

TH 501: Theology Survey I

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

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Instructor

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Technical Support

Gordon-Conwell offers technical support during regular business hours. If you have a technical issue related to the course you can send an email to the Semlink Office at semlink@gcts.edu.

Course Description

A study of theological method, revelation, inspiration, and canon of Scripture, existence and attributes of God, Trinity, creation and providence, human nature, original and actual sin.

Gordon-Conwell Mission

Basic preparation for the complex task of pastoral care and counseling. The focus is upon the pastor in the congregational setting. Gordon-Conwell Mission This course satisfies part of the following institutional learning objective:

- Article 2: To maintain academic excellence in the highest tradition of Christian scholarship in the teaching of the biblical, historical and theological disciplines.

Course Learning Objectives

This course, like its successor TH502, is designed to give students a basic and growing competence in the area of theology through careful consideration of the Bible's teaching on core Christian doctrines, the church's formulation of those doctrines in history, and the expression of those doctrines in the varied contexts of contemporary society. In keeping with

the institutional learning objective stated above, I intend that upon completing this course, you will:

- Survey the biblical teaching on the doctrines covered in the course.
- Articulate terms and issues important to theological discussion.
- Analyze various theological positions critically and develop your own positions on the doctrines studied.
- Articulate and value the implications of the doctrines studied for your own spiritual life, Christian character, and ministries.

Lesson Topics

The 14 weekly lessons of this course are arranged into six modules, as follows:

Module A: Getting Started in Theology (4 Weeks)

- Lesson 1: Introduction to Theology
- Lesson 2: Approaches to Theology, Part a
- Lesson 3: Approaches to Theology, Part b
- Lesson 4: A Key Idea for Theology

Module B: The Doctrine of Scripture (3 Weeks)

- Lesson 5: Scripture- Gathering and Learning
- Lesson 6: Scripture- Interacting and Analyzing
- Lesson 7: Scripture- Articulating and Valuing

Module C: The Doctrine of God and the Trinity (3 Weeks)

- Lesson 8: God/Trinity- Gathering and Learning
- Lesson 9: God/Trinity- Interacting and Analyzing
- Lesson 10: God/Trinity- Articulating and Valuing

Module D: The Doctrines of Creation and the Fall (3 Weeks)

- Lesson 11: Creation/Fall- Gathering and Learning
- Lesson 12: Creation/Fall- Interacting and Analyzing
- Lesson 13: Creation/Fall- Articulating and Valuing

Module E: Looking Ahead (1 Week)

- Lesson 14: Looking Ahead- Foundations for Christology

Required Materials

- Elwell, Walter. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. Baker, 2001. (ISBN: 978-0801020759)
- [Erickson, Millard. *Christian Theology*, 3rd edition. Baker, 2013.](#) (ISBN: 978-0801036439; ASIN of e-book: B00EVS3NK). [Library E-Book Available](#).
- [Fairbairn, Donald. *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers*. IVP, 2009.](#) (ISBN: 978-0830838738; ASIN of e-book: B003F3FJMI). [Library E-Book Available](#).
- [McGrath, Alister. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 6 th edition. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.](#) (ISBN: 978-1444335149; ASIN of e-book: B0089VT6A2). [Library E-Book Available](#).
- Tennent, Timothy C. *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing the Way We Think about and Discuss Theology*. Zondervan, 2007. (ISBN 978-0310275114; ASIN of e-book: B000SIYT06)
- "Chicago Statement on Inerrancy" and "Fairbairn's Statement on Scripture," both available in the Resources folder

Required Learning Activities

Achievement of the course objectives will be measured through a variety of activities as described below. The successful completion of these activities will require each student to spend at least 135 hours devoted to coursework, both in class and out of class. The following chart indicates approximate time commitments for the various learning activities. Descriptions of the assignments are listed below.

Course Assignments	Approximate Time Commitments
Viewing Lectures and Reading	75 hours
Producing Theological Glossary	15 hours
Participating in the Forums	15 hours
Writing Doctrinal Papers	30 hours

Part 1: Gathering Information

The learning activities in this part all work together to help you identify and absorb the information you need to handle the theological doctrines of this course appropriately. These activities enable you to achieve course objectives 1 and 2 above.

Readings

You must complete all the reading prescribed below, including approximately half of Erickson and McGrath, all of Fairbairn and Tennent, 63 short articles on theological terms from Elwell, and two short documents available on Sakai. This reading totals the equivalent of about 1700 single-spaced pages. (McGrath is double-columned, so this total counts each page of McGrath as two pages.)

Please note that the reading load varies from week to week. You may want to use light reading weeks to get ahead on future reading. Graded assignments are generally due during weeks with or no reading. Please see the Weekly Workload Chart (available by clicking the link or navigating to the "General Files" folder in Resources) to aid in your planning.

You will be required to submit a Reading Report at the end of the course.

Video Presentations

You must view/listen to the video presentations as listed in the individual lessons. The lectures (as opposed to module introduction videos) are accompanied by handouts, which you may download either in the individual lessons or in their entirety here.

Part 2: Interacting, Analyzing, and Developing Your Own Opinions

The learning activities in this part combine to help you analyze theological positions on each of the doctrines and to articulate your own position. These activities help you to achieve course objective 3 above.

Theological Terms

In lessons 2, 3, 6, 9, and 12, you must read the short articles in Elwell on the theological terms for that lesson. You must write summaries or definitions (one or two sentences) for each term so as to make a personal glossary of theological terms. Compose your glossary in a Word file, and submit it at the end of the course.

Discussion/Interaction

As you read, view/listen, and learn, you must interact with the other students through three distinct discussion forums.

The first is the Key Idea Discussion Forum(in lessons 3 and 5 only), in which you work together to reflect on the various approaches to theology and their key ideas, begin crafting and refining your own key idea for theology, and respond to your peer's key ideas.

The second is a Theological Discussion Forum (in lessons 6, 9, and 12 only), in which you work together to discuss which issues and questions related to each doctrine are worthy of consideration, what the various views on these issues are, and what questions you have about these issues/views.

The third is a Biblical Discussion Forum (in lessons 6, 9, and 12 only), in which you work together to discuss biblical passages relevant to the doctrine covered in each module. You may use this forum to contribute lists of important passages, to discuss how to interpret certain key passages, and/or to defend particular views of controversial passages.

Your participation in these forums will be graded on the basis of criteria described in the [Discussion Forum Rubric](#) available by clicking the link or navigating to the "Rubrics" folder inside the Resources tool. NOTE: mere participation does not warrant full credit for the forums; your content will be assessed in accordance with the rubric.

Part 3: Articulating and Valuing the Implications of Doctrines

The learning activities in this part will to help you integrate the doctrines you are studying with your own spiritual life and your ministry. These activities will thus help you to achieve course objective 4 above.

Key Idea Statements

In lesson 4, you must write a 1-page explanation of your tentative key idea for theology, explaining how it successfully relates various Christian doctrines to one another. Upon receiving feedback from me, you must revise this explanation into a Key Idea Statement Paper, written according to the [Key Idea Statement Rubric](#) available by clicking the link or navigating to the "Rubrics" folder inside the Resources tool.

Integrative Doctrinal Papers

- In lessons 7, 10, and 13, you must write an integrative doctrinal paper, for a total of three papers of 8-10 pages each, in each of which you do the following:
- Present an appropriate organizational scheme for the issues covered under the broad doctrine that is the subject of that module.
- For each issue/doctrine, interact with the following:
- Relevant biblical teaching
- Important statements from the history of the Church (early creeds, Reformation confessions, denominational doctrinal statements, or other historical materials described in the reading for the module)
- Contemporary issues described in the reading for the module
- For each issue/doctrine, state your own belief clearly.
- Relate your belief on the doctrine as a whole to your key idea for theology.

- Explain how your belief on the doctrine as a whole affects your own ministry.
- These papers must follow the Integrative [Doctrinal Paper Rubric](#) available later in this document.

Grading Policy

Your final grade for the course will be computed as follows:

Assignment	Maximum Points Possible Per Assignment	Total Points Possible	% of Total Grade
Course Introduction Forum	4	4	0.8%
Discussion Forums (x8)	7	56	11.2%
Personal Glossary	50	50	10%
Key Idea Statement Paper	50	50	10%
Integrative Doctrinal Papers (x3)	100	300	60%
Reading Report	40	40	8%
Total		500	100%

Grading Scale

The number of points available for the course is 500, and then the total will be divided by five. Final letter grades will then be applied with cutoffs as follows:

A 95, A- 90, B+ 87, B 83, B- 80, C+ 77, C 73, C- 70, D+ 67, D 63, D- 60, F below 60.

A grade of A+ will be given very rarely, when the student's work is truly exceptional. (At Gordon-Conwell, a grade of A+ and a grade of A are both counted the same way in calculating the student's GPA. Thus, a GPA above 4.0 is not possible.)

Other Course Policies

Instructor Feedback

I check emails once daily during business hours, Monday-Friday. Please allow 24 hours for a response, and plan accordingly. I will also do my best to provide feedback on assignments and post grades on Sakai within one week of submission.

Document Formatting and Submission

Assignments must be submitted electronically by posting on the Sakai site. Hard-copies will not be accepted. If you use a different word processor than MS-Word, please convert the files to PDF before submitting them. Otherwise please submit Word files. Assignments should be double spaced with 1" margins on all sides of each page, and should be printed in Times New Roman 12-point type or another font of similar size and appearance. Citations should preferably follow Turabian style, although APA style is also acceptable.

Late Work

Because of the inherently interactive nature of the forums, late submissions to the forums will receive no credit. Late submissions for the Key Idea Statement and Doctrinal papers will be penalized 5% for each day after the deadline, unless arrangements are made in advance. Extenuating circumstances will be considered as appropriate. Work turned in later than the last day of week 14 (the last day of the course), will normally require that an extension be approved by the Seminary. If you anticipate a problem, contact me as soon as possible.

Netiquette

Gordon-Conwell does not tolerate disruptive or disrespectful behavior in the online communications in any course. Students should review the netiquette policy in the Student Handbook and this website: <http://www.albion.com/netiquette>.

Additional Seminary Policies

Academic Standards

Cheating and plagiarism are considered serious breaches of personal and academic integrity. Cheating involves, but is not necessarily limited to, the use of unauthorized sources of information during an examination or the submission of the same (or substantially same) work

for credit in two or more courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructors. Plagiarism involves the use of another person's distinctive ideas or words, whether published or unpublished, and representing them as one's own instead of giving proper credit to the source. Plagiarism can also involve over dependence on other source material for the scope and substance of one's writing. Such breaches in academic standards often result in a failing grade as well as other corrective measures. For more information, please consult the Student Handbook.

ADA Policy

The seminary complies with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. A student with a qualifying and authenticated disability who is in need of accommodations, should petition the seminary in accordance with the stated guidelines in the Student Handbook.

Extension Policy

Arrangements for submission of late work at a date on or before the "last day to submit written work", as noted on the seminary's Academic Calendar, are made between the student and professor. Formal petition to the Registration Office is not required at this time. This includes arrangements for the rescheduling of final exams.

However, course work (reading and written) to be submitted after the publicized calendar due date, must be approved by the Registration Office. An extension form, available online, must be submitted to the Registration Office prior to the "last day to submit written work." Requests received after this date will either be denied or incur additional penalty. For a full discussion of this policy, please consult the Student Handbook.

Grades

Grades are posted on line within twenty-four hours of receipt from the professor. Students are expected to check their CAMS student portal in order to access posted grades. Those individuals who need an official grade report issued to a third party, should put their request in writing to the Registration Office. Faculty have six weeks from the course work due date to submit a final grade. Note that the final grade posted in Sakai is not official; the official final grade will be posted in the CAMS student portal.

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Course Site Technical Support

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