North American Lutheran Seminary

SHORT SYLLABUS
Introduction to Theology I
ST660
Fall 2019

Thursdays, 1:30-4:45
Instructor: David S. Yeago
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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 vision of life clearly, scripturally, critically, and in accord with sound doctrine, in receptive conversation with saints and teachers of the Church, 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 Wittenberg Reformation. However, the Creeds, Catechisms, and Confessions do not extract the meaning of Holy Scripture so that we can now receive the Bible’s witness without engaging it for ourselves. Both Fathers and Reformers understood the rule of faith and church doctrine as orientation and formation intended precisely to enable fruitful participation in the church’s ongoing engagement with God’s inexpressible 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.

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.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Basic Academic Decency**: Read and reflect on reading assignments in a timely manner. Attend class regularly and on time. Turn in assignments on the assigned date in the prescribed manner.

2. **Be Prepared to Ask Questions**. In class, the Instructor will begin with comments on the assigned reading or the topic under consideration. Students will be expected to bring *well-prepared* questions, whether specifically about the readings or more broadly about the concepts and claims presented in readings and lectures. Participation will not be graded, but engaged class participation may raise a marginal grade to the next level, while lack of participation, along with frequent absences and other forms of disrespect, may bring a grade down.

3. **Make the instructor work for his pay**. Questions and concerns that for whatever reason don’t get addressed in class are still your responsibility and mine. The best way to pursue such questions is through live conversation or email.

4. **ONLINE STUDENTS ONLY**: In order to help me keep in touch with your needs, I am asking you to “Check In” with me once a week by email concerning your understanding of the course material. If things are making sense, you can simply say so. If you have questions or concerns, this is your opportunity to “raise your hand” and ask. Please email me at the address provided above, with “Check In” in the subject line.

5. Each student will submit a **short paper** (app. 1000-1200 words) stating as precisely as possible the church doctrine of the Trinity.

6. Each student will submit a **brief exegetical sketch** (app. 1000 words) on an assigned text. The goal will be to bring theological learning to bear on the interpretation of Scripture and at the same time allow the particularity of the text to inform theological understanding. See the appropriate handout for more information.

7. Each student will write 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* (not a personal testimony) on Christ and his inexhaustible significance. See the discussion of the nature of theological thinking in Chapter 1 of *The Apostolic Faith* for the kind of reflection called for.

**TEXTBOOKS**
