

Bexley Seabury

BEXLEY SEABURY SEMINARY

- Course title:** HT 340 Systematic Theology (3 credit hours)
- Term offered:** Spring 2021
- Format:** Online, including recommended Zoom sessions as set out in the calendar below.
- Course duration:** Spring semester, 14 weeks.
- Meeting dates:** February 1, February 22, March 22, April 19, April 26 (Recommended, not required.)
(classes meet via Zoom, 7:30-9:00 pm Central Time)
- Instructor:** **The Rev. Jason Fout, PhD**
e-mail: jfout@bexleyseabury.edu
mobile: 614-330-7414
- Office hours:** e-mail me to arrange a time to talk in by phone (or by Zoom, if you prefer face to face).

If you would like to meet to discuss any aspect of this course or other issues which may arise, please e-mail me and I will be happy to arrange a mutually-convenient time for us, either by e-mail or Zoom. In the event of an emergency, please feel free to text or phone me at the above number.

If you have learning differences or any other issue which may impinge on your participation in the course, please let's make an appointment early on to discuss how best to approach the course.

Course description:

This course offers an introductory exploration of the central theological themes of the Christian tradition (theologies of God/Trinity, creation, the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the nature and mission of the church, and the reign of God). Students will be exposed to a diversity of theological perspectives and movements from historical and contemporary social and cultural contexts. They will develop their own theological voices as they reflect on the ways in which the Christian theological tradition can be relevant and responsive to issues and challenges in contemporary life.

The particular foci of this class will be 1) developing familiarity with theology as a discourse in its own right, and as intrinsic to the ministry of the church; 2) growing in ability to use theology as a resource for reading Scripture and praying wisely and well; and 3) grasping theology in both systematic and contextual forms. Alongside other systematic theological resources, there will be significant engagement with feminist and Black theologies. Students will be encouraged in their own work to synthesize systematic and contextual theologies as a resource for ministry and life.

Course goals and outcomes:

This course is an opportunity for you to explore some great theological thinkers, and to engage with God, while also continuing on whatever path to ministry – lay or ordained – that you are walking.

The primary goal of this class is to acquire and demonstrate:

Broad knowledge of systematic and contemporary critical and constructive theologies, both ecumenical and Anglican/ Episcopal; a capacity to address liturgical, pastoral and public issues from a theological perspective; and an ability to articulate one's own theological perspectives with clarity and conviction. (Curricular outcome 1.3)

You'll know you've done well here when you find that you can show:

- 1) A growing familiarity and comfort with theology as a discourse in its own right, and as intrinsic to the ministry of the church; this will involve:
 - a. learning and deepening skills appropriate to reading in this genre of writing;
 - b. growing in ease and comfort with speaking about the faith, in a way animated by and responsible to Christian theology; and
 - c. growing in ability to write clearly and accurately about the faith.

Assessment will be through assignments 1, 2, 3, & 5.

- 2) A deeper understanding and ability to utilize theology as a resource to help us to read Scripture and pray wisely and well. This will involve:
 - a. becoming familiar with theological content of the liturgy;
 - b. developing the skill of post-critical theological interpretation of Scripture as a resource for engaging the Bible.

Assessment will be through assignments 2, 4 & 5.

- 3) A grasp on theology in systematic and contextual forms. This will involve:
 - a. engaging with a selection of theologians, historical and contemporary;
 - b. grasping the difference between systematic and contextual theologies;
 - c. growing in ability to think theologically about particular situations and contexts.

Assessment will be through assignments 1, 2, 3, & 5.

Course requirements:

Time requirements:

We are all busy. Most of you are taking more than one class. Many of you also have family or other social roles. Many of you are also heavily involved in a church placement or internship of some kind. A few of you may also be holding down full or part time employment. We are all busy.

In order to successfully complete this course, you should **expect to spend a total of around 130 hours on task for the thirteen weeks of the term.** This translates to around ten hours per week. Some weeks there may be a little more, some a little less. There will be some (optional) time spent together on Zoom; most of the time will be spent reading, thinking, interacting and discussing material online through Canvas.

The figure of 130 hours of time on task is based on a standard formula for workloads for a three credit-hour class. You should work to make sure that you can budget this amount of time, and set aside blocks of time to focus in on your work for this class.

Attendance and participation:

This course is a learning opportunity for all involved, and that learning takes place when we are all present and engaged. Being present means, minimally: *engaging with others, keeping on schedule, and being prepared and ready for online discussions*. But even as our ideal in worship is not only to be present, but to be truly engaged, so also should our aim in thinking, talking and learning about systematic theology be to be present and engaged: probing, challenging, pondering, asking questions – and perhaps above all being present to God, whom we study. In this way our class becomes a collective project in learning about the ongoing conversation in the church about who we are, whose we are, and where we are going.

Pedagogy and communication

This course will be focused on reading, understanding and responding to texts and working to express ourselves through brief written exercises. Each of these elements is intended to help you to grow in the practices related to the curricular goals above. (This pedagogy will be reviewed in light of students' progress towards these goals.)

I will aim to provide feedback (specific or general) on written assignments within a week, and to respond to e-mail within 24-48 hours, outside of the weekend. Exams will be returned in a timely fashion.

Assignments and assessment: (See below for a qualitative description of evaluations of work; rubrics for each assignment are available on Canvas.)

1) Question & answer exercise (3)	150 pts
2) Online discussion forums (4)	200 pts
3) Book review (1)	50 pts
4) Theology in liturgy questions (3)	150 pts
5) Midterm & final exams	250 pts

1) Q & A exercises: There are two steps to this exercise:

1) first, you will have an opportunity to collect your thoughts and articulate a question that has arisen for you through the reading. An effective question will be specific and call attention to one or more locations in the reading with a page reference; a very good question will draw two or more authors into conversation on a topic, or connect ideas from the reading with pastoral practice or other questions beyond the text.

Questions may be to clarify a term or concept; they may analyze and go deeper with an idea; or they might synthesize and wonder about wider applications. This question will be posted by the due date listed in the calendar below. Questions may be as short as a few sentences, or as long as a few paragraphs. **Questions should be posted by midnight of the Thursday of the week.**

2) next, you will sift through the questions your colleagues have asked and respond to (at least) one. An effective response will be clear, concise, and correct. It will likely make reference to the readings for this class; it may go beyond to draw in other resources as well. **Responses should be posted by midnight of the following Sunday.**

There will be three Q&A exercises for this class. Both questions and answers will be assessed. These exercises will primarily advance learning outcomes 1 & 3.

2) Online discussion forums: There will be four opportunities to respond to writing prompts on Canvas. Each student should prepare a response to the prompt of around 250 words; in addition, students should read each posting by their colleagues, and respond to at least one of them in a response of 50-100 words. **Due by the end of Thursday of the week assigned; responses to questions due by the end of the following Sunday.** These exercises will primarily advance learning outcomes 1, 2, & 3.

3) Book review: There will be an opportunity to select a book to read from a supplementary reading list. Each student will read one book from the list and write a review of it which will a) summarize the contents of the book (c. 500-600 words), and b) offer some evaluation of the contents, their relation to the writings of other theologians (as found, for example, in this class), and the relevance of this book to life and ministry (c. 150-250 words). This exercise will advance all three of the major learning outcomes of the class, depending on which book the student selects, but especially learning outcome 3.

4) Theology in the Liturgy questions: Our worship contains a great deal of theology. This exercise will help you to think and write theologically about the text of the rites. You will be provided with a liturgical text, such as a collect or prayer, answer one or more questions about the *theological content* of the text, and then write a short answer summarizing the theology present in the text. There will be three such opportunities. These exercises will primarily advance learning outcome 2.

5) Midterm and final exams: There will be a midterm and a final exam. The midterm will be worth 100 points, and the final 150 points. The final is cumulative. The exams will draw on all material for the class and will include both objective and written sections. The final exam will serve as the artifact for this class for the purposes of curricular assessment. Satisfactory performance on these exams will demonstrate progress in learning outcomes 1, 2, and 3.

Bexley Seabury requires a minimum grade of C to pass a course.								
Grade	Points	Description	Grade	Points	Description	Grade	Points	Description
A (4.00)	96-100	Superior/Mastery	A- (3.67)	90-95	Excellent	B+ (3.33)	87-89	Very Good
B (3.00)	84-86	Good (high)	B- (2.67)	80-83	Good (low)	C+ (2.33)	75-79	Acceptable (high)
C (2.00)	70-74	Acceptable/Adequate						
F/NC (0)	<70	Unacceptable (Fail/No Credit)						
A grade of "P" in a Pass/Fail course is equivalent to a grade of C or above.								

Course evaluation survey:

Each student must complete the course evaluation survey at the close of the course in order to be notified of his or her final grade.

A Word about Assessment:

Bexley Seabury Seminary regularly evaluates the quality of our programs using a variety of data, including documents that are deposited into student portfolios. These portfolios consist of designated student work (artifacts) from each course, along with the instructor's graded artifact and a scored rubric that assesses the work in light of desired curricular outcomes. The designated assessment artifact for this course is the final exam.

We use your portfolio to assess student learning (in the aggregate) and the effectiveness of our curricula in reaching desired goals and objectives. This process does not involve any further evaluation of your work for grading purposes. No identifying information will be included in any evaluation or report provided to our accreditors or other outside parties. For further information, see the Student Handbook. You may also talk with your instructor, your advisor, the Assessment Coordinator (Lelia Fry, lfry@bexleyseabury.edu), or the Academic Dean, (Terry DeLisio, tdelisio@bexleyseabury.edu).

**** All work not turned in on time
(by the time indicated on the day it is due)
is subject to reduction in grade,
and is accepted at the discretion of the instructor. ****

Course calendar:

Shape of our work week: The work week *starts* on **Mondays**, and *concludes* on **Sundays** (although the schedule is designed so that you would be able to finish your work by the end of the day on Friday, should you choose). Our synchronous sessions are on Mondays, on the dates listed below in the calendar, and will draw together and sum up the work done in the previous week or weeks.

Note: a deadline of midnight on a given day is meant as the end of that day – 11:59pm, Central Time, or a minute later, on the date in question. A deadline of, say, midnight on Thursday February 11th means that your work is due at the end of that day – and not the very beginning.

A word about the material for this class: This is primarily a course in ecumenical systematic theology, rather than Anglican theology specifically. It so happens that most of those we will be reading are themselves Anglican/Episcopalian. But the work they are doing is intended primarily for the whole church, the “great tradition”, rather than more inward-looking analysis of a single tradition.

General reading assignment:

<i>Skim</i>	Skim (about 30 pages/ hour) Alister McGrath, <i>Christian Theology, An Introduction</i> , 6 th ed. Focus especially on parts II & III, but be familiar with part I. Skim through pp. 81-326 before the mid-term: Skim through pp. 327-446 before the final.	<i>Total: 15 hours over the course of the term</i>
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Due Date:

Feb 7 **Preliminaries, syllabus overview, a brief introduction to the course – and what are we doing anyway?**

<i>Read:</i>	Ben Myers, <i>The Apostles' Creed: A Guide to the Ancient Catechism</i> William T. Cavanaugh, “Are We Free Not to be a Religion? The Ambivalence of Religious Freedom”, <i>on Canvas</i> Jason Fout, “Belief, Confession, Tradition”, <i>on Canvas</i>	
<i>Write:</i>	Online discussion forum #1, <i>on Canvas</i> ;	
<i>Participate:</i>	Monday, February 1 – class orientation on Zoom, 8:30pm ET/7:30pm CT	<i>Total: 10 hours</i>

- Feb 14 **How do we do theology? Who are we who do theology?**
Read: Cynthia L. Rigby, *Holding Faith*, Ch. 1, Revelation; Ch. 2 Scripture;
Read: RWL Moberly, “Theological Interpretation, Second Naivete, and the Rediscovery of the Old Testament”, *on Canvas*;
Write: Theology in Liturgy exercise #1, *on Canvas*. *Total: 8 hours*
- Feb 21 **The Surprising God of the Incarnation**
Read: Rigby, *HF*, Ch. 3, Incarnation
Write: Q & A exercise #1, *on Canvas* *Total: 4 hours*
- Feb 28 **Two and One: What does it mean to say that Jesus is fully God and fully human?**
Read: B Quash & M Ward, *Heresies and How to Avoid Them: Why it Matters What Christians Believe* – (read it all)
Read: Sarah Coakley, “What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not?”, *on Canvas*
Write: Theology in Liturgy exercise #2, *on Canvas*. *Total: 10 hours*
- Mar 7 **The One and the Three: The One God and the three “persons”.**
Read: Rigby, *HF*, Ch. 4, Trinity
 Karen Kilby, “Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with the Social Trinity”, *on Canvas*
Write: Online discussion forum #2, *on Canvas*; *Total: 4 hours*
- Mar 14 **The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit**
Read: Janet Soskice, “Calling God ‘Father’”, *on Canvas*
Read: Coakley, “Living into the Mystery of the Holy Trinity”, *on Canvas*
Write: Q & A exercise #2 *Total: 4 hours*
- Mar 21 **Creation**
Read: Rigby, *HF*, Ch. 5, Creation
Read: Fout, “Creation: An Overview”, *on Canvas*
Read: Jacob Sherman, “Creation: An Act of Love”, *on Canvas*
Write: Theology in Liturgy exercise #3, *on Canvas*. *Total: 6 hours*
- By Mar 28 Mid-term**
Talk: Zoom session to prepare for midterm, **Monday March 22, 8:30 ET/7:30 CT**
Exam: Mid-term exam, available to take *on Canvas* on March 22nd. **Due by March 28**
Total: 9 hours revision; 3 hours to take the exam
- Apr 4 **Salvation in Christ 1 (Holy Week)**
Read: Rigby, *HF*, Ch. 6, Sin & Salvation
Read: F. Rutledge, “The Primacy of the Cross”, and “The Godlessness of the Cross”, *on Canvas*
Total: 3 hours
- Apr 11 **Salvation in Christ 2**
Read: Coakley, “Creaturehood before God”, *on Canvas*
Read: Lisa Sharon Harper, *The Very Good Gospel: How Everything Wrong Can Be Made Right*, in its

entirety.

Write: Online discussion forum #3, on Canvas;

Total: 5 hours

Apr 18 The Human Condition and the Work of Christ

Read: James Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, in its entirety

Write: Book review, due **April 18**

Talk: Zoom session to discuss Cone **Monday April 19, 8:30 ET/7:30 CT** *Total: 14 hours*

Apr 25 The Work of Christ: Grace upon Grace

Read: Miroslav Volf, *Free of Charge*, in its entirety

Read: David Zahl, "The Seculosity of Jesusland", on Canvas.

Read: Rigby, *HF*, Ch. 7, Church

Write: Online discussion forum #4

Talk: Zoom session to prepare for final exam **Monday April 26, 8:30 ET/7:30 CT**

Total: 15 hours

May 2 The Christian Life; The Christian Hope and Calling

Read: Rigby, *HF*, Ch. 8 Christian Life; Ch. 9 Christian Hope; Ch. 10 Christian Calling

Write: Q & A exercise #3

Total: 10 hours

By May 7 Final exam

Exam: Final exam, available on Canvas by May 2, **Due May 7**

Total: 9 hours revision; 3 hours to take the exam

About the synchronous Zoom sessions:

There are five synchronous Zoom sessions for the course:

Monday, February 1, 2020, from 8:30 ET/ 7:30 CT	introduction to the course
Monday, February 22, 2020, from 8:30 ET/ 7:30 CT	check-in and problem solving
Monday, March 22, 2020, from 8:30 ET/ 7:30 CT	review for mid-term
Monday, April 19, 2020, from 8:30 ET/ 7:30 CT	discuss James Cone reading
Monday, April 26, 2020, from 8:30 ET/ 7:30 CT	review for final exam

These sessions are recommended but *not required*. They will not be graded; attendance will not be taken. I provide them for your enrichment. If you cannot make one (or all of them), this is fine. They will be recorded and placed on Canvas so that if you cannot make one but would like to see what we did (or if you'd like to remind yourself what we did), you may.

Bibliography:

To buy or otherwise have access to:

Cone, James. *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. 2013.

Harper, Lisa Sharon. *The Very Good Gospel: How Everything Wrong Can Be Made Right*. Colorado Spring, CO: Waterbrook. 2016.

McGrath, Alister. *Christian Theology, An Introduction*, 6th ed. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. 2016.
Myers, Ben. *The Apostles' Creed: A Guide to the Ancient Catechism*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press. 2018.
Quash, Ben & Michael Ward, ed.s, *Heresies and How to Avoid Them: Why it Matters What Christians Believe*. Peabody, MA: 2007
Rigby, Cynthia L. *Holding Faith: A Practical Introduction to Christian Doctrine*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 2018.
Volf, Miroslav. *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. 2005.

On Canvas:

Cavanaugh, William T. "Are We Free Not to be a Religion? The Ambivalence of Religious Freedom"
Coakley, Sarah. "Creaturehood before God",
Coakley, Sarah. "Living into the Mystery of the Holy Trinity",
Coakley, Sarah. "What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not?"
Fout, Jason, "Belief, Confession, Tradition."
Fout, Jason. "Creation: An Overview."
Kilby, Karen. "Perichoresis and Projection: problems with the social doctrine of the Trinity", *New Blackfriars*, volume 81, #956, p. 432-445.
Moberly, RWL. "Theological Interpretation, Second Naivete, and the Rediscovery of the Old Testament", *Anglican Theological Review*, volume 99 #4, Fall 2017.
Rutledge, Fleming. "The Primacy of the Cross", and "The Godlessness of the Cross", from *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 2015.
Sherman, Jacob. "Creation: An Act of Love"
Soskice, Janet. "Calling God 'Father'", from *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language*. Oxford: Oxford UP. 2007.
Zahl, David, "The Seculosity of Jesusland", from *Seculosity: How Career, Parenting, Technology, Good, Politics, and Romance Became Our New Religion and What to Do about It*. Minneapolis: Fortress. 2019.

Suggestions for further reading are provided on the Canvas site for this class.

Qualitative description of work evaluation:

Great

Great work shows a depth of thoughtful and creative engagement, and distinct insight or wise judgement, while also being factually correct. It displays mastery of concepts presented in class. There will also be evidence of appropriate effort and process. Insightful connection is made with the practice of ministry or of life generally.

Good

Good work shows thoughtfulness and creative engagement; there will be evidence of some insight or apt judgement, and is substantially factually correct. It displays a solid grasp of concepts presented in class. There is evidence of appropriate effort and process. Apt connection is made with the practice of ministry or of life generally.

Satisfactory

Satisfactory work evidences thoughtful engagement, and some creativity; there will be indications of some insight or judgement, and it is largely factually correct. It displays a grasp of concepts presented in class. There is evidence of appropriate effort and process. Some connection is made with the practice of ministry or of life generally.

Insufficient

Insufficient work may lack thoughtfulness or creativity; it may demonstrate little insight or only hazy judgement; it may be marred by substantial factual errors, or may be incomplete in one or more aspects; there may be a shaky or inaccurate grasp of concepts presented in class; it may lack sufficient evidence of appropriate effort and process. Connection made with the practice of ministry or of life generally may be lacking, hazy, or inaccurate.

ALL STUDENTS IN BEXLEY SEABURY COURSES ARE EXPECTED TO BE FAMILIAR WITH THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION THAT IS PROVIDED ON CANVAS:

- ACADEMIC POLICIES AND FORMS;
- REQUESTS FOR WITHDRAWALS, EXTENSIONS, AND INCOMPLETES;
- TECHNOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS AND ASSISTANCE,
- WRITING GUIDELINES AND ASSISTANCE;
- COURSE NETIQUETTE;
- PROHIBITION OF PLAGIARISM