message more articulately, more scripturally, and more richly (3).

SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

1. You will understand more clearly the context, subject-matter, goals, and norms of classical Christian theology.
2. You will grasp more clearly the scriptural basis and gospel meaning of ecumenical Christian doctrines about God and Christ.
3. You will be able to articulate the doctrine of the Trinity.
4. You will be able reflect and write about the mystery of Christ, informed by Scripture, church doctrine, and the tradition of Christian theology.
5. You will grow in your ability to interpret Scripture theologically.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS (Detailed Instructions and Due Dates TBA)

A **short paper** (app. 1000-1200 words) stating as precisely as possible the church doctrine of the Trinity.

A brief **exegetical sketch** (app. 1000-1200 words) on an assigned text, as an opportunity to reflect on the relationship between doctrinal theology and the interpretation of Scripture.

A **final reflection paper** (app. 3000-5000 words) answering the questions: “Who is Jesus Christ and Why Does He Matter?” The object of the paper will be to integrate Scripture, the course material, and other insights in a disciplined theological meditation on Jesus Christ.

TEXTBOOKS

D. Yeago, *The Apostolic Faith*, Part I. (Available on Google Drive).¹

Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*. St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2012. ISBN: 0881414271.

¹ Because of ongoing revisions, *The Apostolic Faith* will not be available on Google Drive before mid-August.