

DN 980 CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGICAL TRENDS

Spring 2012

Thursdays 1-4 PM

3 Semester Credit Hours

Professor: R. J. Gore, Jr., D.Min., Ph.D.

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<http://acad.erskine.edu/facultyweb/gore.htm>

SPRING 2012 OFFICE HOURS:

Tuesday: 1:30-4:30

Other times arranged by appointment.

Contact me at the email address above for appointment and/or submitting course work.

MISSION:

The mission of Erskine Theological Seminary is to educate persons for service in the Christian Church.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In a seminar setting, students examine current movements in contemporary theology, including the theology of the emerging church, the new perspective on Paul, the federal vision, post-foundational approaches to Scripture, and the current evangelical interest in Karl Barth.

Elective. Three hours.

COURSE PURPOSE:

To expand the students understanding of Contemporary Theology; to identify and evaluate the historical and philosophical backgrounds to Contemporary Theology; to explore and critique the various approaches to theology; and to develop expertise in articulating and responding to contemporary expressions of the Christian faith in light of Scripture.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

The mission of Erskine Theological Seminary is to educate persons for service in the Christian Church. As a part of that mission, one goal is that graduates **write and speak using theological language that is clear, well-considered, disciplined, and meaningful for those to whom they minister**. Another goal is that graduates **be prepared to communicate the Bible's message through preaching and evangelism, so as to make clear that its meaning is relevant for today**. Specific objectives for this course are

1. To explore the nature and contents of Contemporary Theology so that students can **identify** significant issues in modern theology and **develop** methods for responding to the challenges raised by those issues.

2. To lead the student to **understand** the methodologies of various systems of theology and to **critique** their effectiveness.

3. To enhance the student's ability to **explain** the truths of biblical revelation and to **relate** them to the culture in light of historical and philosophical challenges.
4. To assist the student to **apply** theological methodology to contemporary theological and ecclesiastical issues.
5. To challenge the student to **develop** a consistently Christian approach to doing theology.

REQUIRED COURSE TEXTBOOKS:

Chung, Sung Wook. *Karl Barth and Evangelical Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006. ISBN 978-1842273548

Dean, Kenda Creasy. *Almost Christian*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0195314847

von Harnack, Adolph. *What is Christianity*. Reprint; Charleston: Forgotten Books, 2009. ISBN 978-1440035173

Machen, J. Gresham. *Christianity and Liberalism*. Reprint; Bibliolife, 2009. ISBN 978-1115666251

Pagitt, Doug and Tony Jones. *An Emerging Manifesto*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007. ISBN 978-0801068072

Tennent, Timothy C. *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007. ISBN 978-0310275114

A Selected monograph by one of the following: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Robert McAfee Brown, Emil Brunner, Rudolf Bultmann, John Cobb, Dan Kimball, Hans Kung, Brian McLaren, Jurgen Moltmann, Reinhold Niebuhr, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Karl Rahner, Paul Tillich. Make your selection according to (1) your interests and (2) the availability of texts and secure approval of text by the fourth class meeting. You may proposed to study another theologian, but you must secure prior approval.

Students are expected to secure their own copies of all required textbooks. As a convenience, the seminary has a bookstore portal of the website at <http://www.erskineseminary.org/bookstore.html>. There you will find links to familiar vendors (CBD, Amazon) and can check availability of texts, compare prices, and place orders. The ETS SBA will receive a modest percentage of the profits from students' and professors' purchases through this portal. The Erskine Campus Bookstore will carry a limited number of copies of every required text and orders for books can be placed through the Campus Bookstore.

COURSE METHOD:

The purpose and objectives of this course will be achieved through four learning components. The first is the **Content Component**, the student's own mastery of material, accomplished by completing the required readings and measured objectively by a Final Project. The ability to do theology effectively is determined largely by the student's understanding of the historical, philosophical, and global contexts that influence contemporary expressions of the Christian faith.

The second is the **Reflection Component**. Each student will complete the Reflection Paper for each assigned reading. The Reflection Paper provides the student opportunity to interact with the readings, evaluate the methods used, and critique the usefulness of the readings as an approach to theology. Each response will be 750 words in length (plus or minus 10%), single-spaced, using Times New Roman 12 or similar font.

The third is the **Discussion Component**. Each class will incorporate discussion and lecture. A vital exchange of ideas is essential to the process of exploration. Students will build on their classroom preparation (the Content Component) and outside preparation (Reflection Component) by participating in classroom discussion.

The fourth is the **Research Component**. The final portion of the course will be conducted as a seminar. Each student will make a thirty (30) minute Seminar Presentation and lead the classroom discussion on the theologian selected for your final reading requirement. The focus of this seminar presentation will also serve as the general topic for the Final project. The Final Project will be a formal research paper (using Times New Roman 12 or similar font), double-spaced, 3000 words in length (plus or minus 10%), with proper footnote and bibliography forms as established in Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, 7th edition.

These four learning components will provide a well-rounded learning experience for the thoughtful student.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Requirement One: Attend class regularly and participate in the discussions. No unexcused absences are permitted. Students who miss more than a total of three hours will be assigned additional work. While no grade is assigned for this Component, a favorable subjective evaluation may positively influence the student's final grade. Failure to do the preparatory reading will negatively influence the student's final grade by a least a full letter.

Requirement Two: All students will complete seven readings and seven Reflection Papers. These will be due at the beginning of the class period assigned. The papers will follow the attached "Reflection Paper Guide." Each Reflection Paper will be 750 words in length (plus or minus 10%), single-spaced, using Times New Roman 12 or similar font. Footnotes are not needed unless you reference additional sources. You may simply cite page numbers parenthetically within the body of your text. The Reflection Papers will count 70% of the final grade.

Requirement Three: All Students will complete a **Final Project** based on the selected monograph. The **Final Project** counts as 20% of the final grade. **The Final Project will be due the 12th of December.** It will be typewritten and double-spaced, 3000 words in length (plus or minus 10%). The student may use any resources at his or her disposal to complete the project. The student must receive approval for the Final Project topic by the conclusion of the fourth class.

Requirement Four: Each student will make a Seminar Presentation during the last few class periods (exact dates determined by enrollment). The topic of the presentation will be the same as that of the Final Project. The format of the presentation will be different from the written project and will be as follows: **(Part One)** The student will present and explain the main ideas and formative structures of a leading modern theologian; **(Part Two)** The student will critique that theologian using a biblical, theological, and historical grid (attached); **(Part Three)** The student will lead a classroom discussion with his/her peers to determine the effectiveness of the response and to consider other possible responses. The presentation will count for 10% of the grade.

IN SUMMARY, the Grade distribution is as follows:

- 70% from Reflection Papers
- 20% from Seminar Presentation
- 10% from Final Project

COURSE PROGRESSION:

Reading Assignment/Study Guide:

Introduction to the Course	
The background of Contemporary Theology	
Machen/Harnack	23 Feb Machen/Harnack completed
Theology in World Christianity	22 Mar Tennent completed
New Perspective and Federal Vision	5 Apr
Emerging/Emergent Church	19 Apr Pagitt/Jones & Dean compl'd
Barth revisionism	11 May Wook/Monograph completed
Student Seminar Presentations	TBD

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, HISTORICAL GRID For Analyzing Theologians

BIBLICAL:

- How does the theologian regard the text?
- What view of revelation/inspiration underlies the theologians work?
- Does he faithfully exegete the text?
- Is his interpretation influenced by any philosophical system?

THEOLOGICAL:

- How does this theologian's work square with the Vincentian formula: What has been believed in all times, in all places, by all people?
- How does this theologian's work square with the analogia fidei?
- Are there any novel or significant contributions by this theologian?
- How does this theologian measure up in terms of his own confessional tradition?
- How does he measure up in terms of your confessional tradition?

HISTORICAL:

- Where does this theologian fit in the development of modern theology?
- What is the context in which the theologian labored?
- How did this theologian seek to make his theology communicate to his culture?
- What theologians made the most impact on your theologian?
- What continuing effect does this theologian have on the Church today?

[SAMPLE FOOTNOTES](#) [Click Here](#)

[INTERNET RESOURCES](#) [Click Here](#)

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

Grading Scale:

100-95	A	83-80	C
94-93	A-	79-78	C-
92-91	B+	77-76	D+
90-88	B	75-72	D
87-86	B-	71-70	D-
85-84	C+	69-0	F

Attendance: Attend class regularly, complete the required reading, and **participate** in the opening dialogs. No absences are excused. However, you may miss three (3) hours of class without being required to do make-up work. I will not try to assess reasons for absences in order to grant excuses. You decide if you want to or need to miss a portion of the class. If you miss more than three (3) hours, you will be required to do extra work in the areas missed. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP TRACK OF YOUR ABSENCES AND CONSULT WITH ME IMMEDIATELY (before the missed class if possible) TO HAVE THE EXTRA WORK and "DUE DATE" ASSIGNED. All make-up work must be handed in by the Exam Day. You cannot complete the course without this being done. The "rule of thumb" for extra work is nine (9) hours of work for each three (3) hours class period missed. This is based on the idea that each class period requires three hours in class and six hours outside for fulfilling the work of the course.

STANDARDS FOR RESEARCH PAPERS:

- A.....No more than 4 misspellings or grammatical errors in total
Identified the most significant articles, books in bibliography
Used research materials expertly, leaving no unanswered questions
Thesis statement clear and proved
B/T/H Grid skillfully
- B.....No more than 2 misspellings or grammatical errors per page
Identified a number of important articles, books in bibliography
Used research material fairly, addressed most problem areas
Thesis statement clear and sustained
B/T/H Grid used properly
- C.....No more than 3 misspellings or grammatical errors per page
Used the minimum required number of bibliographical entries
Used research material adequately
Thesis statement not clear and/or not sustained
B/T/H Grid used acceptably
- D/F.....More than 3 misspellings or grammatical errors per page
Failed to use minimum number of bibliographical entries
Research poorly done

What thesis statement?
B/T/H Grid used poorly (B/T/H- What's that?)

KEY DATES FOR THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THIS COURSE:

23 February: Project/Seminary Topic
23 February: Machen Reflection Paper
22 March: Tennent Reflection Paper
5 April: Easter/Spring Break- No Class
19 April: Pagitt/Jones Reflection Paper
11 May: Wook Reflection Paper and Monograph Reflection Paper
TBD: Seminar Presentation
Last Day of Exam Week: Research Paper Due

ERSKINE SEMINARY POLICIES: Click Below

http://seminary.erskine.edu/content_policies/SeminaryPoliciesforETSSStudents.pdf

LATE WORK: Work turned in after the due date will be accepted, but you will not receive full credit.

REFLECTION PAPER GUIDE

A Reflection Paper provides the student an opportunity to interact with the text. This is not a formal research paper and you will not be expected to use any sources other than your required text. The Reflection Paper may address some or all of the following questions:

- 1) What is the general context out of which the theologian(s) writes? What is his/her philosophical orientation and/or view of history?
- 2) Does the theologian(s) articulate a particular view of revelation and/or inspiration? If so, what are the unique contributions of this theologian?
- 3) Does the theologian articulate a doctrine of God? If so, how does it compare to classical Trinitarian formulations?
- 4) How do(es) the theologian(s) address the Christological issues of the preexistence and deity of Christ, his humanity, his person? Does the theologian reflect an acceptance of, opposition to, or modification of, Chalcedonian Christology?
- 5) What do(es) the theologian(s) say about the nature of sin and salvation?
- 6) Do(es) the theologian(s) offer any unusual formulations of the doctrines of the Church, Sacraments, or Last Things.

You are not expected to write extensively and in great detail. You must, however, penetrate to the salient points, digest them, and express them in concise, cogent summaries. Furthermore, if a particular question is not germane to your reading, devote more effort to your other answers. For Pagitt/Jones and Wook, you may choose a particular essay to discuss or you may choose to deal with the text in its entirety, or a theme that permeates the text.

By all means critique your author(s), favorably and/or unfavorably; but- specify the reasons for your critique.

The Reflection paper should be no less than 750 words (plus or minus 10%), in Times New Roman 12 (or similar font), single spaced, and in proper form. Make use of Turabian, 7th edition, for any questions you might have regarding form. If you quote from the text, cite using parenthetical references (75) to indicate the page referenced. Should you use other sources (not required), use footnotes with proper Turabian format.

