



Course Syllabus

THS 611 L1

Theology Intensive: Global Theology

Fall 2025

Class Information

Day and Time: Thur 7:30–10 PM

Room Number: E207

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

An intensive, advanced study of a selected doctrine of systematic theology, a selected period of historical theology, or a selected issue in relation to theology. (Course may be repeated for credit when the specific doctrine or historical period differs; Prerequisite: Dependent on topic being covered in course.)

Course Objectives

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

- Narrate theological trends and themes in various regions of the world
- Charitably analyze advanced theological texts from across the Christian world and contemporary scholarship
- Construct coherent dogmatic arguments that are rooted in primary texts and related to contemporary literature
- Integrate questions, methods, and conclusions theological drawn from global theology into his/her own theological system

Required Textbooks

Chan, Simon. *Grassroots Asian Theology: Thinking the Faith from the Ground Up*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014.

Horton, Michael S., Elizabeth W. Mburu, and Justin S. Holcomb, eds. *Prophet, Priest, and King: Christology in Global Perspective*, *Theology Together*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2025.

Pardue, Stephen T. *Why Evangelical Theology Needs the Global Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2023.

Strickland, Walter R., ed. *Swing Low: Theological Meditations on African American Spirituality and Identity*. Vol. 2. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2024.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Theses and Participation (40 pts — 4 pts/day): Our class discussions will be guided by short 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. Students should submit 3+ theses (200–300 words total) to Canvas by 4 PM on the day of class. These theses should, as far as possible, come from different chapters in the readings. Every day I will collect, distill, and select certain theses to be the framing theses for class discussion. Your grade is based on the theses you submit, not only the ones selected. However, I reserve the right to grade theses up/down on the basis of class engagement. See below for greater specification and some examples.

Theological Dialogue and Listening (12 pts — 1 pts/day): Each class we will learn from and engage a theologian addressing questions on our topic. This may be an interview, recording, video lecture, or live conversation. Students should engage these opportunities with charity and attentiveness.

Commitments of a “Glocal” Church Member (10 pts): Students will develop a personal list (1,000-1,250 words [excluding footnotes]) of commitments to thinking theologically with the church that they will execute in future research/writing/speaking. It need not be structured in paragraph format, but ought to engage (e.g., quote, draw from, disagree with, etc.) and cite the course readings and include a reference to each of our conversations. The paper will be graded on (A) engagement with readings; (B) depth and coherence of rationale; and (C) specificity and creativity of commitment. See Canvas for the rubric, expected sections, and details.

Research Paper (38 pts total — 2 + 3 + 5 + 7 + 7 + 14 pts): This 3,000–4,000-word paper¹ will engage a particular theologian across the globe. You will submit an outline of the paper (2 pts), submit your notes from at least 20 additional chapters/articles from relevant sources (7 pts), write your initial draft of the paper (7 pts), present your findings during the last week for 6–8 minutes (5 pts), provide a written response to one classmate’s paper (500–1,000 words; 3 pts), and then submit your final draft (14 pts). Each step of this paper will be submitted on Canvas in Word or PDF format.

Grade of your initial 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

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).

Late work: For all assignments except your theses, your grade will be reduced by 10% for each calendar day an assignment is late. If your theses 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.² 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.

Reading Rule: Graduate school is, in part, about learning how to read and how to read different texts differently. You cannot read everything; you cannot even read everything that you “should” read. Therefore, in this class, there is an expectation that you will read 50+ pages/week *carefully*. However, once you get beyond that, you may skim the remainder of the reading. Use wisdom to discern which 50 pages are most worth reading carefully and which ones you can skim.

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.
- 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.

² 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).

- 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.

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 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 or visit 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.

Course Outline/Calendar

#1) August 21st — Introduction to the Class

Cyril, *Catechetical Lectures* (in class)

Practice Theses (in class)

Video

#2) August 28th — Theological Methodology 1

Read: Pardue, *WETNGC*, 1—89

Read: *PPK: CGP* (TT), Front Matter, Introductions to the volume & each section, and Conclusion

Theses

#3) September 4th — Theological Methodology 2

Read: Pardue, *WETNGC*, 91—188

Read: Bergman, “Models of Contextual Theology”

Theses

Latino/a Theology

#4) September 11th — Survey of Latino/a Theology

Read: Gonzalez, *Mañana* (75-167) [Library]

Read: Padilla, “Hispanic Biblical Interpretation”

Theses

#5) September 18th — Mainline Latino/a/x Theology

Read: Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 33—48

Read: Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 155–77

Read: Isasi-Díaz, “Mujerista Discourse”

Theses

#6) September 25th — Evangelical Latino/a Theology

Read: *PPK: CGP* (TT), Chs. 3 & 8

Read: Carroll, “The Bible and Hispanic Immigration”

Read: Padilla DeBorst, “Church, Power, and Transformation in Latin America”

Theses

African and African American Theology

October 2nd — No Class: Writing Week #1

#7) October 9th — Survey of African and African American Theology

Read: Strickland, *Swing Low*, Introduction & Introductions to every section

Read: Strickland, *Swing Low*, Chs. 1 (Haynes), 2 (Paul), 4 (Douglass), 6 (Wheatley), 8 (Chavis), 9 (Douglass), 25 (Frimke), 29 (Boothe), 30 (Perry), 32 (Cole Baker), pick 5 letters/stories/songs from sections 1–2

Read: McCaulley, “African American Biblical Interpretation”

Theses

October 16th — No Class: Student Development

Research Paper Outline (due October 17th at 11:59 PM)

#9) October 23rd — Civil Rights and Mainline Black Theology

Read: Strickland, *Swing Low*, 45 (MLK), 45 (Burroughs), 48 (MLK), 50 (Kelsey), 51 (Thurman), 82 (Moyd), 85 (Cleage), 86 (Cone), 87 (Roberts), 88 (Cone), 89 (Grant), 90 (Jennings), 91 (Felder), pick 5 letters/stories/songs from sections 3 & 5

Theses

#10) October 30th — Evangelical African and African American Theology

Read: PPK: *CGP* (TT), Chs. 2 & 9

Read: Strickland, *Swing Low*, 60 (Bailey), 62 (Smith), 64 (Charles), 66 (Potter), 67 (Skinner), 68 (Ellis) 69 (Williams), 70 (Bacote), 100–105 (Berry–Edmondson)

Theses

Asian Theology

#11) November 6th — Survey of Asian Theology

Read: Chan, *Grassroots Asian Theology*, 7–127

Read: Ok, “Asian American Biblical Interpretation”

Theses

#12) November 13th — Mainline Asian Theology and Continued Survey

Read: Chan, *Grassroots Asian Theology*, 129–205

Read: Koyama, *Three Mile an Hour God*

Theses

November 20th — No Class: Writing Week #2

Research Paper Initial Draft (due 11/23 at 11:59 PM)

November 27th — No Class: Thanksgiving

#13) December 4th — Evangelical Asian Theology

Read: PPK: CGP (TT), Chs. 1, 4–7

Theses

#14) December 11th — Semester Recap/Review

Presentation Delivered

Responses Delivered

Commitments of a “Glocal” Church Member (due December 12th at 11:59 PM)

Research Paper Final Draft (due December 12th at 11:59 PM)

Theses: Details and Examples

Genres of Theses

1. Explication: Provide clarity of interpretation and/or synthesis of a particular theme/claim in the reading. The goal here is to bring clarity to our understanding of the text.
2. Evaluation: Make a judgement on the truthfulness/coherence/biblical-rootedness/historical-precedence of a claim.
3. Extension: Illustrate the potential applied value a claim in relation to another discussion or context.
4. Enquiry: Ask a pointed question that seeks to find clarity, coherence, or significance in the text.

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*.

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.

Theological Candidates for Research Paper

These are pre-approved theologians you might focus on. Feel free to select another figure, but please get approval before beginning your research in earnest.

Latino/a

Leonardo Boff (Brazil)
Antonio González (Spain)
Justo L. González (Cuba)
Gustavo Gutiérrez Merino (Peru)
Ada María Isasi-Díaz (Cuba)
René Padilla (Ecuador)
Ruth Padilla DeBorst (Costa Rica)
Rubén Rosario Rodríguez (Puerto Rico)
Jon Sobrino (Spain)
Elsa Tamez (Mexico)

Eastern/Southern Asian and Asian American

Simon Chan (Singapore)
T. C. Chao (China)
Grace Ji-Sun Kim (Korea)
Kim Yong-Bock (Korea)
Kazoh Kitamori (Japan)
Kosuke Koyama (Japan)
Julie Ma (Korea)
Arvind P. Nirmal (India)
K.K. Yeo (Singapore)
Amos Yong (Malaysia)

Western Asia

Naim Ateek
Elias Chacour
Yohanna Katanacho
Mitri Raheb

African Theology

Kwame Bediako (Ghana)
Allan Boesak (South Africa)
Emmanuel Katongole (Uganda)
Elizabeth Mburu (Kenya)
John Mbiti (Kenya)
Wageeh Mikhail (Egypt)
Mercy Amba Oduyoye (Ghana)

Lamin Sanneh (The Gambia)

Black Theology

J. Cameron Carter

James Cone (d. 2018)

Kelly Brown Douglas

Frederick Douglass (d. 1895)

Jacquelyn Grant

Lemuel Haynes (d. 1833)

Dwight Hopkins

Willy James Jennings

Martin Luther King Jr. (d. 1968)

Natasha Sistrunk Robinson

David Ruggles (d. 1849)

William Still (d. 1902)

Maria W. Stewart (d. 1879)

Sojourner Truth (d. 1883)

Howard Thurman (d. 1981)

Cornel West

Delores S. Williams (d. 2022)

Indigenous Theologians

Kaitlin B. Curtice (Potawatomi)

Clara Sue Kidwell (Choctaw)

George Tinker (Osage Nation)

Richard Twiss (Sicangu Lakota)

Randy Woodley (Keetoowah

Cherokee)