



# Course Syllabus

## THS 203 L1

### Systematic Theology I

#### Fall 2025

### Class Information

**Day and Time:** Tues/Thurs 12:15–1:30 PM

**Room Number:** E201

### Contact Information

**Instructor Name:** Dr. Ty Kieser

**Instructor Email:** tkieser@criswell.edu

**Instructor Phone:** (214) 818–1306

**Instructor Office Hours:** Mondays 12–2 PM; Thursdays 2–4 PM; Sign up [here](#)

### Course Description and Prerequisites

Introductory discussions to Theological Method (Prolegomena), Scripture (Bibliology), God (Theology Proper), Creation, Providence, Angels (Angelology), Humanity (Anthropology), and Sin (Hamartiology), 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 105)

### Course Objectives

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

- Articulate a survey-level understanding of Christian doctrines—including their biblical, historical, cultural, and theological components—with attention to the distinctives of the evangelical tradition.
- Defend theological commitments with clarity, charity, and coherence.
- Formulate nuanced questions regarding theology and theological inquiry.
- Apply Christian doctrinal content toward its ecclesiological, cultural, and devotional ends.

We will pursue these objectives under the assumption that rigorous theological learning is an act of Christian discipleship that will, prayerfully, bring us into closer communion with Jesus Christ and his Holy Spirit.

### Required Textbooks

Erickson, Millard J. *Introducing Christian Doctrine*. Edited by L. Arnold Hustad. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015. (ISBN: 9781441222541)

Kapic, Kelly M. *Embodied Hope: A Theological Meditation on Pain and Suffering*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017. (ISBN: 9780830851799).

McLaughlin, Rebecca. *Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World's Largest Religion*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2019. (ISBN: 9781433564260).

## Course Requirements and Assignments

**Quizzes** (36 pts: ≈ 2.5 pts each): Each week will culminate with a quiz consisting of multiple-choice, true/false, and short answer questions over material from the reading and lectures. Each quiz will be approximately nine questions. You are allowed to use your notes and books during the quiz, although the quiz must be taken alone and you may *not* Google answers. Quizzes will be posted by the end of the day on Thursday (i.e., by 11:59 PM) and must be taken before the day of our next class (i.e., by Mondays at 11:59 PM). Each of the fourteen quizzes is worth 2.5pts of your final grade (35pts total).

**Biblical-theological Meditations** (11 pts: .5 pts each): Since Scripture is the ultimate source of theology and reading Scripture well is one of the main goals of theology, students theologically engage Scripture in preparation for every class. For each class session, students will meditate on at least one biblical text for at least 10 minutes. Each entry is worth .5pts (11pts total).

**Reading Reflection Questions** (23 pts: 1 pt/class): Before every class you will read the assigned texts, prepare reading reflection questions, and submit them on Canvas by 10 AM on the day of class. For most weeks this will be focused on chapters in Erickson but can/should include supplemental readings. If there are multiple readings for that you, you should read everything, but you only need to provide one question. Since there should be one+ question for every class period, you will submit 2+ total questions per week. These questions are designed to serve your learning and your formation. So the content is largely up to you, however, there are details and examples below. You will submit 1+ question/class [graded for completion], but you will also collect each of these and submit them at the end of every module [graded for quality]. So, by way of summary of your submissions:

- Reading reflection questions (every class) (11 pts – .5 each)
- Collected reading reflection questions (end of every module) (12 pts – 3 each)

**Podcast Preparation and Recordings** (12 pts: 3 pts each): At the end of every module, you will record a podcast with a group of your fellow students. Each student will submit their notes that they used to prepare for the podcast and one student in the group will submit the recording on Canvas. Your notes will be graded for their thoroughness and engagement with the reading—see below for specifics—and your group will be given a collective grade. This is basically your module exam, please treat it as such.

**Letter to a Skeptical Friend** (18pts: 2 + 4 + 4 + 8 pts): To help you think more critically about key doctrines, questions, readings, and the world that you live in, you will be asked to write one 2,000+ word paper as a “Letter to a Skeptical Friend.” The specific topics of these papers will largely be up to you, but you can see example topics listed below. You must cite 5 different sources (course readings can count) for at least 15 footnotes total. You will submit your notes from these sources, including 20+ quotes from them, with your initial draft. You will submit your initial outline of the paper first, then submit an initial draft your paper for a grade, finally, you will submit an edited final draft of your paper with tracked changes. Papers should be saved as a PDF or Docx and submitted via Canvas. The outline is worth 2pts, your resource notes are worth 4pts, the initial draft is worth 4pts, and the final draft is worth 8pts (18pts total).

Grade of your draft: Your initial draft will be graded, and you will receive recommendations on the draft. You should then make edits using “tracked changes.” Your final draft grade can only improve your initial draft grade. So if you choose not to make changes and simply resubmit your initial draft as the final draft, you will receive the exact same grade. For example, if you earn a 90% on the initial draft, you can simply resubmit the same paper and receive 90% on the final draft.

## Course/Classroom Policies and Information

**Late work:** For all assignments except your reading-observations, your grade will be reduced by 10% for each calendar day an assignment is late. If your observations are late (even by a few minutes), you can only receive 50%. However, any/all missed assignment may be submitted before the end of the semester for up to 50% credit.

**Technology:** Cell phones should *not* be used during class time. Additionally, laptops inherently have several negative consequences on classes that prioritize discussion.<sup>1</sup> However, I recognize that computers also have several advantages and that some of the assigned reading will be originally accessed digitally. Therefore, computers may be allowed under the condition that they are used properly. However, I reserve the right to deduct grades for misuse of any technology or designate particular periods of time as laptop-free.

### Video Recording

To ensure FERPA compliance when a course is live-streamed or recorded, students can opt out of video recordings by requesting seating in a designated area off camera. Students who sit outside of this area are giving implicit permission to be recorded.

### Class Attendance:

Students should only enroll in courses they are able to attend regularly.

- **On-campus** students are expected to attend class **in person** according to the course syllabus.
- Students enrolled in the **online section** must pay any applicable online course fees.
- Online students are expected to attend class **synchronously** at the scheduled time via the designated video conferencing platform, Zoom, found in the left-hand global menu in Canvas.
- Online students must have their **cameras turned on with sound muted** during class, and actively participate in discussions and activities. In order to be properly identified, students must upload a picture ID to their Canvas Account Profile *prior to the first online meeting*. For instructions on how to upload a profile picture, [click here](#).

### Missed Classes:

- Each instructor may decide how attendance impacts your grade and learning objectives. Details are provided within the course syllabus.

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the potentially distracting nature of computers for the user and their neighbors, the negative consequences can include adverse effects: (A) Interpersonally: they create a physical barrier between humans in dialogue. (B) Mentally: your brain does not function as sharply when it is subconsciously aware that you could access the answer in two seconds with less effort than you could by simply thinking; plus you more quickly forget the content retrieved this effort-less way (see *Make it Stick; The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains; “Is Google Making Us Stupid?”*). (C) Teleologically: computers inherently prioritize efficiency; whereas a discussion is a gradual process oriented toward intellectual formation (and, therefore, is often superficially inefficient).

- Students are responsible for catching up on any material missed due to absence or tardiness.
- Instructors are **not required** to allow make-up work for missed classes.

#### **Attendance & Financial Aid:**

- Students receiving **grants, loans, or scholarships** must meet participation requirements set by the college.
- It is the student's responsibility to:
  - Review relevant sections of the Academic Catalog.
  - Contact the **Financial Aid Office** for details on how attendance affects aid.
  - Understand the consequences of non-participation.

#### **Census Period Attendance Requirement:**

- Though Criswell College does not officially take attendance, it must verify that students **begin their courses** to meet federal aid regulations.
- **During the census period** (first two weeks of a 16-week semester or first week of shorter terms), students must participate in **academically related activities**, or they may be dropped from the course.

#### **Examples of Qualifying Activities:**

- Attending class in person or via live video with the instructor present
- Submitting an assignment, quiz, or exam
- Taking part in assigned tutorials, study groups, or discussion boards
- Having documented communication with the instructor about course content

#### **Important Note:**

Simply logging into Canvas or a Zoom session without participating (e.g., camera off, no interaction) **does not count** as attendance.

#### **Canvas:**

- Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based Learning Management System (LMS).
- **For online courses** at Criswell College, instructors 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 with the students rather than by broadcasting to a class email listserv outside of canvas
  - Use Zoom in Canvas for all "live" (synchronous) class sessions

#### **Important Note:**

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.

## **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.

## Course Policy on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI can be used wisely, and it should be used accordingly in this class (if it is used at all). It should NOT be used to generate text or idea (e.g., you should never copy and paste), but can be used as a referee (e.g., double checking grammar and logic) and reference (e.g., sources; however, as with any source, “trust but verify”). Basically, any use of AI that would be considered plagiarism if pulled from another person or source is strictly prohibited. Any use of AI that would be permissible if aided by another person or resource is permitted. For example, you wouldn’t let your friend re-write your paper (or even an entire sentence), so you shouldn’t let AI re-write your paper (or even an entire sentence).

Examples of AI-related functions you **may not use** without permission:

- Text Generation – You may not use AI to generate text for use in an assignment.
- Substantial revision – you may not use AI to revise your content beyond grammar and syntax
- Outline Generation – You may not use AI to generate an outline for an assignment.

AI-related tools you **may use** without permission:

- Spellcheck and grammar – built into Word, Pages, and Google Docs
- AI research and summarize – tools that help you find sources to cite, such as the new AI tools built into Logos Bible Software.)

## 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 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](mailto: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](mailto: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 a wide range of academic resources and receive research assistance by contacting or visiting the Wallace Library, which is located on the second floor of the Education Building.

Login credentials for accessing the library's databases are emailed to students near the beginning of each semester.

For more information or assistance, email the Wallace Library at [library@criswell.edu](mailto:library@criswell.edu) or visit [www.criswell.edu/academics/wallace-library/](http://www.criswell.edu/academics/wallace-library/).

Tutoring Center: Students are encouraged to consult with tutors to improve and enhance their skills and build confidence. All tutors are recommended by the faculty to ensure that the tutor(s) they are qualified to support the student body. To meet with a tutor, students can schedule an appointment through Calendly at <https://calendly.com/criswell-tutoringcenter>. The Tutoring Center is located in room E203 of the Education Building.

For questions, email [tutoringcenter@criswell.edu](mailto:tutoringcenter@criswell.edu).

## Course Outline/Calendar

### Prolegomena Module

#### August 19<sup>th</sup> — Introduction

Introduction on Canvas

#### August 21<sup>st</sup> — What is Theology

*Theology Anthology*, 1–3—completed in class

1 Tim 1:5; Prov 8:9–11 (due August 23<sup>rd</sup> at 11:59 PM)

**Podcast Crews Selected**

**Week #1 Quiz**

#### August 26<sup>th</sup> — How we do Theology

Erickson, Chs 1 & 2 (minimum of 1 question total)

Prov 11:14; 18:2; 19:2

#### August 28<sup>th</sup> — Knowing God

*Theology Anthology*, 4–18

McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, Introduction and Ch 1

Romans 11:33–12:2

**Week #2 Quiz**

#### September 2<sup>nd</sup> — Revelation

Erickson, Chs 3 & 4

Romans 1:19–2:3

#### September 4<sup>th</sup> — Character of Scripture

Erickson, Ch 5

McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, Ch 6

2 Tim 3:16–17

**Week #3 Quiz**

September 9<sup>th</sup> — Character of Scripture & Hermeneutics

Erickson, Ch 6 & 7

2 Peter 1:19–21

September 11<sup>th</sup> — Podcast

*Theology Anthology*, #19–25

[Pick a biblical text that is relevant to your podcast topic and make observations on it]

Prepare Podcast topics

1. Why should we study theology?<sup>2</sup>
2. How should we study theology?<sup>3</sup>
3. Can we know God in nature and why does it matter?<sup>4</sup>
4. How should we understand special revelation?<sup>5</sup>
5. What is the nature of Scripture?<sup>6</sup>
6. What is inspiration and why does it matter?<sup>7</sup>
7. Is Scripture inerrant and why does it matter?<sup>8</sup>
8. What is illumination and why does it matter?<sup>9</sup>
9. How can we read Scripture wisely?<sup>10</sup>
10. ??????????????????

**Week #4 Quiz**

**Doctrine of God Module**

September 16<sup>th</sup> — Models of God

Erickson, Ch 8

Isaiah 40:28–31

September 18<sup>th</sup> — God's Existence

*Theology Anthology*, 26–28

McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, Ch 3

Exodus 3:14–15; John 8:56–59

**Week #5 Quiz**

September 23<sup>rd</sup> — God's Perfections: Incommunicable Attributes

Erickson, Ch 9

Psalm 139:1–12

September 25<sup>th</sup> — God's Perfections: Communicable Attributes

Erickson, Ch 10

*Theology Anthology*, 29–34

1 John 4:7–12; Psalm 119:68

**Week #6 Quiz**

September 30<sup>th</sup> — God's Triunity in Scripture

Erickson, Ch 11

<sup>2</sup> Vanhoozer, *Hearers and Doers*, Introduction, ch. 1, ch. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Akin (ed.), *A Theology for the Church* pages 39–66.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.saet.ac.uk/Christianity/NaturalTheology>

<sup>5</sup> Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1 Ch. 11

<sup>6</sup> Thompson, *The Doctrine of Scripture*, chs. 2–3

<sup>7</sup> Thompson, *The Doctrine of Scripture*, chs. 2–3

<sup>8</sup> Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy (Ch 4. by Vanhoozer)

<sup>9</sup> Miller, *Seeing by the Light*, Ch. 9

<sup>10</sup> Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God*, ch 6

Isaiah 44:6; Revelation 22:13; John 10: 25–30

**Pick a podcast topic**

October 2<sup>nd</sup> — God's Triunity in history (Asynchronous—NO in person class)

*Theology Anthology*, 35–43

**Watch Video Lecture**

Galatians 4:4–7; Philippians 2:9–11; Hebrews 1:1–3, 8–9

**Week #7 Quiz**

October 7<sup>th</sup> — God's Actions

Erickson, Ch 12

John 5:19–20; Romans 5:8

October 9<sup>th</sup> — Podcast

*Theology Anthology*, 44–51

[Pick a biblical text that is relevant to your podcast topic and make observations on it]

Prepare Podcast Topics

1. How should we argue for God's existence?<sup>11</sup>
2. What does it mean to call God "simple," and why does it matter?<sup>12</sup>
3. What does it mean for God to be \_\_\_\_\_ [pick an incommunicable attribute] and why does it matter?<sup>13</sup>
4. What does it mean for God to be \_\_\_\_\_ [pick a communicable attribute] and why does it matter?<sup>14</sup>
5. How can we see the Trinity in the Old Testament (when read with the NT)?<sup>15</sup>
6. How can we see the Trinity in the New Testament?<sup>16</sup>
7. How has the church historically understood the Trinity?<sup>17</sup>
8. How have people historically misunderstood the Trinity?<sup>18</sup>
9. Why does it matter that God is triune for salvation and revelation?<sup>19</sup>
10. ??????????

**Week #8 Quiz**

## Doctrine of Creation Module

October 14<sup>th</sup> — Student Development Week (No class)

October 16<sup>th</sup> — Student Development Week (No class)

**Work on your paper, which is due in 4 weeks**

October 21<sup>st</sup> — Creation and Scripture

Erickson, Ch 13

Genesis 1:1–2:25

October 23<sup>rd</sup> — Goodness of creation

<sup>11</sup> Oden, *Classic Christianity*, 79–104

<sup>12</sup> Charnock, *Existence and Attributes of God*, Discourse 3

<sup>13</sup> Charnock, *Existence and Attributes of God*, Pick your Ch.

<sup>14</sup> Charnock, *Existence and Attributes of God*, Pick your Ch.

<sup>15</sup> Sanders, *Triune God*, Ch. 8

<sup>16</sup> Sanders, *Triune God*, Ch. 7

<sup>17</sup> Allison, *Historical Theology*, Ch. 11

<sup>18</sup> Wilhite, *The Gospel According to Heretics*, Chs. 4–5 (Sabellius and Arius)

<sup>19</sup> Eilers & Strobel, *Sanctified by Grace*, Ch1.

*Theology Anthology*, 52–67

McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, Ch 7

1 Tim 4:3–5; Genesis 1:31

**Outline of Letter to a Skeptical Friend (due October 27<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 PM)**

**Week #9 Quiz**

October 28<sup>th</sup> — Providence

Erickson, Ch 14

Isaiah 46:8–11; Acts 17:26–27

October 30<sup>th</sup> — Evil and suffering

Erickson, Ch 15

Kapic, *Embodied Hope*, Prelude & Ch 1

McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, Ch 11

John 9:1–5; Psalm 130:1–8

**Week #10 Quiz**

**Pick a podcast topic**

November 4<sup>th</sup> — Angels, Demons, and Culture

Erickson, Ch 16

*Theology Anthology*, 68–84

Heb 1:13–14 & Jer 29:4–14

November 6<sup>th</sup> — Podcast

Kapic, *Embodied Hope*, Ch 2 & 3

[Pick a biblical text that is relevant to your podcast topic and make observations on it]

Prepare Podcast topics

1. Why does non-human creation matter?<sup>20</sup>
2. Why does creation from nothing matter?<sup>21</sup>
3. How should we read creation in Genesis 1 & 2?<sup>22</sup>
4. How is God involved in the world? Why does it matter?<sup>23</sup>
5. Why does a good God let bad things happen?<sup>24</sup>
6. The logical problem of evil<sup>25</sup>
7. How should we respond to suffering?<sup>26</sup>
8. Why do angels/demons matter?<sup>27</sup>
9. How should Christians relate to our culture(s)?<sup>28</sup>
10. ?????????????????????????????????

**Initial Draft of your Letter to a Skeptical Friend (due November 10<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 PM)**

**Notes from your sources for your Letter to a Skeptical Friend (due November 10<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 PM)**

**Week #11 Quiz**

<sup>20</sup> Jones, *Practicing Christian Doctrine*, 77–96 + 10 pages

<sup>21</sup> Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:406–41

<sup>22</sup> Charles (ed.), *Reading Genesis 1-2*, pick one of the first 5 chapters to read AND read the responses

<sup>23</sup> Allen and Swain, *Christian Dogmatics* ch. 7 (pages 148–163)

<sup>24</sup> Keller, *Reason for God*, chs. 2 & 5

<sup>25</sup> <https://iep.utm.edu/evil-log/>

<sup>26</sup> Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*, chs. 8; *Theology Questions Everyone Asks*, Ch. 5 by McNutt

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.saet.ac.uk/Christianity/AngelsinChristianTheology>

<sup>28</sup> Edgar, *Created and Creating*, ch 2 (pages 51–85)

## Humanity Module

### November 11<sup>th</sup> — Image of God

Erickson, Ch 17 & 18  
Kapic, *Embodied Hope*, Ch 4  
Genesis 1:27 & James 3:9

### November 13<sup>th</sup> — Human Constitution & Race and Ethnicity

Erickson, Ch 19  
McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, Ch 10  
*Theology Anthology*, 85–96  
Matthew 22:37 & Revelation 7:9

#### **Week #12 Quiz**

### November 18<sup>th</sup> — Particularity and Culture (Asynchronous–NO in person class)

McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, Ch 8 & 9

#### **Watch Video Lecture**

Eph 5:21–33

### November 20<sup>th</sup> — Sins (Asynchronous–NO in person class)

Erickson, Ch 20 & 21

#### **Watch Video Lecture**

Matthew 15:11-20 & Romans 3:9–20

#### **Week #13 Quiz**

### November 25<sup>th</sup> — Thanksgiving Break (no class)

### November 27<sup>th</sup> — Thanksgiving Break (no class)

### December 2<sup>nd</sup> — Original Sin

Erickson, Ch 22  
Rom 5:12–21

### December 4<sup>th</sup> — Podcast

Kapic, *Embodied Hope*, Ch 5  
Prepare Podcast topic

[Pick a biblical text that is relevant to your podcast topic and make observations on it]

1. What is the meaning of the image of God?<sup>29</sup>
2. What is the nature of the body and soul?<sup>30</sup>
3. What is the purpose of life?<sup>31</sup>
4. What is the nature of marriage?<sup>32</sup>
5. How should we think about homosexuality?<sup>33</sup>
6. How should we think about gender? Why does it matter?<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, Ch. 2 (Christ as God's Image)

<sup>30</sup> Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, Ch. 4

<sup>31</sup> Bavinck, *Mangalia Dei*, 11-21; Kierkegaard, *The Essential Kierkegaard*, Christian Discourses 312-32)

<sup>32</sup> Winner, *Real Sex*, Chs. 1–2

<sup>33</sup> Sprinkle, *Does the Bible Support Same-Sex Marriage?*, pick 30 pages

<sup>34</sup> Hiestand & Wilson, *Beauty, Order, and Mystery*, Ch. 2.

- 7. How should we think about race & ethnicity? Why does it matter?<sup>35</sup>
- 8. What is the nature of sin?<sup>36</sup>
- 9. What is original sin?<sup>37</sup>
- 10. ??????????????????

**Week #14 Quiz**

**Final, Revised Draft of your Letter to a Skeptical Friend (due December 12<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 PM)**

**Late work due December 12<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 PM**

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<sup>35</sup> Chatraw & Swallow Prior, *Cultural Engagement*, Ch. 7

<sup>36</sup> Horton, *Pilgrim Theology*, Ch. 6.

<sup>37</sup> McCall, *Against God and Nature*, Ch. 4 (149–84)

## Reading Reflection Questions

Our class will be structured around engaging the questions that you draw from the readings. Therefore, you will write 1+ questions per class (i.e., two per week). These questions should be engaged with the readings (including Scripture) and thoughtful. They should have two parts: (1) the question itself; (2) the evidence and explanation of the question.

**The question itself:** This should be a brief, precise, and genuine question.

- Questions can be of a variety of different kinds:
  - *Clarifying* questions: “When the Erickson says “X,”<sup>38</sup> 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, since Y seems to follow from X?”
  - *Coherence* question: “I’ve always been taught Y, but the book says X. Do these contradict?”
  - *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 or your own knowledge.

**The evidence and explanation of the question:** This may include some of the relevant evidence to consider when answering your question (e.g., biblical passages to consider), it may include the significance of answering one way or another, it may include clarity on definitions in the question, etc.

### **Reading Reflection Examples**

**The question itself**<sup>1</sup>: When Dumbledore says, “There are things much worse than death” (6:814), is he specifically referring to a life with a lack of love?

**Evidence and explanation**<sup>1</sup>: The order of the Phoenix (i.e., a “resurrection bird”) insists that death (or, a kind of death) must be embraced on the way to a life of love. Sacrificial love is regularly considered the most potent form of magic, as Harry was protected by the love of his mother from Quirrell (HP, 1:216) and as it is studied in the department of ministries as “a force that is at once more wonderful and more terrible than death” (HP, 6:843). Since love is greater than death, a failure to love, or a betrayal of love, is worse than death. Sirius Black tells Peter Pettigrew that he should’ve “died rather than betray [his] friends” (3:375). Not only is a betrayal of love worse than death, but an absence of love is likewise worse than death. Dumbledore tells Harry, “Do not pity the dead, Harry. Pity the living, and above all, those who live without love” (7:722). So what is worse than death? According to Dumbledore, in my opinion: a life without love.

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<sup>38</sup> X, Y, and Z are simply variables (like in algebra), so they refer to any idea/term/argument in the reading.

**The question itself**<sup>2</sup>: If Dumbledore is right to suggest that “There are things much worse than death,” then should Christians be (like Dumbledore) courageous in the face of death and not fear it (see Hebrews 2:15)?

**Evidence and explanation**<sup>2</sup>: While the narrative of resurrection is not as explicit as I would like in HP, I think that there is a connection between Dumbledore’s claim about death and the power of resurrection if we accept the premise that Christ has died, was raised, and will one day raise us to new life. Apart from the resurrection, death is indeed the victor and the greatest power (see 1 Cor 15:13–15; see James and Lily’s tombstone). Yet because Jesus has been raised from the grave, he can promise us, “whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it” (Matt 16:25). While Voldemort tried to save his own life from death, it is only through resurrection that we find true life. We have hope in the face of death because the “resurrection stone” (HP, 7:416) has been “rolled away” from the tomb of Christ (Matt 28:2). Because there are things worse than death, I can embrace death to my own flesh, desires, preferences and instead “walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up [unto death] for us” (Eph 5:2). Knowing that if we have “died with him, we also will live with him” (2 Tim 2:11).

## **Podcast Preparation**

In preparation for the podcast discussion, you’ll submit a doc. or PDF to Canvas containing each of the following elements. Podcasts will either be recorded in individual groups OR conducted in front of class with a randomly selected set of students. Your grade will be based on your preparation and participation. However, if you don’t formally participate (e.g., you’re not randomly selected), you can still receive full marks through your preparation.

**For your question** of each podcast day, you should have:

**3+ biblical text** you’re prepared to discuss.

**3+ theological concept** that you’re prepared to discuss, alongside their significance for your conclusion

**3+ sub-question** you’re prepared to discuss. — this, especially, might relate to the practical significance of your conclusion.

### **Podcast Preparation Example**

For example, if the topics were (unrelated to theology): “Why the Bears are going to win a playoff game” my preparation would look like:

- a. Texts
  - i. “.....” — Mina Kimes, ESPN.com
  - ii. “.....” — Domonique Foxworth, The Domonique Foxworth Show
  - iii. “.....” — Mel Kiper Jr., ESPN.com
- b. Concepts

- i. Dual-threat quarterback — the ability of Justin Fields to throw and gain yards with his feet. Last season he broke the single-game rushing record for a QB and amassed over 1,500 yards.
  - ii. Parity in the NFC north — with Rodgers out, the Lions poor defense, and the Vikings likely regressing to the mean, the NFC north lacks a clear favorite, which gives them a good chance to have a good division record and get a high seed in the playoffs.
  - iii. Twelve Personnel — a formation with one running back and 2 tight ends that could fit the Bears well as Khalil Herbert, Cole Kmet, Robert Tonyan Jr. are each very capable of pass-catching and blocking, providing a good run/pass option.
- c. Sub-questions
- i. Can the bears Rookie defensive tackles, Gervon Dexter and Zacch Pickens, bring pressure and support the defense?
  - ii. Will the Montez Sweat contract be worth the money that they put into him?
  - iii. If the Bears miss the playoffs, should they draft a QB?

## Letter to a skeptical friend

This 2,000+ word paper is intended to be formatted as a letter to your friend who is asking questions about the Christian faith and doctrine addressed this semester—this can be a real friend/question, a made-up friend/question, or a letter to yourself. You will get to choose the specific question that they are asking and then provide a clear and charitable response. This paper should provide a clear response, thoroughly engage (and cite) the readings, theologically support your position, and do so while retaining a charitable tone. As a “letter” this can be as personal and relational as you would like. However, if you use a lot of words making it sound relational, I strongly recommend that you exceed the word count so that you can include important content.

The question that you choose can be closely related to one of McLaughlin’s questions, but it does not ‘need’ to be. Further, the more specific your question, the more likely you are to provide a clear, coherent, and charitable answer. Regardless of the topic, you must include distinct 15 citations from at least five different academic sources [not including the Bible].

Example paper questions—feel free to develop your own and/or specify even further

### Questions about the truthfulness of Christianity

- Did the resurrection really happen?
- Can we trust Scripture?
- Etc.

### Questions about the Christianity and science

- Does Christianity exclude evolutionary theories?
- Does Christianity require a certain view of reproductive rights?

- Etc.

#### Questions about Christianity and history

- How can you belong to a religion that condoned the crusades?
- How can you belong to a religion that condoned slavery?
- Etc.

#### Questions about Christian doctrines

- How could a good God let bad things happen to good people?
- Do I need to believe in the Trinity to go to heaven?
- Etc.

#### Questions about Christianity and other religions

- Is Jesus the only way to God?
- How do Christians explain the good things in other religions?
- Etc.

#### Questions about Christianity and culture

- Is Christianity homophobic?
- Is Christianity necessarily judgmental?
- Etc.

Feel free to specify the question further by providing a brief explanation of the situation at the beginning of this letter.

#### Outline

Your outline should include:

- A) The specific question that your friend is asking.
- B) A draft of your main point in response, in thesis form.
- C) Your 2-4 claims that support your main point
- D) At least one piece of evidence for believing each of these 2-4 claims (e.g., a quote from a theologian; an explanation of a biblical text)
- E) Which **five** academic sources you will engage/read

#### Example of an Outline

Skeptical friend is asking: Are the Bears even going to be good this year?

Main point: The Bears are going to be good, indeed, they're going to win a playoff game.

Claims:

- 1) Mobile Quarterback have dominated the NFL over the past 5 years.

- a. Evidence: Hurts, Mahomes, Jackson, Rodgers, Allen, Russel Wilson AND the Bears have a mobile QB (Caleb Williams)
- 2) The Bears lack of success has been due to a lack of a #1 receiver.
  - a. Evidence: The only two times the Bears have made the Playoffs in the last 12 years was when Allen Robinson was on the team – a clear #1 receiver
  - b. See Boomer Esiason on the Bears WR difficulties (..... p. ##)
- 3) The NFC North champion may make the playoffs with an 8-9 record.
  - a. Evidence: The NFC North has so much parity, even if the Bears have a below average season, they might be able to make the playoffs.
  - b. Evidence: The Bears have the second easiest schedule in the NFC ([www.ESPN.com/Bears](http://www.ESPN.com/Bears))