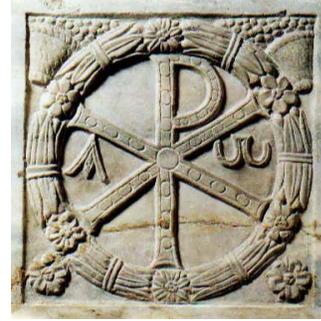


TH 4312.120

The Church's Faith (online)

Spring 2020

Austin Graduate School of Theology



Instructor: Stephen D. Lawson

Email: lawson@austingrad.edu

Office: 209

Office Hours: Mondays: 1–3 and by appointment

Phone: (512) 476-2772, ext. 209

I view it as my responsibility to be available and responsive to you. I aim to respond to all emails within 24 hours (weekends excluded) and am willing to set up meeting times with you to talk in person.

Note bene: Anything on this syllabus can change at the professor's discretion in order to accommodate the needs of the professor and/or the students. Any changes will be communicated via email and/or Canvas announcement. In some cases, a revised syllabus may be posted on Canvas.

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce the nature, tasks and language of Christian theology in the life of the church. We will examine the nature of revealed knowledge and the basic content of the Christian tradition passed down through the Scriptures and expounded by the church through the ages. We will give special attention to central Christian teachings including: the Trinity, Christology, Pneumatology, the doctrine of Creation, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology.

Learning Objectives

1. To impart a baseline of foundational theological content. Students will *demonstrate an active grasp* of foundational doctrines of the Christian tradition.
2. Reading theologically. Students will *interpret* within a theological framework both primary and secondary theological writings.
3. Writing theologically. Students will *accurately summarize* basic theological concepts in their own words, explain relationships between two or more theological concepts, and identify the historical and/or contemporary relevance of these concepts.
4. Speaking theologically. Students will *ask questions* relevant to the course content and contribute meaningfully to class discussion.

Course Textbooks

- Beth Felker Jones, *Practicing Christian Doctrine: An Introduction to Thinking and Living Theologically* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014) [PCD in course schedule]
- Rowan Williams, *Tokens of Trust: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007)
- Additional Readings posted on the Canvas site, marked with (*) in the course schedule.

Course Schedule

Week One: *Orientations: The Nature and Task of Theology*

Lecture One: Introduction, the Nature of Theology

Lecture Two: God and Metaphysics, Analogical language

Readings:

- *Practicing Christian Doctrine*, 1–30.
- *Tokens of Trust*, vii–30.
- John Behr, “What Are We Doing, Talking about God?”*
- Robin Darling Young, “*Theologia* in the Early Church”*

Week Two: *Revelation and Scripture*

Lecture Three: Revelation and the Bible

Readings:

- *Practicing Christian Doctrine*, 31–54.
- Keith Stanglin, “The Restoration Movement, the Habit of Schism, and a Proposal for Unity”*
- Robert Wilken, “The Face of God For Now”*

Week Three: *Christology and Trinity*

Lecture Four: Christology

Lecture Five: Trinity

Readings:

- *Practicing Christian Doctrine*, 55–76, 117–40.
- *Tokens of Trust*, 31–80.
- Robert Wilken, “Seek His Face Always”*
- Herbert McCabe, “The Trinity and Prayer”*

Week Four: *Soteriology*

Lecture Six: Soteriology

Readings:

- *Practicing Christian Doctrine*, 141–92.
- *Tokens of Trust*, 81–103.

Week Five: *Creation and Anthropology*

Lecture Seven: Creation and Anthropology

Readings:

- *Practicing Christian Doctrine*, 77–116.
- Herbert McCabe, “Prayer”

Week Six: Ecclesiology

Lecture Eight: Ecclesiology

Readings:

- *Practicing Christian Doctrine*, 193–216.
- *Tokens of Trust*, 105–34.
- Philip Kenneson, “Gathering: Worship, Imagination, Formation”*

Week Seven: Eschatology

Lecture Nine: Eschatology

Readings:

- *Practicing Christian Doctrine*, 217–38.
- *Tokens of Trust*, 135–59.
- George MacDonald, “The Consuming Fire”*

Week Eight: Conclusion

Lecture Ten: Concluding Reflections

Readings:

- *Practicing Christian Doctrine*, 239–40.
- David Bentley Hart, “Tsunami and Theodicy”*
- Herbert McCabe, “Why God?”*

Course Assignments

- **Course Journal (15 or 16 points each, for a total of 125 points, 25% of grade):** Every week students will upload a document to the Canvas site which summarizes the assigned material for the week and analyzes it through disciplined questioning.
 - Précis & Discussion Questions
 - A précis is a concise and accurate summary of a given material (text or other media). Quotations from the material should be employed sparingly. Please consult the document “Guide for Writing Good Summaries” on the Canvas site before writing your first précis.
 - For *every* reading assignment each student will write a brief précis followed by 1–3 discussion questions. Each précis should be between 150 and 350 words (longer material should have longer précis). Write them (single-spaced) on a single document. Follow *each* précis by the discussion questions. Students should upload their précis and discussion questions as a .docx file to the Canvas site by 11:59PM on Saturday.
 - Discussion questions generally fall into three types of questions:
 - Questions that ask for explanation, due to the reader not understanding certain passages in the text (please note if any vocabulary was unfamiliar or confusing for you and I will try to address it in class)
 - Questions that arise from the text making a point that would seem to contradict an earlier text, or a discussion in class
 - Questions that ask “so what,” and want to know the implications of certain claims, and what difference it would make if they were true

- **Discussion Forum (15 or 16 points each, for a total of 125 points, 25% of grade):**
 - Students are expected to actively participate in each weekly forum. Students should write a substantive reply to the prompt for the week by 11:59 PM on Wednesday. These responses should draw upon the course readings and lectures. They should be at least 200 words, but may be longer.
 - Additionally, students must actively engage with other students in the forums. Provide at least two substantive responses to the posts of others. Substantive replies are replies that do more than simply say “Good point!” or “I agree!,” they must further the conversation in productive ways. Substantive replies should be at least 100 words each.
- **Integrative Paper (125 points, 25% of grade):** Near the end of our course you will write a five-page paper that integrates much of the course content. The review will take its main shape from Williams’ book *Tokens of Trust*. More instructions and a grading rubric will be posted on the Canvas site. *Due via Canvas upload by 11:59 PM on March 7.*
- **Final Exam (125 points, 25% of grade):** There will be a comprehensive final exam which will consist of both objective (e.g. multiple choice, true/false, etc.) and writing (e.g. short answer, essay) questions. Please take good notes throughout the semester over both your reading and the lectures as this will help you prepare for the final exam. The final exam will be available from March 11 until 11:59PM March 14.

Course Journal	125 points
Discussion forums	125 points
Integrative paper	125 points
<u>Final Exam</u>	<u>125 points</u>
Total	500 points

Late Work: I will generally not accept late work without penalty. If you find that you will need some extra time, you can request an extension via e-mail at least one full business day in advance. I will review all requests and you will be notified as soon as possible whether or not they will be granted. Work turned in late without an approved extension will lose one letter grade for each day that it is late.