



On-Campus Course Syllabus

THS 512 : L1

Prolegomena and Trinitarianism

Spring 2023

Class Information

Day and Time: Thursday 4:45–7:15

Room Number: E 201

Contact Information

Instructor Name: Dr. Ty Kieser

Instructor Email: tkieser@criswell.edu

Instructor Phone: (214) 818-1306

Instructor Office Hours: Tues 12–2 PM; Thurs 8:30–9:30; 11–12; Mon/Thurs 4:15-4:45

Sign up [here](#)

Course Description and Prerequisites

Provides advanced discussions to Prolegomena (including Bibliology), Theology Proper, Christology, and Pneumatology, defining the scriptural views and showing the arguments for them, refuting other views, and emphasizing the relevance of theology to the Christian life and witness. (Prerequisite: BIB 505)

Course Objectives

At the end of the course, the student should be able to:

1. Articulate a survey level understanding of the Christian doctrines covered in the class—including their biblical, historical, cultural, and theological components—with attention to the distinctives of the evangelical tradition.
2. Construct coherent dogmatic arguments that are rooted in primary texts and related to contemporary literature.
3. Apply technical dogmatic content toward discussions of its ecclesiological, doxological, and devotional significance.
4. Compose clear, coherent, and well supported responses to common theology questions around the topics addressed in class.

Required Textbooks

Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013. (9780801036439).

*If Spanish is your first/preferred language, the Spanish translation may be used for the class.

Sanders, Fred. *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything*. 2nd ed. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010. (9781433513152)

Course Requirements and Assignments

- 1) **Reading Log and Participation** (40%): For each module students will carefully read and take notes on the Erickson reading in preparation for a class discussion on those chapters. Before each class begins, students should submit their reading logs (8 pts each). See description below for more details. The professor has the right to deduct points from these reading logs for a lack of participation in discussions in class.
- 2) **Theological Issue Presentation and Paper** (30% total): Students will select one issue to present for the class on a day marked with ??????? in the calendar below (10 pts). The presentation should last about half of the class and facilitate discussion on the topic. While the mode of presentation is open (e.g., handout, PowerPoint, etc.), the discussion should attend to biblical texts, contemporary questions, historic contributions, and theological/pastoral significance. Two weeks after the presentation, a position paper of 2,500–3,000 words¹ is due arguing for a particular thesis on the question (20 pts). Included in the paper should be 5 key biblical texts, 5 relevant contemporary sources (≥ 1 source should be non-white/western/male), 5 relevant historic sources, and 5 sub-questions/aspects of the topic.
- 3) **Why the Trinity Matters** (15% total): This 1,500–2,000 word paper will address the question “why does the Trinity matter?” Students may further specify the question (e.g., “why does the Trinity matter to sanctification” or “... to Christians in heaven?”) if they indicate this in the title of the paper. Fred Sanders’s book ought to be engaged (e.g., agreement, disagreement, extension) throughout the paper. Grades will be based on (1) source engagement (i.e., Scripture, Sanders, and any other sources), (2) coherence and clarity, and (3) pastoral/theological sensitivity.
- 4) **Oral Exam** (15% total): At the end of the semester, students will sit for a 30-minute oral exam on several the topics covered in class. Grades will be based on biblical support (40%), theological facility (40% – e.g., breadth of historic knowledge, depth of related questions), and communication (20% – i.e., clarity, coherence, concision, charity). Throughout the 30 minutes, topics will be randomly selected for the student to discuss, the professor may interrupt with follow-up and/or clarifying questions before moving onto the next topic. See description and potential topics before for more details.

Class Attendance

Students are responsible for enrolling in courses for which they anticipate being able to attend every class session on the day and time appearing on course schedules, and then making every effort to do so. When unavoidable situations result in absence or tardiness, students are responsible for acquiring any information missed. Instructors are not obliged to allow students to make up missed work. Per their independent discretion,

¹ This does NOT include footnotes or bibliography. Hard word count requirements are +/- 10% — every percentage over/under 10% accrues a proportionate deduction (e.g., a paper that is 15% too long is penalized 5% of the paper grade).

individual instructors may determine how attendance affects students' ability to meet course learning objectives and whether attendance affects course grades.

Campus Closure

To ensure the health and safety of students and employees, college administrators may decide it is necessary on rare occasions to close the campus. Once this decision is announced, instructors will contact students to provide further details regarding the campus closure's impact on those courses. Students are responsible to watch for communication from their instructors and respond appropriately. (Unless otherwise specified by the instructor in this syllabus, this communication will be sent to the student's Criswell College e-mail account.)

In order to make progress toward the courses' objectives, instructors have the freedom during most campus closures to require students to participate in activities as alternatives to meeting on campus. An instructor may, for example, hold class remotely (through Zoom) at the scheduled time, provide a recording of a class or presentation for students to watch independently, or assign other activities that students are to accomplish before returning to campus. Students are responsible for accomplishing these alternative activities as well as any course requirements listed in this syllabus during the period of the campus closure. If, during the period of the campus closure, personal circumstances prohibit a student from accomplishing these alternative activities or course requirements and assignment listed in the syllabus during the campus closure, the student is responsible for communicating with the instructor as soon as possible. Instructors will not penalize students who do not have the means to accomplish the alternative activities during the period of the campus's closure and will work with students whose circumstances during the campus closure prohibited their timely completion of course requirements and assignments in the syllabus.

Grading Scale

A	93-100	4.0 grade points per semester hour
A-	90-92	3.7 grade points per semester hour
B+	87-89	3.3 grade points per semester hour
B	83-86	3.0 grade points per semester hour
B-	80-82	2.7 grade points per semester hour
C+	77-79	2.3 grade points per semester hour
C	73-76	2.0 grade points per semester hour
C-	70-72	1.7 grade points per semester hour
D+	67-69	1.3 grade points per semester hour
D	63-66	1.0 grade point per semester hour
D-	60-62	0.7 grade points per semester hour
F	0-59	0.0 grade points per semester hour

Incomplete Grades

Students requesting a grade of Incomplete (I) must understand that incomplete grades may be given only upon approval of the faculty member involved. An "I" may be assigned only when a student is currently passing a

course and in situations involving extended illness, serious injury, death in the family, or employment or government reassignment, not student neglect.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructors prior to the end of the semester, plus filing the appropriate completed and approved academic request form with the Registrar's Office. The "I" must be removed (by completing the remaining course requirements) no later than 60 calendar days after the close of the term or semester in which the grade was awarded, or the "I" will become an "F."

Academic Honesty

Absolute truth is an essential belief and basis of behavior for those who believe in a God who cannot lie and forbids falsehood. Academic honesty is the application of the principle of truth in the classroom setting. Academic honesty includes the basic premise that all work submitted by students must be their own and any ideas derived or copied from elsewhere must be carefully documented.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- cheating of any kind,
- submitting, without proper approval, work originally prepared by the student for another course,
- plagiarism, which is the submitting of work prepared by someone else as if it were his own, and
- failing to credit sources properly in written work.

Institutional Assessment

Material submitted by students in this course may be used for assessment of the college's academic programs. Since programmatic and institutional assessment is done without reference to specific students, the results of these assessments have no effect on a student's course grade or academic standing at the college. Before submitting a student's work for this type of assessment, the course instructor redacts the work to remove anything that identifies the student.

Institutional Email Policy

All official college email communications to students enrolled in this course will be sent exclusively to students' institutional email accounts. Students are expected to check their student email accounts regularly and to respond in an appropriate and timely manner to all communications from faculty and administrative departments.

Students are permitted to setup automatic forwarding of emails from their student email accounts to one or more personal email accounts. The student is responsible to setup and maintain email forwarding without assistance from college staff. If a student chooses to use this forwarding option, he/she will continue to be responsible for responding appropriately to all communications from faculty and administrative departments of the college. Criswell College bears no responsibility for the use of emails that have been forwarded from student email accounts to other email accounts.

Disabilities

Criswell College recognizes and supports the standards set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and similar state laws, which are designed to eliminate discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities. Criswell College is committed to making reasonable

accommodations for qualifying students, faculty, and employees with disabilities as required by applicable laws. For more information, please contact the Student Services Office.

Intellectual Property Rights

Unless otherwise specifically instructed in writing by the instructor, students must neither materially nor digitally reproduce materials from any course offered by Criswell College for or with the significant possibility of distribution.

Resources and Supports

Canvas and SONIS: Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based learning tool and SONIS for student data. Students needing assistance with Canvas should contact the Canvas Help Support line at (844) 358-6140. Tech support is available at this number, twenty-four hours a day. Students needing help with SONIS should contact the Campus Software Manager at studenttechsupport@criswell.edu.

Student Services: The Student Services Office exists to foster and encourage success in all areas of life—physical, intellectual, spiritual, social, and emotional. Students are encouraged to reach out for assistance by contacting the office at 214.818.1332 or studentservices@criswell.edu. The Student Services Office also works with local counseling centers to ensure that every student has access to helpful mental health resources. More information is located on the college website at [Criswell College Mental Health Resources](#), and students may contact the Director of Student Services if they have any questions.

Wallace Library: Students can access academic resources and obtain research assistance by contacting or visiting the Wallace Library, which is located on campus. For more information, email the Wallace Library at library@criswell.edu. Offsite login information is available in Canvas in the “Criswell Student Training Course” under “Library Information.”

Tutoring Center: Students are encouraged to consult with tutors to improve and enhance their skills and confidence in any subject matter taught at the college. Tutors have been recommended by the faculty to ensure that the tutor(s) are qualified to serve the student body. Every tutor brings experience and expertise in an effort to provide the proper resources for the subject matter at hand. To consult with a tutor, students can visit the Tutoring Center located on the second floor in room E203, or schedule an appointment by emailing tutoringcenter@criswell.edu or by calling 214.818.1373.

Course Outline/Calendar

1) The Task of Theology

Jan 19th – Issue: Why Study Theology

Jan 26th – Survey: Task of Theology

Read: Erickson, 1–117

Assignment: Reading Log #1 (submitted before class begins)

2) Revelation

Feb 2nd – Survey: Revelation

Read: Erickson, 121–229

Assignment: Reading Log #2 (submitted before class begins)

Feb 9th – Issue: Inerrancy

Read: Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

Feb 16th – Issue: ????????

Read: ≈20 pages of reading selected by the student presenting

Assignment: ≥ One student will select and present a related theological topic, such as:

Scripture’s Trustworthiness
Natural Theology
Philosophy and Theology
Role of metaphysics in
theology
Canonization

Perspicuity of Scripture
Sufficiency of Scripture
Theological language
Theological knowledge
Old Testament and NT
Revelation and Christology

Scripture and tradition
Cultural and Scripture
Authority of Scripture
Etc...

3) Doctrine of God

Feb 23rd – Survey: Theology Proper

Read: Erickson, 233–313

Assignment: Reading Log #3 (submitted before class begins)

March 2nd – Issue: Indivisible Operation

Read: Claunch, “What God Hath Done Together” (*JETS* 56, 781–800) [pdf]

March 9th – Issue: Divine Simplicity

Read: Sanders, *Deep Things of God*

Assignment: Why the Trinity Matters (due March 30th at 11:59 PM)

March 16th – Spring Break

March 23rd – Issue: ????????

Read: ≈20 pages of reading selected by the student presenting

Assignment: ≥ One student will select and present a related theological topic, such as:

Immutability
Impassibility
The Trinity as exemplar
Analogies for the Trinity

Social vs Latin
Trinitarianism
Eternal generation
Trinity and Creation

Divine procession/missions
Divine attributes
Fatherhood of God
Etc...

4) Christology

March 30th – Survey: Christology

Read: Erickson, 603–691

Assignment: Reading Log #4 (submitted before class begins)

April 6th – Issue: Communication of Properties

Read: Sanders, “Introduction to Christology” [pdf]

April 13th – Issue: ??????

Read: ≈20 pages of reading selected by the student presenting

Assignment: ≥ One student will select and present a related theological topic, such as:

Historical Jesus
Ascension
Resurrection
Life of Christ

Maleness of Christ
Ethnicity/race and Jesus
Jesus in the Old Testament
Kenoticism

Threefold office
Twofold state
Dyothelitism
Etc...

5) Pneumatology

April 20th – Survey: Pneumatology

Read: Erickson, 771–821

Assignment: Reading Log #5 (submitted before class begins)

April 27th – Issue: Filioque

Read: Levering, “The Holy Spirit and the *Filioque*” [pdf]

May 4th – Issue: ??????

Read: ≈20 pages of reading selected by the student presenting

Assignment: ≥ One student will select and present a related theological topic, such as:

Gender and God
Filioque

Spirit and culture
Spirit and Jesus

Spirit and mission
Spirit and Church

Spirit and new birth
Prayer and the Holy Spirit
Spirit as love and gift

The forgottenness of the
Holy Spirit
Etc...

Final

May 11th – Final Meeting

Assignment: Oral Exam

Assignment: Theological Issue Paper (due May 13th at 11:59 PM)

Reading Log Details

These reading logs are designed to be helpful to you as students, for the semester and for the rest of your life. Therefore, there is no prescribed method/medium (i.e., word document, scratch paper, etc.) so long as you can submit them (or a scan of them) digitally. The format/structure is also largely up to you. However, there must be (minimally) three sections—nb. a good log will have additional notes beyond these sections.

Required sections for every chapter:

3-5 key **biblical verses** (written out, with references)

3-5 **key terms** defined, in your own words

1-2 **Theological arguments**, in your own

3-5 **questions**

Questions can be of a variety of different kinds:

- Clarifying questions: “When the Erickson says “X,”² does he mean Y or Z?”
 - Evaluation questions: “If the book says “X,” but Scripture says Y, is X really true?”
 - *Interpretation questions*: “If X is true, then how should we read and understand Y biblical text?”
 - Extension questions: “If X is true, then is Y also true?”
 - Applications questions: “If it’s true that X, then does that mean the church should do Y”
- Notice that the above questions are (A) engaged with the readings and (B) engaged with your own knowledge. Minimally, they are not “lazy” questions. For example, “What does X mean?” and “is X true” are lazy questions. But the above are not lazy because they engage the reading and your own knowledge.

Other sections you might include in some/all chapters

Your answer to questions at the front of each chapter

Important historical figures/movements and their opinion

Important theological arguments

Devotional/practical/ministerial value of an idea

² X is simply a variable (like in algebra), so that it might refer to any idea/term/argument in the reading.

Your disagreements with the author

Oral Exam Options

Things to consider when formulating your answer:

- Relevant biblical texts
- Options among theologians
- Historic positions/contributors
- Objections
- Your opinion
- Implications

A) Task of Theology

- 1) What is theology?
- 2) What is systematic theology and how does it relate to other kinds of theology?
- 3) Why should we study theology?
- 4) Can we claim that doctrines are true?
- 5) How does the Bible relate to theology?
- 6) What is the process of doing theology?
- 7) How does culture influence the task of theology?
- 8) How should theology be contextualized?
- 9) What is biblical criticism?
- 10) How should we understand theological language?

B) Revelation

- 1) What is general revelation and why does it matter?
- 2) Ought we do “natural theology?”
- 3) Is special revelation propositional?
- 4) How should we understand the process of inspiration?
- 5) What is the extent of the inspiration of Scripture?
- 6) What is inerrancy and why does it matter?
- 7) What is infallibility and why does it matter?
- 8) What is illumination and why does it matter?
- 9) What does it mean to call Scripture “authoritative” and why does it matter?
- 10) How does the authority of Scripture relate to the tradition?

C) Doctrine of God

- 1) How should we classify divine attributes?
- 2) What does it mean to call God “infinite?”
- 3) What does it mean to call God “unchanging?”
- 4) How should we understand God’s love and justice?
- 5) What is divine simplicity and why does it matter?

- 6) What does it mean to call God “immanent” and why does it matter?
- 7) What does it mean to call God “transcendent” and why does it matter?
- 8) How does Scripture support the doctrine of the Trinity?
- 9) How has the church historically understood the doctrine of the Trinity?
- 10) How do the three divine persons relate in their actions?

D) Christology

- 1) How does history relate to Christology?
- 2) How does Scripture support the deity of Christ?
- 3) How does Scripture support the humanity of Christ?
- 4) Is calling Jesus fully God and fully human a contradiction? Why/why not?
- 5) Why does it matter that Christ is human and divine?
- 6) How did the church understand Christ as divine and human in the first 800 years?
- 7) What developments/disagreements have happened over the person of Christ in the last 200 years?
- 8) What is kenoticism and why does it matter?
- 9) Was Jesus sinless and why does it matter?
- 10) What is the virgin birth and why does it matter?

E) Pneumatology

- 1) Is the Holy Spirit divine and why does it matter?
- 2) Is the Holy Spirit a person and why does it matter?
- 3) How did the Holy Spirit work in the Old Testament?
- 4) How does the Holy Spirit work in the initiation of the Christian life?
- 5) How does the Holy Spirit work in the ongoing life of believers?
- 6) What is the *filioque*, is it true, and why does your answer matter?
- 7) How did Jesus relate to the Holy Spirit?
- 8) Are miraculous gifts for today?
- 9) How should we understand spiritual gifts?
- 10) How should we understand the Spirit and other religions/culture?

Principles of Good Seminar Discussions

Principle of Charity

Charitably relate to each other: Loving the Lord and your neighbor is our ultimate goal. In 10 years you might not remember the content of these discussions, but you might remember how others treated you.

Charitably disagree and question: Civil disagreement is a good thing when done charitably. It helps us understand each other and the topic. However, when you think you disagree, first seek to understand. If someone says something, consider it in the best possible light.

Phrases to use: Any genuine compliment. “When you say _____, do you mean _____, or _____, or something else?”

Principle of Curiosity

Curiously engage the topic: Seek to understand. Assume that we have something to learn from this discussion.

Curiously seek truth: This is a journey of intellectual formation toward truth, not merely an intellectual exercise.

Phrases to use: "Help me understand _____. " "How does _____ work with the author's earlier claim to _____?"

Principle of Collaboration

Collaboratively speak: Building off of what has come before and not interjecting clever thoughts 30 minutes after we moved on from the topic.

Collaboratively include: Every one is included in the conversation. It is not a two-person, dialogue, series of monologs, or a sustained Q & A with the professor.

Collaboratively listen: Listen well to classmates. Do not interrupt.

Phrases to use: "Like Sue said, _____. I might add, _____ for further support." "Sue, what do you think about adding _____ to your list?"

Principle of Courage

Courageously speak up: Some of us need the courage to share our opinion with others. Please do! We will all benefit when you do.

Courageously stake a claim: Make the strongest defensible claim you can. It's easier to describe than evaluate, but be courageous. Make a claim and defend it (always in accordance with the previous principles.).

Courageously boast in weakness (see 2 Cor 12): Admit we do not know everything. Admit we are wrong.

Phrases to use: "I do not know." "I was wrong about _____." "I think _____ is true."

Characteristics of a Good Paper

Sharp: A good paper is clear, nuanced, and well organized. It has an identifiable thesis that is supported throughout the paper. Each of the sections work well together. Papers that are not clear, evidence thinking that is not clear. So, strive to write clearly.

Helpful exercise: Print a draft of your paper, highlight the main thesis and the main claims of each section [and if you cannot find them, write them]. Revise these repeatedly. Ask yourself how the highlighted texts relate; ask yourself if the unhighlighted text supports the highlighted text.

Supported: A good paper is well supported with evidence from the primary source. The evidence is “support” for the author’s thesis, so it should be summarized well and not over-quoted. A well-supported paper might “play defense” as well as offense and consider potential objections to its claims.

Helpful exercise: Consider what claims are “necessary” for your project to “work” and how they flow together. If you have material that is not necessary, cut it. If you cannot think of what is needed to make it “work,” then you probably have a topic not a thesis.

Significant: A good paper is significant for theological and devotional thought. While your paper does not need to “contribute” to academic scholarship, a good thesis is not obvious to everyone nor agreed to by everyone. For example, saying, “justification and sanctification are related” is not very significant (because few dispute that claim), but saying that “justification and sanctification are only related insofar as they are both effects of union with Christ” is significant—because it disagrees with many people who more closely align the two doctrines. Further, the implications of the thesis should be attended to and made clear to some degree.

Helpful exercise: Consider the alternatives to your theses. Are those alternatives commonly held by theologians/church-people? Are they interesting? If you cannot think of alternatives, or they are uninteresting, keep revising your thesis.