



Online Course Syllabus
THS 660 L1
Patristic, Medieval, & Reformation Theology
Spring 2024

Contact Information

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Sign up [here](#)

Course Description and Prerequisites

A survey of the development of Christian theology from the end of the Apostolic Period through the Reformation Period. Special emphasis is placed on the historical and theological movements and the theologians of the period.

Course Objectives

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

1. Identify key figures, events, ideas, and movements pertaining to the Christian church between the apostolic era and the Reformation
2. Narrate the development of theological thought from the apostolic era to the end of the Reformation with a sense of unity and cohesion.
3. Charitably analyze theological readings from the Christian tradition and contemporary scholarship.
4. Posit historical and theological claims with nuance, clarity, charity, and coherence.

Required Textbooks

Athanasius. *On the Incarnation*. Popular Patristics 44b. Translated by John Behr. New York: St Vladimirs Seminary Press, 2012. (ISBN: 9780881414097)

Anselm, *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*. Oxford World's Classics. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008 (ISBN: 9780199540082).

Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian, 1520*. The Annotated Luther Study Edition. Edited by Timothy J. Wengert. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016 (ISBN: 9781506413518).

Recommended Reading

Olson, Roger E. *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1999. ISBN 9780830815050.

Kelly, J.N.D. *Early Christian Doctrines*. Rev. ed. New York: HarperCollins, 1978.

Nieuwenhove, Rik Van. *An Introduction to Medieval Theology*. 2nd ed. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

McGrath, Alister. *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*. 4th ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2012.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Theses and Participation (40%; about 2.85 pts/week): Our class discussions will be guided by theses submitted by every student. Engaging with the readings, these theses are intended to aid your understanding of the text and to bring clarity and organization to our discussion of that text. We will read at least one primary text, sometimes portions of three or four.

Students should submit 2–3 theses total (≈150–300 words total) based on the readings to Canvas by 11:59 PM on Tuesday (with the exception of the 1st week, when no theses graded are due). See below for greater specification and some examples.

Thesis Videos (due Tuesday): After typing your theses in written form on Canvas, you'll include a video where you defend one of your theses, its rationale and significance — i.e., don't read your explanation, talk about it.

Response Videos (Wednesday–Sunday): Please watch other students' videos and respond to at least two videos/thesis with videos (1+ due Thursday at 11:59 PM; 1+ due Sunday night at 11:59 PM). Your response videos should be charitable, clarifying, inquisitive, and continue to engage with the text. If you notice that another student's thesis connects to your discussion, use the "@name" to tag them and include them in your thread.

Total Video Engagement: Your cumulative thesis-discussion video engagement (watched and responded to) should be 60 minutes per week. In addition to your own contributions, I would encourage you to watch several threads that you're not involved in and chime in. When you watch a thesis or thread that you don't post a video in response to, please "like" it or submit a quick text response (e.g., "I appreciated your observation that Kant did _____").

Exams (25% total; 12.5 pts each): There will be an exam covering each half of the semester, addressing the lecture and reading content. The format and specific questions will be explained below. There are two ways of taking each exam. You can choose option A for both Exam #1 and Exam #2; Or option B for both, or one method for Exam #1 and the other method for Exam #2.

Option A: Oral Exam: On this format you will prepare for multiple topics and then be examined on randomly selected topics in a conversation. While you could do these on your own as a monologue response, the best oral exam will function more like a dialogue and will be ready for follow up questions from the professor. Several tips and the topics are listed below.

Option B: Presentation: On this format, you could prepare a recorded presentation that tells a unified story over that portion of the semester. The format of the presentation is up to your creative abilities, but there are specific topics that should be covered below.

Paper (30% total; 1 + 4 + 25 pts): This 3,000–4,000 word paper¹ will engage the themes, figures, and content of the class. You will submit an outline of the paper (1%), detailing (A) the focus/research question of your paper, (B) an outline of your paper with headings and subheadings, (C) 3 additional primary sources, (D) 3 secondary sources, and (E) a tentative thesis of the paper and of each section. Then you will present your findings during the last week for 7–10 minutes (4%). The paper (25%) will be submitted on Canvas in Word or PDF format. There are two ways to fulfill this assignment:

Optional: You can submit your paper early to receive feedback and a preliminary grade. If you are happy with your preliminary grade, you don't need to submit another draft. If, however, you make revisions based on the feedback, your grade will improve (n.b., your grade cannot get worse).

Option A: Theological Dialogue Paper: This paper compares and contrasts two theologians within modern/postmodern theology and places them in dialogue — written like a script, but with footnotes. The paper will contain two sections: (1) a dialogue between your two figures (≈3,000+ words) and then (2) your own evaluation of the question at hand (≈1,00 words).

Option B: Research Paper: Entering into a contemporary conversation regarding one of the figures/topics introduced in the class, your paper should make a nuanced and well-supported claim that engages the sources (esp. primary sources) carefully.

Book Review (5% total): This is a 1,000-word book review of a recent (i.e., last 10 years) book that treats a figure or movement within this time period (roughly, the 1st to the 17th centuries).² About 750 words should be dedicated to a close summary and synthesis of the book; while about 250 words should be evaluation. This *can be* (but does not need to be) a book that is related to your paper. However, your book must be approved by the professor.

Online Course Information

In an online course at Criswell College:

1. Instructors and all students enrolled in that course meet using video-conferencing technology at scheduled class times through the course of a semester or term in order to meet 25–30% of the direct faculty instruction required by the college's Credit Hour policy.
2. The remaining direct faculty instruction is delivered using other means such as:
 - Lectures/instruction for students to watch asynchronously
 - Online content modules in which instructor provides feedback to student work
 - Tests/quizzes on which instructor provides feedback
 - Discussion boards on which instructor provides feedback

¹ This does NOT include footnotes or bibliography. Hard word-count requirements are +/- 10% of the limits listed and 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).

² Examples of popular recent books that could work would include, Beth Allison Barr, *The Making of Biblical Womanhood How the Subjugation of Women Became Gospel Truth* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2021); Gavin Ortlund, *Retrieving Augustine's Doctrine of Creation: Ancient Wisdom for Current Controversy* (Grand Rapids: IVP Academic, 2020).

Canvas: Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based learning tool to host/deliver all instructional materials, discussions, assessments, files, and other peripheral tools and applications that support teaching and learning. In online courses at Criswell College, instructors design and use Canvas to:

- organize course content on a module basis using organizational tools within Canvas,
- control the timing of course requirements through module control or assignment due dates to ensure that students are engaged for the full length of the semester or term,
- accept assignments from students only inside the Canvas course (emailed assignments are not acceptable),
- provide written feedback on assignments only within Canvas, preferably through Speedgrader,
- use the Announcement or e-mail feature in Canvas to communicate to the students rather than by broadcasting to a class email listserv outside of Canvas.

Zoom in Canvas is used for all synchronous class sessions.

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.

Course/Classroom Policies and Information

Late work: For exams and papers, your grade will be reduced by 10% for each calendar day late. However, any missed assignment may be submitted end of the semester for up to 50% credit. Late work will not receive any feedback beyond a rubric grade.

Reading: I have a “5 hour rule,” whereby if you have not completed the weekly reading in 5 hours (of very focused attention), you are permitted to put the book down and “be done.” This is intended to prevent you from being overworked and to train you in reading wisely. You will have to learn how to skim certain sections, how to read other sections very carefully, and how to tell the difference. I did some of this work for you by placing some chapters of whole texts in bold and/or noting especially significant chapters.

Attendance

Students are responsible for enrolling in courses for which they (1) anticipate being able to attend every on-campus class session on the day and time appearing on course schedules, or (2) participating in academically related activities as identified in online-course schedules including synchronous class sessions conducted remotely by video, and then making every effort to do so. When unavoidable situations result in absence or tardiness, students are responsible for acquiring any missed information. Professors are not obliged to allow students to make up missed work. Per their independent discretion, individual professors may determine how attendance affects students’ ability to meet course learning objectives and whether attendance affects course grades. Professors apprise students of such information in course syllabi.

Students receiving grants, loans, or scholarships must meet specified requirements of various departments at the college and should consult relevant sections of the *Academic Catalog*. To ensure such funds will not be forfeited, students are responsible for contacting the proper departments to ascertain any specific course participation requirements and consequences of not meeting such requirements. Students receiving grants, loans, or scholarships should consult the Financial Aid office.

While Criswell College is a non-attendance taking institution, it nevertheless must demonstrate that students begin their courses in order to comply with Federal Aid regulations. Accordingly, students must participate in academically related activities during census periods. Failure to meet this requirement will result in students being administratively dropped from courses.

Academically related activity is defined as any course-related activity that may be used as evidence of attendance. Examples include:

- physical presence in a classroom during a class session with the instructor present,
- participation in a synchronous remote video class session with the instructor present,
- submission of an academic assignment, quiz, or exam,
- participation in an interactive tutorial or computer-assisted instruction,
- participation in a study group or discussion board that is assigned by the instructor,
- documentation showing that the student and a faculty member corresponded about the academic subject of the course.

NOTE: Logging into a Canvas course alone and logging into a Synchronous Online class session without active participation or with the camera off are not considered attendance.

NOTE: A census period begins on the first day of a semester/term and runs through the end of the last day to drop courses. During the census period, attendance data is collected in order to demonstrate compliance with Federal Aid regulations. There is no census period for winter terms since there is no last day to drop courses.

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.

Research and Writing Standards

The default writing style for written assignments in Criswell College Courses is the latest edition of *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations* by Kate Turabian. However, instructors are free to require alternative writing styles in their courses. These styles include but are not limited to the American Psychological Association (APA), Chicago Manual of Style, Modern Language Association (MLA), and Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) writing guides.

Resources and Support

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 can be found 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 schedule an appointment through Calendly (<https://calendly.com/criswell-tutoringcenter>) or by visiting the Tutoring Center located on the second floor in room E203. For questions, call 214.818.1373 or email at tutoringcenter@criswell.edu.

Course Outline/Calendar

Week of January 15th — Introduction

Watch: Vides 1.1–3

Assignment: Theses

Module 1) Ante-Nicene Fathers

Week of January 22nd — Creation — First Two Centuries

Watch: Videos 2.1–3

Read: Didache [\[link\]](#)

Read: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book 4: 462–525 (PDF pgs. 1202–1341) [\[link\]](#)

Read: Irenaeus, On Apostolic Preaching, §1–21 [\[link\]](#)

Assignment: Theses and responses

Week of January 29th — Scripture and Tradition — 3rd Century Fathers

Watch: Videos 3.1–3

Read: Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Church*, 421–29 [\[link\]](#)

Read: Tertullian, *Prescription Against Heretics*, 243–265 (PDF pgs. 547–607) [\[link\]](#)

Read: Clement, *Stromata*, 1:5–6, 9, 19–21 (ANF 2:305–8, 309–10, 321–35; PDF pgs. 675ff) [\[link\]](#)

Read: Origen, *De Principiis*, 349–73 [\[link\]](#)

Read: Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* [\[link\]](#) (§1-18)

Assignment: Theses and responses

Module 2) Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers

Week of February 5th — Deity of the Son and Spirit — Nicaea and Constantinople I

Watch: Videos 4.1–3

Read: Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (including Lewis’s preface)

Read: Nicene Creed [\[link\]](#)

Assignment: Theses — you need NOT post a video or responses for this week since it will be discussed synchronously next week

Week of February 12th — Humanity of the Son — Ephesus, Chalcedon, and Constantinople II & III

Watch: Videos 5.1–3

Read: Cyril’s Letters to Nestorius and Anathemas, NPNF² 14:197–98; 201–18 (PDF pgs. 408ff) [\[link\]](#)

Read: Definition of Chalcedon [\[link\]](#)

Read: Leo’s *Tome*, NPNF² 14:254–58 [\[link\]](#)

Read: Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theological Orations*, XXIX–XXX (NPNF² 7:301–18) [\[link\]](#)

Read: Constantinople III: Definition of Faith (NPNF² 14:254–58) [\[link\]](#)

Read: John of Damascus, *Orthodox Faith*, Book III, Chs 13–15 (NPNF² 9:57–64) [\[link\]](#)

Read: Cyril, *Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to John* (chs. 1–3) [\[link\]](#)

Assignment: Theses — you need NOT post a video or responses for this week since it will be discussed synchronously

Week of February 19th — Graciousness of God — Augustine

Watch: Videos 6.1–3

Read: Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 8 (NPNF¹ 1:116–29; PDF pgs. 281–310) [\[link\]](#)

Read: Augustine, *City of God*, Books 13–14 (NPNF¹ 2:245–83; PDF pgs. 606–90) [\[link\]](#)

Read: Augustine, *Nature and Grace*, Chs 21–39 [\[link\]](#)

Assignment: Theses and responses

Assignment: Book Review Selection (due by February 19th at 11:59 PM)

Module 3) Early Medieval Church

Week of February 26th — Schism & Knowledge of God — Early Medieval Church

Watch: Videos 7.1–3

Read: Cassian, *On the Protection of God*, Chs 6–13 (NPNF² 11:424–30) [\[link\]](#)

Read: Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitory*, Ch 2 (NPNF² 11:132) [\[link\]](#)

Read: John of Damascus, *On Holy Images*, 1–31 [\[link\]](#)

Read: Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Rule*, Part 2 (NPNF² 12:9–23) [\[link\]](#)

Read: Lombard, *Sentences* [PDF]

Read: Palamas, *The Triads* [PDF]

Assignment: Theses and responses

Week of March 4th — Catch Up Week

Exam #1: Mid-Term (due March 8th at 11:59 PM) [\[link\]](#)

Assignment: Book Review (due March 8th at 11:59 PM)

Commented [TK1]: Add book selection

Week of March 11th — Spring Break

Module 4) High Medieval Theology

Week of March 18th — Atonement — Scholasticism Introduced

Watch: Videos 8.1–2

Read: Anselm, “Why God Became Man,” in *Major Works*, 260–355.

Read: Anselm, “Proslogion,” §2–18 in *Major Works*, 87–98

Assignment: Theses — you need NOT post a video or responses for this week since it will be discussed synchronously next week

Week of March 25th — Virtue — Aquinas and Proto-Reform

Watch: Videos 9.1–3

Read: Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, Q. 50–52, 55, 61–63, 65–67, 71–73 [\[link\]](#)

Read: Julian of Norwich, *Revelation of Divine Love*, Chs 1–5, 58–59 (PDF pgs. 9–19; 130–35) [\[link\]](#)

Read: Wyclif, *On the Pastoral Office*, 32–38, 47–51 [PDF]

Read: Aquinas, *Commentary on John*, (Lectures 8–10) [\[link\]](#)

Assignment: Theses — you need NOT post a video or responses for this week since it will be discussed synchronously

Module 5) Reformation(s)

Week of April 1st — Justification — Reformation in Germany

Read: Luther, *Freedom of a Christian*, 467–538

Read: Luther, *95 Theses*, 13–46 [PDF]

Read: Luther, “What to Look For and Expect in the Gospels” [link]

Assignment: Theses and responses

Assignment: Book Review Selection (due by the end of class)

Assignment: Paper outline (due April 7th at 11:59 PM)

Week of April 8th — Union with Christ — Swiss and French Reformation

Read: Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I.i, I.xi, II.xv–xvi (37–39, 90–103, 425–52) [link]

Read: Marburg Colloquy, 71–107 [PDF]

Read: Zell, “The Miserere Psalm Meditated, Prayed, and Paraphrased” [PDF]

Read: Calvin, *Commentary on Ephesians*, 1:1–6 [link]

Assignment: Theses — you need NOT post a video or responses for this week since it will be discussed synchronously next week

April 15th — Commitment (and Compromise?) — Anabaptist and English Reformation

Read: 39 articles, 487–514 [link]

Read: Schleithem Confession of Faith, 247–53 [PDF]

Read: Simons, *Foundation and Plain Instruction*, 12–39 (PDF pgs. 21–54) [link]

Read: Simons, *Scriptural Explanation of Excommunication*, 122–37 [link]

Read: Hooker, vol 1: 332–336 [PDF pgs. 459–464] [link]

Read: Hooker, Vol 2:30–36, 381–427 [PDF pgs. 52–58; 403–449] [link]

Read: Hubmaier, *Concerning Heretics and Those that Burn Them* [PDF]

Assignment: Theses — you need NOT post a video or responses for this week since it will be discussed synchronously

Assignment: Optional early paper submission (due April 19th at 11:59 PM)

April 22nd — Purgation, Justification, and Contemplation — Catholic Reformation, Mysticism, and Jansenism

Read: Cajetan, “Faith and Works” [PDF]

Read: Trent, Session 4 (pp. 17–21), Session 6 (pp. 30–49), Session 7 (pp. 53–58) [link]

Read: Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle* [PDF]

Read: Pascal, *Pensées* [PDF]

Assignment: Theses and responses

Module 6) Post-Reformation

Week of April 29th — Regeneration & Sanctification — Reformed and Remonstrant; Introducing Puritanism, Pietism, and Methodism

Read: Five Articles of the Remonstrants, 545–49 [\[link\]](#)

Read: Canons of Dort, 581–97 [\[link\]](#)

Read: Herbert, The Temple [pdf]

Read: Spener, *Pia Desideria* [pdf]

Read: Wesley, “Free Grace” [pdf]

Read: Wesley, “The Scripture Way of Salvation” [\[link\]](#)

Assignment: Theses and responses

Week of May 6th

Synchronous Meeting

Assignment: Presentation of Paper in class

Assignment: Exam #2 (completed by May 9th at 11:59 PM) — If doing a “live” oral exam, is the student’s responsibility to schedule a time to meet with the professor for this at least 5 days in advance. First come, first serve.

Assignment: Paper (due May 9th at 11:59 PM)

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.

Theses Details

Genres of Theses

1. Explication: Provide clarity of interpretation and/or synthesis of a particular theme/claim in the reading. The goal here is the bring clarity to our understanding of the text. Ask: “What exactly does this mean?” “Can I give an analogy?”
2. Evaluation: Make a judgement on the truthfulness/coherence/biblical-rootedness/historical-precedence of a claim. Ask yourself: “Is _____ true?” “How does _____ relate to Scripture?”
3. Extension: Illustrate the potential applied value a claim in relation to another discussion or context. Ask: “How does this apply to my life?” “If _____ is true, what does it mean for X topic?”
4. Enquiry: Ask a pointed question that seeks to find clarity, coherence, or significance in the text. Ask: “What, specifically, am I confused about and why?”

Example theses on John 1

[Explication – main claim in bold, support follows] **The language of “Word of God” connects the doctrine of revelation in John 1 and the filial theme of “sonship,” reinforcing the intimate relationship of the Word and God and thereby the validity of Jesus’ revelation of the Father.** Even when John is addressing the theme of light (likely indicating revelation), he moves to an articulation of soteriological adoption (1:12) that “he gives” (v. 12c) when they “receive him” (v. 12a)—foreshadowing the adoption of sons and daughters in the Son that is flushed out in Ephesians 1. Second, again in the context of the revelation of glory that is seen by the people (v. 14b) and that brings truth, John describes Christ as the “only Son from the Father.” Here, the intimacy of the Father and Son recalls the intimacy of the “Word” and “God” in 1:1. Finally, the one who makes the invisible God “known” is the one “at the Father’s side” and (some manuscripts say) “the only Son.”

[Evaluation] **The Johannine prologue, and whole gospel, attend to the humanity of Christ in continuity with the synoptic gospels,** even though John is often perceived to be focused on the exalted status of Jesus in tension with the low-christological claims of the synoptics. In the prologue, Jesus bears human flesh (1:14), he is born in time (1:15), and he is announced by John as the sacrificial lamb (1:29). Throughout the gospel Jesus does ordinary human things: does the will of the Father (6:38), asks for a drink (4:6-7), thirsts (19:28). He also shares in human emotional experiences: he weeps (11:35); feels sorrow (11:33–35), and his soul is troubled (13:21). This is in continuity with, not contrast to, the presentations of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

[Extension] **Christ’s accurate revelation of God on the basis of his intimate relationship with the Father, as testified to in John 1, addresses and corrects the frequent insecurity with the Father’s love for many of us**

modern Christians. Many modern Christians reflect the sentiment, “Jesus loves me, but God I’m not so sure about.” However, the gospel of John and the prologue in particular articulate the intimacy of Christ’s relationship with the Father in order to express the accuracy of his revelation of God. John 14:9 expresses Jesus as the image of the Father to the degree that if we have seen Jesus, we have seen the Father. Likewise, John 1:18 says that “no one has seen God” yet Jesus has “made him known.” As such, the character and action of Jesus reflect of the character and action of the Father. We need not be unsure about the Father’s love or relationship to us because we know of Jesus’ love and relationship toward us.

[Enquiry] **Does the conjunction of verse 18a (“no one has ever seen God”) and verse 1c (“the Word was God”) signal a “contradictory Christology,” such that our human reasoning about the hypostatic union necessarily results in an antinomy?** If the Word is *homoousia* with the Father (whom no one has seen, nor could see), then how can the Word make God known (1:18d)? You might say, “he make him known in his visible humanity (see 1 John 1),” yet on such an account the Word would seemingly only be revealing that which is expressible in human form and not the “eternal, immortal, invisible” God (1 Tim 1:17).

Other examples might include a comparison of a quote in the reading with a passage of Scripture (e.g., “Augustine’s account of _____ might be considered a reflection on X biblical text”), the provision of an illustrative analogy (e.g., “Augustine’s account of _____ might be illustrated by Y analogy”).

Theses Rubric

Theses will be graded on their attention to the text, clarity of the claim, and evidence provided in its defense (understanding the limitation of space/words). See the rubric in Canvas. Most basically, a sub-par thesis is one that could have been written without reading the text, a good thesis reflects a careful reading of the text, and a superior thesis shows close engagement with the text and incisive reflection, causing us all to think and to *look at the text*.

Exam Instructions

You will have two options for taking the exams. These exams are largely based on lecture content but the readings can/should be included.

Oral Exam [Recommended; especially, for MATBS Students]³

In this discussion with the professor, you will address each category (e.g., “A”) for 5 minutes. A 6-sided die will be rolled, and the number rolled will indicate which topic you must address for that time. If you cannot fill the 5 minutes with one topic, you may roll the die again and then answer that corresponding number within that same category question. After the first 5 minutes, you will move onto the next category. Your grade will be based on your level of (1) detail/specificity and (2) coherence of thought [3 pts/category; + a .5 point bonus for the courage of taking an oral exam]. You ARE allowed a single page (single-sided) of notes and any/all your

³ My reason for recommending the oral exam is: (1) it forces you to prepare broadly, (2) it focuses on the “big ticket items” in each topics, (3) students use their own words and their own thought, (4) the mode of deliver is more likely relatable to “real life” use of these topics—i.e., you’re more likely to use Kant in a conversation than give a lecture or take another quiz on Kant, (5) an oral exam is medium stakes stress—high enough so that you are committed to preparing and focused, but no so stressful that it should prevent you from doing well.

books, but the best oral exam will function more like a dialogue and will be ready for follow up questions from the professor.

As you consider the topic, think about:

Theological content:

- What did they say about the topic?
- Can you give examples of this from their thought? — nb. Reading brief quotes is acceptable/encouraged, and if done well, could significantly support your response.
- What elements of their thought influenced their conclusions on this topic (e.g., what previous commitments did they bring to the discussions, what biblical text were they emphasizing, etc)?
- What follows from their claims on this topic (e.g., if it's true, what does it mean for who God is)?

Historical context:

- What events lead to the solidification of their thought on this topic?
- What is unique to this theologian on this topic? Why?
- Whom were they disagreeing with on this topic?
- What significance does this theologian on this topic have today?

Presentation: Me and Modern Theology

If you choose not to do the oral exams, you can record a 30–40 minute presentation of the story of modern theology and its significance. This can be a recording of you in a classroom, in front of your computer, sharing a Power-Point, or whatever creative method you want to use. Your story should be unified as a single story with a single point, and it should communicate the significance of WHY this story matters to you and the church today.

Your presentation should cover each of the four categories and should mention at least three of the topics within each category (e.g., A.1, A.2, A.4). Your grade will be based on (1) the details of each section [1 pt/category], (2) coherence of each section [1 pt/category], (3) clarity and coherence of the whole narrative [2.5 points], (4) presentation and communication [2 pts].

Exam #1 Topics

A) Big Story of Church History

- 1-6. Say the Apostles' Creed from memory and then tell the story of church history up to 1700 for the remainder of the 5 minutes [n.b., this is the only question in this category, so you will have to answer it]

B) Ante-Nicene Fathers

1. Apostolic Fathers
2. The Apologists
3. Irenaeus on Creation
4. Scripture and Philosophy
5. Origen on Scripture and God
6. Dealer's choice: Choose any one of the above topics to answer

C) The Ecumenical Councils

1. Nicaea and/or Athanasius
2. Constantinople (esp. the Holy Spirit)
3. Cappadocians
4. Ephesus and Constantinople II
5. Chalcedon and Constantinople III
6. Dealer's choice: Choose any one of the above topics to answer

D) Augustine and Early Medieval Theology

1. Augustine on Grace
2. Augustine on the Church
3. Palamas and the Damascene on the Knowledge of God
4. Medieval Monasticism and Pastoral Care
5. Early Medieval Views of Grace (esp. Cassian) and the Sacraments (esp. Lombard)
6. Dealer's choice: Choose any one of the above topics to answer

Exam #2 Topics

A) Scholasticism

1. Anselm on Atonement
2. Scotus and Ockham on God's will
3. Aquinas on God and Speaking about God
4. Aquinas on Virtues and Sacraments
5. Proto Reform Movements
6. Dealer's choice: Choose any one of the above topics to answer

B) Luther and Immediate Responses

1. Luther on Justification
2. Luther on Justification [this is duplicated to increase the probably of you answering it]
3. Luther on the Church and/or Scripture
4. Marburg Colloquy
5. Catholic Reformation (esp. Cajetan and Trent)
6. Dealer's choice: Choose any one of the above topics to answer

C) Calvin and Reform in Switzerland/France

1. Calvin's Life and Work Outside of the *Institutes*
2. Calvin on the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*
3. Calvin on the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* [this is duplicated to increase the probably of you answering it]
4. Zwingli
5. Women of the Reformation (in Germany, Switzerland, France, etc.)
6. Dealer's choice: Choose any one of the above topics to answer

D) Reformation Spreads

1. Radical Reformation

2. English Reformation
3. Catholic Mysticism and/or Jansenism
4. Puritanism and/or Pietism
5. Reform in Scotland and/or the Netherlands and/or Poland
6. Dealer's choice: Choose any one of the above topics to answer