

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO
Department of Theology

Syllabus Template1

Introduction to Christian Theology

Instructor's Name

Office Hours

Building, Room #, Days and Times

E-mail: _____

Course Description: Foundational & Developmental

This course is one of two foundational core courses in the Theology Department. Both foundational core courses (Intro to Christian Theology and Intro to Religious Studies) will always incorporate the study of scripture, belief and practices, and the historical and social context of religion. The purpose this course is to introduce students to the fundamental questions, sources, and content of the Christian theological tradition, with special attention to Catholic Christianity, and its significance for Christian faith and life in the world today. It will develop a foundation of theological discourse and will introduce the relationship of Christian Theology to the study of other religions or to the study of religion generally, thus ensuring foundational continuity between the two courses on the first-tier level. This will constitute a proper and adequate foundation for any of the second-tier courses. It has no prerequisites.

Expected Content

Introduction to Christian Theology will begin from the traditional perspective of “faith seeking understanding,” introducing students to the process of critical reflection on the sacred texts, beliefs, and practices of Christianity. The course will also include some reflection on Christianity’s relations with non-Christian religions or to the academic study of religion as a field.

Upon completion of this gateway course, students will be prepared to engage any second-tier course from among 13 options. All these courses build on the content and the methodological approaches studied in the first tier. Students will be familiar with the Christian understanding of God, the Church, the sacramental tradition, and some measure of dialogue with another religious tradition.

1 Following revisions to the Theology Core completed in Spring 2010 by the Theology Department and subsequently approved by the University Core Curriculum Committee (UCCCC), Introduction to Christian Theology became one of two first tier gateway courses, one of which must be taken before students may take any of the 2nd tier Core courses. This model syllabus was approved by the Undergraduate Programs Committee (UPC) of the Department of Theology on November 16, 2010 and submitted to the UCCCC as an example of the content and shape for this 1st tier foundational course.

Core Curriculum

This course addresses competency in the Core knowledge area of “**Theological and Religious Studies Knowledge.**” By taking this course, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the work and content of theology and of its various specialties and methodologies. This course is presented as a survey course and will cover a great number of topics – including both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures (the Old and New Testaments); the nature and methods of Theology; history of the Church; Faith and Reason; Theological Anthropology; Sacraments; Moral Theology; Spirituality; and others.

This course also addresses the Core value area of “**Understanding Spirituality or Faith in Action in the World.**” By taking this course, students will be able to comprehend ways in which religion and spirituality are related and also different. A series of discussions on spirituality will lead to the conclusion that, while not all people are religious, all people, because they are human, share in a fundamental spirituality. Furthermore, by the end of the course, students will understand the relationship of faith to the practical exercise of life in society. Forays into fundamentalism and scientism will also be considered.

This course also addresses the Core skills area of “**Critical Thinking.**” As in any interpretative science, Theology admits of a variation of interpretations of primary and secondary texts. Students will learn to consider a variety of such interpretations and to acquire the skills of discerning the most plausible among these.

Course Requirements

***Note:** While individual instructors may vary in their assignments and weighting, expected course requirements will always include:

- (1) exams and written assignments (some with essay components) that assess the skill, value, and knowledge outcomes noted above
- (2) examinations and other assignments that assess student completion of, and level of engagement with, assigned readings and comprehension of the material covered in lectures, discussions and readings
- (3) Participation (accessed via quizzes, short in-class writing assignments, small group projects, individual presentations, etc.)

Course Style

Lectures/presentations and class discussions will be the principal activity styles.

Grading

***Note:** Individual instructors may provide their own grading scale and an explanation of the meaning of each letter grade.

A	100-94%	B-	83-81%	D+	69-67%
A-	93-91%	C+	80-78%	D	66-60%
B+	90-88%	C	77-73%		
B	87-84%	C-	72-70%	F	59-0%

Consultation

I welcome the opportunity to meet you and talk with you outside of class time. You may see me without an appointment during my office hours or you may arrange an appointment by seeing me before or after class or contacting me by e-mail.

Core Assessment

This course will have a compulsory Core assessment component. The data collected will not be reported for individual students but used as a collective unit to inform us of how well students are performing compared with other LUC students.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me and also contact Services for Students with Disabilities (Sullivan Center Suite 260) as soon as possible to arrange appropriate accommodations.

Academic Integrity

A basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate the truth. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students of Loyola University Chicago are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to: cheating, helping another student to cheat, plagiarism, turning in the same paper for two different courses (including those in two different semesters), purchasing papers written by others, manipulating attendance records, and falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines.

For an extensive but not exhaustive list of activities that constitute academic dishonesty, see the University's Academic Integrity Policy:

http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml

Please note that any form of academic dishonesty whatsoever will result, at a minimum, in an F for the assignment in question; this is University policy. It may result in an F for the course or, in extreme cases, expulsion. A permanent record is kept by the Academic Dean of all instances of academic dishonesty.

Essay(s)

***Note:** Individual instructors may assign one or more essays, along the following lines, or some other written activity. These essays may be part of examinations or may be separate written assignments (e.g. reading responses/reflections, position papers, short research papers, etc.). To illustrate, below are two, sample essay assignments. Instructors may use one or both, but they may also create a different kind of essay component to the course:

Sample Essay Assignment#1: This essay will be three to five pages in length and will be

related to material in the textbook or discussed in class. The student will write a reflective and insightful essay on that topic, writing in the first person, indicating what might have been intriguing or provided an occasion for a fresh insight.

Sample Essay Assignment #2: Consider the role of the theologian's vocation and write three pages addressing contemporary theological issues. You should write from within your own religious tradition and write what you believe a contemporary theologian in your religious tradition would address. You may undertake consideration of a moral issue or a Christological one or the meaning of salvation or an ecclesiological one. Examples of such topics will be provided in class a week or two before this essay is due.

Suggested Text

***Note:** Individual professors may elect to use another text book as primary, ensuring that topics described below are studied.

Rausch, Thomas P., Editor. *The College Student's Introduction to Theology*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1993. ISBN: 0-8146-5841-5

Bibliography

***Note:** Instructors may include one or more of the following texts as "required" and one or more others as "recommended."

Bible (preferably the New American Bible or the New Revised Standard Version). Both are available online.

The Gospel of Mark

Abraham, Susan and Elena Procaro-Foley, *Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology*

Adler, Mortimer J. *The Difference of Man and the Difference It Makes*. New York, 1967.

Armstrong, Karen. *The Case for God*. 2009.

Chesterton, G. K. *Orthodoxy*. See <http://www.ccek/chesterton/orthodoxy.html>.

Clooney, Francis X. *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders*. John Wiley & Sons, 2010.

Cone, James. *A Black Theology of Liberation or God of the Oppressed*.

Copeland, M. Shawn. *Enfleshing Freedom*

Gonzalez, Michelle, *Created in God's Image*.

Grenz, Stanley J. and Olson, Roger E. *Who Needs Theology?* Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Future of an Illusion*.

Haight, Roger. *The Experience and Language of Grace*. New York: Paulist Press, 1979.

Haight, John F. *What Is Religion*. Paulist Press, 1990.

Hanson, Bradley C. *Introduction to Christian Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997.

Juergensmeyer, Mark, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*

King Jr., Martin Luther, *A Testament of Hope* (selections) (James Washington, ed.)

Kugel, James L. *How To Read the Bible: A Guide to Scriptures Then and Now*.

LaCugna, Catherine Mowry, ed., *Freeing Theology*

Luther, Martin, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings* (selections) (Timothy F. Lull ed.)

Maitland, Sara. *A Joyful Theology*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Books, 2002.

McGrath, Alister E. *The Christian Theology Reader*, 2nd ed. Oxford, Blackwell.

Nostra aetate: Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions. Vatican website, 1965.

Michel, Thomas F. and Irfan Omar, eds., *A Christian View of Islam: Essays on Dialogue* (Orbis, 2010)

Niebuhr, H. Richard, *The Meaning of Revelation or The Responsible Self*

Niebuhr, Reinhold, *Moral Man and Immoral Society or The Nature and Destiny of Man*

Pope John Paul II, Speech made at Israel's Holocaust Memorial March (2000) (online).

Pope Benedict XVI, "Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections" Regensburg Address 2006; online: <http://pontificateofpopebenedictxvi.blogspot.com/2008/08/regensburg-address-faith-reason-and.html> (especially the first 16 paragraphs; read alongside the "Open Letter To Benedict XVI by 38 Leading Muslim Scholars and Leaders" and Benedict's official letter back to them).

Russell, Bertrand. *Why I Am Not a Christian*. (Various editions).

Smiley, Jane. *Good Will*.

Vatican II documents, especially, but not limited to: *Nostra aetate, Ad gentes, Dignitatis Humanae*

Viladeseau, Richard, and Massa, Mark. *Foundations of Theological Study*.

Williams, Delores, *Sisters in the Wilderness*

Wright, N. T. *Simply Christian*. New York: HarperOne, 2006.

Audio-Visual Resources, e.g., “Walking God’s Paths: Christians and Jews in Candid Conversation,” video recording, 90 mins. ISBN: 1674555960.

SCHEDULE – Model One

WEEK	INSTRUCTOR
1 and 2	Introduction; Syllabus; Theology & Its Methods
3 and 4	The Hebrew Bible/Septuagint
5 and 6	The New Testament
7 and 8	Church History
9	Christian Faith: Contemporary View
10	Theological Anthropology
11	Moral Theology
12	The Sacraments and Liturgy; Christian Spirituality
13 and 14	Theology & the World Religions

SCHEDULE – Model Two

WEEK	INSTRUCTOR
1	Intro to course; use of poetry
2	Reading of novella, e.g., Smiley’s “Good Will,” a modern retelling of Genesis 2-3
3	Scripture (including comparative religious texts and perspectives)
4	Theology of God; religious language
5	Revelation and Reason
6	Film and first exam
7 and 8	Responses to Revelation: biblical portraits of God
9	Jesus (with biblical passages)
10	Jesus and ethics
11	Film and second exam
12	Freud, <i>The Future of an Illusion</i> – critical responses to faith
13	Church and sacraments
14	Contemporary Issues (including comparative religious perspectives)
15	Women in Religion (including comparative religious perspectives)

Appendix: Grading Rationales

Students often ask how letter grades are awarded, and what the criteria for various letter grades are. The following is an attempt to answer that question.

“A” work represents superior work. In the case of writing assignments and papers, this means that the assignment has been fulfilled with care, intelligence, and genuine insight. The written work displays a clear focus and method of approach, uses pertinent examples or "facts" to support its judgments, shows a distinct personal perspective which can be distinguished from others, makes a real argument, and can discern the strengths and weaknesses of other arguments. A work also displays spelling, punctuation, grammar, word usage, and syntax that is of high quality. On examinations, A work is demonstrated by an accurate and insightful knowledge of the material in question, judicious choices in the material used in essay questions, and clarity of expression.

“B” work represents very good work. In the case of writing assignments and papers, this means that the assignment has been fulfilled with care and intelligence. The written work displays a fairly clear focus and uses good examples. In general, B work also displays the lack of technical errors described for A work. On exams, B work is shown by a solid knowledge of the material involved, good choices used in essay questions, and clear expression.

Often students ask what distinguishes B or B+ work from A work. The main difference is the distinctiveness, imagination, and ability to see the larger picture with intelligence and insight on the part of A work. A paper that follows the assignment exactly and does it well may well merit a B or B+ grade because it is very good, but it may not be superior if it does not include these further elements.

“C” work is satisfactory work. In the case of writing assignments and papers, this means that there is a basic, but not extensive, understanding of the assignment. Work will generally not demonstrate a clear focus (e.g., the paper may wander-around) or method of approach, but there is some attempt to do so. Its use of material to support judgments is adequate and will show some awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of other positions. C work demonstrates that there is sufficient knowledge of the material, but that there remain some deficiencies in understanding and expression. In exams, C work shows an adequate (but not more than adequate) knowledge of the material and on essay questions, will show the same characteristics listed above for written work. C work often displays a poor technical grasp of the conventions of writing (spelling, punctuation, etc.) and often lacks good organization.

“D” work is barely passing work. It is generally unsatisfactory but demonstrates a bare minimum of knowledge of the subject matter. There is little to no awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of other positions, little to no organization, and poor use of technical conventions. What saves D work from failure is a barely adequate grasp of the material.

“F” work does not meet any of the criteria listed above.