Introduction to Christian Theology
THEO5110, Spring 2020 (online)
North Park Theological Seminary

Instructor Information:
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Theology Teaching Fellow, Th.D.
Contact: mawalker@northpark.edu

Course Description
This course provides an introduction to the doctrines, methods and tasks of Christian theology; it seeks active appropriation of Christian faith both in the context of the church and in engagement with the world.

Course Objectives
By virtue of this course, students will:

1. **Identify** and **describe** basic Christian doctrines, and significant theologians, in terms of their historical contexts and/or their contributions to the Christian theological tradition
2. **Articulate** important theological themes, concepts and vocabulary, based on lectures and reading materials
3. **Argue** a theological position based on your analysis of course materials
4. **Defend** a theological argument in academic writing by engaging, evaluating, and integrating various theological texts on a chosen theme

Required Reading:
Over the semester, we’ll engage in dialogue with the following texts:

1. Bible (any translation; **modern strongly preferred**, for ease of use)


6. **Canvas:**

Rough page count / reading load: 1,060 pages.

**Recommended, But Not Required, Reading:**


**Assessments and Grading Scale:**

As this is an entirely online course, it is asynchronous. Your discussion-posts will be due on Thursdays; please respond to your classmates by Saturday on the weeks discussion-posts are due. All other assignments are due on Mondays. I will be active online on Mondays and Fridays. Since I’ve given you folks a lot of reading to do, I’ll grade as generously as I can on the weeks that have numerous posts, and I’ll make clear what your areas of focus should be for each assignment.

**This course will use the following metrics for assessment:**

1. Two (2x) reflection papers of 250-500 words: 5% each, and 10% total (due Mondays)
   - addresses Learning Outcomes 1, 2, and 3
   
   At two specific points across the term, I’ll ask you to write me reflection papers. In general, these papers are to be no more than two pages long, dependent on the depth of the topic. Here, I’d like you to both engage as fully as possible with the primary author’s
claims (the first half of the paper, so between 125 and 250 words), and then to **add your own experience or reflection to the author’s assertions** (the second half of the paper; again, 125 to 250 words). You can bring in other sources as appropriate, but citations are **not necessary**. These are reflective essays, not argumentative ones. If you have questions, please come see me, or write me an email.

**Reflection Paper Rubric:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Exemplary: 4.5 – 5 pts</th>
<th>Competent: 4 – 4.5 pts</th>
<th>Developing: less than 4 pts.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>Charitably presents author’s views on selected topic; displays clear understanding of themes or parts of primary source’s argument</td>
<td>Presents author’s view with some charity; understands most, but not all, of parts or themes in primary source</td>
<td>Interacts with primary source with little or no charity; displays little, if any, understanding of primary source’s argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis/Evaluation</td>
<td>Integrates own views in interesting and provocative ways; concise; integrates knowledge from previous weeks</td>
<td>Integration of own experience is somewhat unclear or disconnected from primary source; concise; engagement of previous modes of knowledge evident</td>
<td>Little or no integration of personal experience; integration of same unclear or disconnected from source material; engagement of previous modes of knowledge unclear or not evident</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Three (3x) **precis assignments**, of 250 to 500 words: **5% each**, and **15% total** (due Mondays) – addressing Learning Outcomes 1 and 2

In a similar vein, three times throughout the term, I’ll ask you to write me **precis** assignments. A precis is a brief paraphrase of a piece of information. Thus, these papers are not reflective or argumentative, but **descriptive**: I want you to write me 250 to 500 words **that make clear what the primary source is saying in the given chapter or article**, and (if possible) **why** s/he is saying it. These are not complicated assignments,
and—as you’re only engaging one source—you do not need to provide citations beyond the parenthetical. Questions? Please write to, or talk to, me.

Precis Assignment Rubric:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exemplary: 4.5 - 5 pts</th>
<th>Competent: 4 – 4.5 pts</th>
<th>Developing: less than 4 pts.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charitably presents author’s views on selected topic; displays clear understanding of themes or parts of primary source’s argument; may make connections to other course content</td>
<td>Presents author’s view with some charity; understands most, but not all, of parts or themes in primary source; may connect obliquely to other course content</td>
<td>Interacts with primary source with little or no charity; displays little, if any, understanding of primary source’s argument; does not connect, or connects in unclear ways, to course content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Seven (7x) 300-word discussion-posts, AND 100-word responses to a classmate: 5% apiece, and 35% total (initial post due Thursdays; replies due by Saturdays) – addressing Learning Outcomes 1 through 3

And bringing us back in a wide arc, seven times across the breadth of the course, I’d like you to post 300 to 500 words to our Canvas discussion board, on a set topic. Write about what you’ve read, and summarize it charitably; then engage with your own experience of the topic. Then, after you’ve posted, please engage with a classmate, in a reply to their post, using about 100 words. In both cases, please draw on course readings with parenthetical citations as necessary, and (when replying to your classmates), please be collegial. It’s okay to disagree; please make your disagreement substantive, and (as often as possible) based in the text that you’re discussing. Ad hominem attacks will be marked down.

As usual, if you have questions, please communicate with your professor. □

Discussion Post Rubric:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Exemplary: 4.5 - 5 pts</th>
<th>Competent: 4 – 4.5 pts</th>
<th>Developing: fewer than 4 pts.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial Post (3 of 5 points)</td>
<td>Answers question clearly; writes well; interacts with readings; engages previous themes; raises interesting questions; demonstrates knowledge of text; posts on-time</td>
<td>Mostly answers question; writing meets standards; generally interacts with readings; may engage prior themes; raises questions; indicates some familiarity with text; posts on-time or only a little late</td>
<td>Does not answer question, or answers unclearly. Does not interact with readings, or interacts below standards. Raises no intriguing questions; may demonstrate very little or no knowledge of text. Posts late.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response (2 of 5 points)</td>
<td>Relates to original posting; reinforces or challenges interpretation of course material; shows at least three of the following attributes: a. supportive b. thought-provoking. challenging d. reflective, i.e. connects to another course concept</td>
<td>Mostly relates to initial posting; may reinforce or challenge parts of course material. <strong>Demonstrates at least one:</strong> a. supportive b. thought-provoking. challenging d. reflective, i.e. connects to another course concept</td>
<td>Does not relate to initial post, or displays unclear connection; offers no reinforcement or challenge of course material. Demonstrates none of the following: a. supportive b. thought-provoking. challenging d. reflective, i.e. connects to another course concept</td>
</tr>
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4. One **2,000-2,500-word essay**, broken in two parts, for **30% total** (due Monday, April 21st) – addressing ALL FOUR Learning Outcomes  
   At one period during his course – the last part, **when we’re talking about eschatology** – I would have you write me essays. These essays are meant to be somewhere between
2,000 and 2,500 words long (and no longer, please!). They must contain a thesis statement, a clear introduction, a body of the essay, and a decisive end-point; they must engage with at least two or three sources, including the primary source that you’re investigating in the question; and they absolutely must cite sources. (That last part is not negotiable). Similarly, they ought to be collegial / civil in tone. I’ll go into depth about that in the Rubric below. That means: treat your subject with charity, even when you disagree with your primary source! Outside research beyond the scope of the course is not necessary, but always welcome.

Your possible topics are as follows (you may NOT go outside this list):

1. Write a short paper summarizing, and arguing for or against, N.T. Wright’s view of the Last Days.
2. Write a short paper summarizing and critiquing Williams’ view of the eschaton; integrate Volf’s view of forgiveness as one component of eschatology.
3. Write a short paper comparing and contrasting Williams’ paradigm of the eschaton with James Cone’s.

Here is the breakdown of the assignment grading for the essays:

This assignment will contain two discrete, but related parts:

a) You will receive 10 of those 30 points, or one-third of your full grade, for the submission of a draft of the essay, including a rough thesis, introduction, body, conclusion, and references; this part will be due in early April.

b) You will receive the remaining 20 points for the FINAL draft of the essay, due on April 20th.


Two parts: DRAFT (10 points) and FINAL copy (20 points).
Draft of Eschatology Paper:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Exemplary: 2.25-2.5 pts each</th>
<th>Competent: 2 – 2.25 pts each</th>
<th>Developing: fewer than 2 pts each</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analysis (2.5 of 10 points)</td>
<td>Clear analysis that demonstrates</td>
<td>Analysis is mostly clear and demonstrates</td>
<td>Analysis is not clear and demonstrates some or partial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing (2.5 of 10 points)</td>
<td>Excellent attention to grammar and style; appropriate references</td>
<td>Appropriate grammar and style used; appropriate references</td>
<td>Errors in grammar; problems in references</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarity (2.5 of 10 points)</td>
<td>Conveys information clearly and concisely; strong organization; well-developed voice</td>
<td>Conveys the information with some clarity and concision; good organization; clear voice</td>
<td>Presentation not confined to key themes of topic; conveys information neither clearly nor concisely; weak organization; weak voice (e.g., too much quoting or referencing other material)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration (2.5 of 10 points)</td>
<td>Clearly relates essay to course learning objectives; interacts with or challenges concepts based on course themes</td>
<td>Relates essay to the course; interacts with or challenges concepts based on course themes</td>
<td>Does not relate essay to the course; minimally interacts with or challenges ideas based on course themes</td>
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</table>

**FINAL DRAFT OF ESCHATOLOGY PAPERS (20 of 30 points):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Exemplary: 3.6 - 4 pts.</th>
<th>Competent: 3.2 – 3.6 pts.</th>
<th>Developing: fewer than 3.2 pts.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analysis (4 of 20 points)</td>
<td>Clear analysis that demonstrates understanding of topic; author’s voice interacts well with</td>
<td>Analysis is mostly clear and demonstrates understanding of the subject; summary is within assignment</td>
<td>Analysis is not clear and demonstrates some or partial understanding of the topic; main point not clearly made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Example</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composition (4 of 20 points)</td>
<td>Excellent attention to grammar and style; appropriate references</td>
<td>Appropriate grammar and style used; appropriate references</td>
<td>Errors in grammar; problems in references</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity (4 of 20 points)</td>
<td>Conveys information clearly and concisely; strong organization; well-developed voice</td>
<td>Conveys the information with some clarity and concision; good organization; clear voice</td>
<td>Presentation not confined to key themes of topic; conveys information neither clearly nor concisely; weak organization; weak voice (e.g., too much quoting or referencing other material)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration (4 of 20 points)</td>
<td>Clearly relates essay to course learning objectives; interacts with or challenges concepts based on course themes</td>
<td>Relates essay to the course; interacts with or challenges concepts based on course themes</td>
<td>Does not relate essay to the course; minimally interacts with or challenges ideas based on course themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources (4 of 20 points)</td>
<td>Integrates primary-source material for essay-topic clearly and well; includes other voices from course material, especially voices from women, people of colour, and other under-represented groups</td>
<td>Integrates primary-source material for essay-topic; includes some voices from an under-represented group</td>
<td>Integrates primary-source material poorly or not at all; includes voices from under-represented groups (women, people of colour, etc.) little or not at all</td>
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</table>
5. One (1x) multiple-choice quiz concerning the Council of Chalcedon: 10% total – addressing Learning Outcome 1

This is pretty straightforward. During week three, you’ll be writing a short multiple-choice quiz, of ten questions, based on your lecture-material about the Council of Chalcedon; thus, it contains a very direct and clear Rubric, which you can find below.

**Have you questions?** By now, dear class, you know the drill. □

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Exemplary: 8-10 pts.</th>
<th>Competent: 7-8 pts.</th>
<th>Developing: less than 7 pts.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Choice Quiz on Council of Chalcedon</td>
<td>Answers correctly above 80%</td>
<td>Answers correctly between 70-79%</td>
<td>Answers correctly below 70%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In general, assignments submitted on time (those two words are important!) will receive a grade within a week of their submission. This grade will also be accompanied by feedback, and the depth of that feedback will be based on the weight of the assignment. Similarly, discussion-posts and responses will be monitored, read, and graded within a day or so of their regular submission. □

I trust that, by now, you get the idea. Please see the assignment rubrics, above, for more details.

**Grading System:**

*Grade percentages operate as follows: A (93+), A- (90-92.9), B+ (87-89.9), B (83-86.9), B- (80-82.9), and so on.*

Late Work: Graduate students at this University are expected to hand in assignments by the date given in the course outline. Again, this means a loss of a letter-grade per day late (A becomes A-, A- becomes B+, B+ become B…). This penalty is not applied to students with medical or compassionate difficulties; students facing such difficulties are kindly requested to consult with their faculty advisor or academic dean, who should make a recommendation on the matter to the instructor. The absolute deadline for the course is the examination day scheduled for the course. All papers are to be submitted electronically, on Canvas or directly to the professor (mawalker@northpark.edu) on the day that they are due. Papers must be sent as a .doc or .docx
file from a North Park email address (absolutely not as PDF or RTF files, and not from a personal email address). Papers should contain numbered pages, and be doubled-spaced.

Please note this course’s late policy: approval for an assignment extension must be obtained at least 48 hours before that assignment’s due-date; otherwise, papers will face a deduction of one-third of a letter-grade each day (that is, A becomes A-, B+ becomes B). Extensions are granted only in emergency situations; computer or device issues do NOT constitute an emergency.

Class Conduct:

This class will really only work if we can engage in open dialogue with each other! that’s particularly true because it’s an internet-based course. In light of the significance of civil and collegial discourse, please employ charity in dialogue with those who hold differing theological views from you. This means: when you read their responses to a post that you’ve made, strive to actually read the material. Then engage charitably with the ideas—that is, strive to understand your colleagues’ reasoning—and do your level best to keep the conversation mutual, mostly by engaging with the ideas, rather than with the persons who promote them.

It ought to go without saying, but it can’t: any post in our discussion fora that puts forward or promotes hate speech, and any sustained attack on any person, will be deleted by your professor, who moderates the discussion. Similarly, any assignment that contains hate speech will be severely critiqued, and very likely sent back, thereafter, for substantive revision.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

In accordance with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park University is committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating will receive a failing grade on the assignment and are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion. Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Plagiarism – the use of another’s work as one’s own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the internet.

2. Copying another’s answers on an examination.
3. Deliberately allowing another to copy one’s answers or work.
4. Signing an attendance roster for another who is not present.

For additional information, see the Seminary Academic Catalog, pp. 25–27.

ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

North Park is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this class related to a disability, contact the Center for Student Engagement by emailing ada@northpark.edu or phone at 773-244-5737 to schedule an appointment with the Disability Access Specialist. You can also stop by the Center for Student Engagement, located on the first floor of the Johnson Center.

TITLE IX

Students who believe they have been harassed, discriminated against, or involved in sexual violence should contact the Title IX Coordinator (773-244-6276 or TitleIX@northpark.edu) for information about reporting, campus resources and support services, including confidential counseling services.

As members of the North Park faculty, we are concerned about the well-being and development of our students, and are available to discuss any concerns. Faculty are legally obligated to share information with the University’s Title IX coordinator in certain situations to help ensure that the student’s safety and welfare is being addressed, consistent with the requirements of the law. These disclosures include but are not limited to reports of sexual assault, relational/domestic violence, and stalking.

Please refer to North Park’s Safe Community site (http://www.northpark.edu/Campus-Life-and-Services/Safe-Community) for reporting, contact information and further details.

Class Calendar / Schedule:

Week 1 Jan 13

Faith: Intellectual Affirmation and Trust (1x reflection paper: due Monday)
**Reading**: Frisk (Faith); Gerrish, *Saving and Secular Faith* ch. 1; Isasi-Diaz (Canvas)

**Due**: 500-word reflection paper on faith in Frisk and Gerrish, and in your own experience (5%).

**Week 2**: Jan 20 (2x discussion-posts due Thursday/Saturday)

Theology: A Way of Discovery

**Reading**: Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* (chapters 1-3);
Fensham, *Emerging from the Dark Age Ahead*, ch. 6

**Due**: 300-word discussion-post, and 100-word reply to a classmate, on Augustine (5%)

**And**: 250-word discussion-post on Fensham’s chapter (+ 100-word response) (5%)

**Week 3**: Jan. 27 – 31: Midwinter – no class. Please read ahead!

**Week 4**: Feb 3 (discussion post Thursday/Saturday; MC quiz and precis due Monday)

Who is God?

**Reading**: Frisk (God, the Holy Spirit, and Salvation); Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 3.2.127-94

**Due**: 300-word **discussion-post**, and **100-word reply to a classmate**, on Frisk’s, and your, experience of God (5%);

**And**: 300-word precis of Barth’s claim about Jesus’ divinity (5%);

**And**: multiple-choice quiz on Council of Chalcedon (10%)

**Week 5**: Feb 10 (2x discussion posts, Thursday/Saturday)

How does God reveal and communicate Godself?

**Reading**: Frisk (Revelation and the Word of God); Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination* ch. 7 (Canvas)

**Due**: 300-word **discussion-post**, and **100-word reply**, based on Barth and Kwok (5%); 250-word discussion post and 100-word response on revelation (5%).
Week 6: Feb 17 (discussion post: Thursday/Saturday)
Creation, God’s Image, and Sin
Reading: Frisk (God, the World, and Our Humanity; Sin)
Due: 300-word discussion-post, and 100-word reply: what is sin for Frisk? What is it for you? (5%)

Week 7: Feb 24 (discussion-post: Th/Sat)
Who is Jesus Christ? What did, and does, Christ do?
Reading: Frisk (Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior) & (The Work of Jesus Christ); Cone chapter 6 (Canvas)
Due: 500-word discussion-post, and 100-word reply to a classmate, on Frisk’s paradigm of Jesus, and explaining who Jesus is for you! (5%)

Week 8: March 2 (reflection paper: due Monday)
How is the church a community? How can we make that community inclusive?
Reading: Frisk, “Mission and Ministry”; Weiss Block, Copious Hosting chapters 2 and 7
Due: 500-word reflection paper concerning Frisk’s definition of ecclesiology, your own experience of the church as a community of believers, and Weiss Block’s paradigm of the church as a place of access for believers with disabilities

Week 9: March 9 – March 13:
Reading Week: no classes or reading!

Week 10: March 16 (precis due Monday; discussion-post Th/Sat)
Church and Sacraments
Reading: Frisk (the Church and Sacraments); Weborg, Made Healthy in Ministry for Ministry chapters 5 and 6 (pp. 67-91)
Due: 300-word precis on Frisk’s definition of the sacraments (5%);
300-word discussion post (and 100-word response) on how you would create an open Communion service (5%).
Week 11: March 23 (precis due **Monday**; first draft of papers **Monday**):

**Eschatology as Time and Space in Frisk and Tinker**

**Reading:** Frisk (Eschatology); Tinker, *Spirit and Resistance* chapters 6 and 7 (pp. 88-115)

**Due:** 500-word precis of eschatology, based on Frisk’s and Tinker’s definitions.

**ALSO DUE:** first draft of final paper on eschatology

Week 12: March 30 (DP: **Th/Sat**)

Wright’s View of Eschatology, Part One

**Reading:** N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope* chapters 1-8.

**Due:** 500-word discussion-post, and 100-word reply, in terms of Wright’s paradigm of the *eschaton*.

Week 13: April 6 (precis due **Monday**)

Wright’s View of Eschatology, Part Two

**Reading:** N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, chs. 9-15

**Due:** 300-word precis summarizing Wright’s view of the Last Days.

Week 14: April 13 (**no assignments**)

Eschatology, Part Four: eschatology with Williams, Bonhoeffer, and Volf

**Reading:** Williams, *Bonhoeffer’s Black Jesus*, chs. 1-3; Miroslav Volf, *Free of Charge* chapter 4.

**Due:** no assignments.

Week 15: April 20 (final draft papers due **Monday**)

Eschatology: the Final Class

**Reading:** Williams, *Bonhoeffer’s Black Jesus*, chs. 4 and 5; Cone, *God of the Oppressed* ch. 10.

**DUE:** FINAL DRAFTS of papers on eschatology (20% !!)
Week 16: April 27: no assignments

No readings. Ungraded summative 300-word discussion-posts (no replies) on class learning.