

## Associated Canadian Theological Schools of Trinity Western University

### THS 571: Introduction to Believer's Church Theology

Brian Cooper, Ph.D.  
May 15-19, 2017  
3 Credit Hours

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<https://courses.mytwu.ca>  
May 15-19, 2017, 8:30 am -12:30 pm daily  
Prerequisites: THS 540 or equivalent

#### I. Course Description

This course lays a foundation for theological study and reflection in all ACTS graduate degree programs. We will begin with a discussion of the nature and importance of theology and a review of key tools and methodological principles for the Christian thinker. We will also reflect on the particular dynamics of doing theology in the Evangelical and Believer's Church tradition. As an illustration of good theological reflection in action, we will explore the doctrines of revelation and Scripture, which are basic to our work. And we will provide a practical orientation to the expectations and opportunities for theological study in the ACTS curriculum.

#### II. Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this course, a student should be able to:

- 1) describe the **nature of theology, its role and importance** in the life of the individual Christian and of the church as a whole;
- 2) discuss the general **structure and function of theology as an academic discipline**, demonstrating an understanding of the relationship between various areas of theological study and their significance in the ACTS curriculum;
- 3) explain the key features that mark the **theological perspective of the Believer's Church Tradition**, showing an appreciation for its relationship to other theological traditions within historic Christianity and recognizing the significance of such concepts in their own ministry setting;
- 4) articulate the **historic Christian doctrines of Revelation and Scripture**, together with their biblical basis, contrasting these with other non-Evangelical perspectives;
- 5) discuss important **theological issues which arise in relation to these doctrines**, together with significant historical perspectives on those issues and key biblical concepts which apply to them;
- 6) apply basic **methodological principles, techniques, and tools for effective theological reflection and ministry application** in an Evangelical, Believer's Church Christian framework;
- 7) formulate concrete **plans for appropriate personal theological development** through the course of the student's program;
- 8) **integrate personal theological development with practical aspects of personal Christian life and ministry.**

### III. Course Texts

**Required texts** (i.e.: you will need to read these for the course)

Donald Bloesch, *Holy Scripture*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2000.

W. David Buschart, *Exploring Protestant Traditions: An Invitation to Theological Hospitality*. Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2006.

Brad Harper and Paul Louis Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology: An Evangelical and Ecumenical Introduction*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2009.

Howard W. Stone and James O. Duke, *How to Think Theologically*. Second Edition: Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006.

**Recommended** (i.e.: these are appropriate for course reading but not required; they would be good additions to your library)

Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*. Second Edition; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.

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

John R. Franke, *The Character of Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.

Paul C. McGleson, *Invitation to Dogmatic Theology: A Canonical Approach*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006.

Helmut Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962.

### IV. Course Requirements

#### A. **Reading and Reading Reports**

**For this course, you will be reading ...**

- **All four textbooks!** (Approx. 1000 pages)

To maximize the value of the reading and enhance our class interaction, **you will be expected to complete the appropriate readings by the relevant class period, as set forth on the course outline** (below).

**You will write a 5-6 page paper describing your personal ecclesiological commitments (and especially what they would look like in real life)**, using Bloesch, Buschart, and Harper & Metzger to stimulate your thinking. Write a paper describing what a church (think about a hypothetical church, not your current church) would look like if you could build it to fit your theological commitments concerning church identity and mission, and organized particularly around the following considerations: polity and decision-making, baptism and membership, strategizing and goal-setting. Include in your paper theological definitions of leadership and

leadership roles, membership, and other concepts (Hint: Use your textbook readings!) that form part of your paper. **Ecclesiological commitment papers are due June 15, 2017.**

### **Ecclesiological Commitment Paper Guidelines:**

Your goal in this paper to explain how a church needs to be built in order to be and do the things that you believe churches should be and do. In order to accomplish this task, think about (among other things) the following questions:

1. What theological method, assumptions and/or positions underlie church polity and decision-making processes? How do these affect the way churches operate?
2. What are the implications of your theology of baptism and church membership? What are the implications of connecting oneself to a church community as a member? What, if any, continuing relevance does Believers' Church ecclesiology have?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses the church structure you have described, and how do you address the weaknesses?
4. What, if anything, will you change in your ministry as a result of reading this book? What will change in terms of your participation in the life of your church?

#### **B. Research paper on the nature, role, and expression of theology**

- You will write a research paper (12-15 pages) reflecting on a theological issue of interest to you in your Christian life and ministry.**

The purpose of this paper is to help you reflect critically on the methodological issues raised in Stone & Duke and explored in the context of the course, and to demonstrate your awareness of the distinctive theological agenda that shapes the Believers' Church tradition. Your paper should contain four main elements:

- A thesis statement which clearly and concisely articulates the point you intend to argue in your paper.
  - A synopsis of the possible positions on the issue you have chose and the theological issues at play – e.g., the methods, norms, and sources involved; the priorities inherent in the different options, strengths and weaknesses of each, and the implications for church ministry.
  - Historical examples of each – the positions, including their origins and outcomes.
  - Your conclusion, anticipating objections to your arguments and also exploring specific application to your personal life and ministry.
- The paper is due on June 30, 2017.** This is a formal research paper, so we are concerned about bibliography or sophisticated footnote apparatus. The paper should be written in good, clear prose, cleanly edited and properly and consistently formatted according to Turabian style (see below for more information).

**C. Critical reflection paper on revelation, Scripture, and the Evangelical - Believer's Church tradition**

- You will write a brief paper (8-10 pages) interacting with key concepts from the section of our course dealing with revelation, Scripture, and the Believer's Church tradition.**

This paper will help you consolidate your understanding of the doctrines of revelation and Scripture. It will also push you to reflect on the significance of these doctrines and some of the special issues and challenges associated with them. And it will invite you to consider how these (and other related) doctrines have shaped the life of the church, particularly within the Believer's Church movement.

The paper should be structured in sections which answer the following questions:

- Describe what you view as the key ideas which are essential in a good presentation of the doctrines of revelation and Scripture, if you had to teach these in a church setting.
  - Comment briefly on the reason we believe it is essential to hold these truths about God's revelation and the Bible. How do these ideas shape the rest of our doctrine? How do they affect church life in general, and a believer's faith in particular? What happens if we question them?
  - Reflect on the role these doctrines play in your own church tradition. Does your tradition embrace the same essentials you have named? How has your tradition's view of Scripture shaped other aspects of its thought and practice? In particular, if your tradition is part of the Believer's Church movement, how has its understanding of revelation and Scripture influenced other key elements that mark it as part of that movement?
  - Identify several of the most challenging issues that relate to the doctrine of revelation and Scripture—either in your own current ministry context or in the Christian world in general. Why are these issues a challenge at this time? How do they affect faith and ministry in your setting? Briefly, comment on key insights or strategies which will help you to address these challenges as you face them.
- The paper is due on July 15, 2017.** This is not a major research paper which requires and extensive bibliography. However, you should be interacting with the sources you are reading—and where you quote from or engage a source directly, it is appropriate that you leave a documentation trail through footnotes. As always, the paper should be well-written and well presented.

### Assignment weight (%)

Ecclesiology Paper .....	30%
Research Paper .....	35%
Critical Reflection Paper .....	25%
Class participation.....	10%
Total: .....	100%

**Late Assignments** will be penalized as follows:

- Reduction by 5% of assignment value for each (working) day after due date . (Assignments due at class time are considered late after the end of the class period).
- Late or incomplete reading is evaluated qualitatively.
- No late assignments will be accepted after July 20.

### Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	Grade Point
A+	97-100	4.30
A	93-96	4.00
A-	90-92	3.70
B+	87-89	3.30
B	83-86	3.00
B-	80-82	2.70
C+	77-79	2.30
C	73-76	2.00
C-	70-72	1.70
F	Below 70	0.00

### **V. Submitting Papers Electronically**

Assignments may be submitted either in hard copy or electronically. If in doubt about which method is appropriate, please feel free to ask—especially in class, so everyone gets the information.

If you turn assignments in electronically, we have two requests which will help us to handle your materials easily and not lose them:

(1) Please use document attachments linked to emails, rather than pasting your material into the email message. (The format is less likely to be corrupted, and the item is easier to file.) Attach your documents as MS Word files, or if you are not using Word, as files that will convert easily and neatly to Word. (Examples would include WordPerfect or .rtf—“rich text format”—files.)

(2) Before you attach your file, please save it (“save as”) using the following format: last name – initial – assignment name.doc. So, for example, Joe Kowalski’s first paper would be kowalski-j-paper 1.doc, and his reading report would be kowalski-j-reading report.doc. This makes it much easier for us to track your papers. As you can imagine, if we get 20 papers all called “research paper.doc” it is likely that some will be misplaced.

### **VI. Web Support**

All ACTS courses are supported with web pages through the TWU MyCourses system. We will use the course web page to post any course notes and other materials which we wish to distribute to the class. (For example, an essay you need to read for the class will be posted on the web page for you to download.) You will want to check the page periodically to watch for updates and announcements.

***Note that we will not be distributing hard copies of course notes in class.*** They will be posted on the course website, allowing you to download and access them in hard or soft copy as you choose. We recommend that you download notes and bring them along to class, as this will make it easier to follow lectures and add your own notes as we go.

You should have received information on the TWU virtual campus and MyCourses system with your class registration materials. If you do not have an appropriate password, are unfamiliar with the system, or are having trouble making it work, please do not come to faculty for assistance, as we are not equipped to help you with in this area. You can get basic information from the Registrar's office, and can get more detailed help from the "esupport" people who specialize in such things. They can be reached at [esupport@twu.ca](mailto:esupport@twu.ca), or 604-513-2148 (toll free at 1-866-614-4652).

Please remember that TWU uses the web system to distribute your grades for this and other courses at the end of the semester. ***Plan to use your TWU email***—or at least to set it to forward automatically to your personal account. ***Any other notices, mid-course grade information, etc., which we send you during the semester will go to your TWU email address as well.***

**VII. Tentative Course Outline (Contents subject to change and/or reorganization at the whim of the instructor)**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic(s)</b>	<b>Chapters</b>	<b>Assignments Due</b>
May 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syllabus, preliminaries</li> <li>• Theology: what it is, why it matters</li> <li>• Theology as an academic discipline</li> <li>• Theology in my academic program and ministry area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stone &amp; Duke chapters 1-4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Stone &amp; Duke</li> </ul>
May 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theology from an Evangelical perspective</li> <li>• What is the "Believers' Church?"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stone &amp; Duke chapters 5-9</li> </ul>	
May 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• God, Revelation, and Scripture (part 1)</li> <li>• God, Revelation, and Scripture (part 2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bloesch all</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Bloesch</li> </ul>
May 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Believers' Church in Historical Perspective</li> <li>• Revelation, Scripture, and Mission from a Believers' Church perspective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buschart all</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Buschart</li> </ul>
May 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Church and the World</li> <li>• The Church, the Gospel, and Culture(s)</li> <li>• Incarnating Believers' Church Theology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harper &amp; Metzger</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Harper &amp; Metzger</li> </ul>

### **VIII. Some recommendations on systematic theology texts**

There are many fine texts on Systematic Theology from the Evangelical perspective. As part of your long-term development as a theological thinker, it is worth your while to become familiar with a number of these: general overviews, texts dedicated to specific topics, broad generic studies, presentations from a particular tradition or perspective, volumes old and new. For the purpose of this class, our goal is simply to help you become better acquainted with one or two such texts. (We have no in-principle objection to you reading from a number of sources, but in our view the exercise will be more cohesive, helpful, and manageable if you focus on one primary text or at most two.)

We have listed several possible texts below. The choice is up to you, but we would request that you follow several basic guidelines:

Unless there is a special reason to do otherwise, we would strongly encourage you to use a text which is broadly Evangelical for this particular assignment. There is a place and time to read Schleiermacher or Tillich, but this is not it. The goal is to help round out your exposure to the Christian faith from an Evangelical perspective, and to enrich your thinking on revelation and Scripture as these are viewed within the classic Christian tradition.

Some possible texts for your consideration

- Bird, Michael F. *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013. *An attempt by a NT scholar to build a systematic theology around the evangel as the core and organizing element.*
- Demarest, Bruce, and Gordon Lewis. *Integrative Theology*. Grand Rapids: Academie, 1987-. 230 *Creative attempt to do interdisciplinary theology. Many interesting insights, but sometimes a little "cluttered."*
- Finger, Thomas N. *Christian Theology: An Eschatological Approach*. Scottsdale: Herald, 1985-. 230.2 *Creative theology through a particular thematic grid.*
- Garrett, James Leo. *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990-. 230.2
- Grenz, Stanley J. *Theology for the Community of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994. *Recent, more attuned to postmodern concerns than many other Evangelical texts.*
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994. *Quite readable, very Bible-focused, fairly central/conservative in orientation (with a Vineyard element); a little basic but definitely usable.*
- Horton, Stanley M., *Systematic Theology*. Springfield Mo. Logion Press, 1995. 230.994.S97.
- McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Malden MA: Blackwell, 2007. *Quite historically oriented, at times quite detailed; written for a broad university-style audience so presents options without arguing for a particular point of view; very current in terms of the issues it tackles.*

Pannenberg, Wolfhart, *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991-1998. 230.044P2613.

Williams, J. Rodman. *Renewal Theology*. Grand Rapids: Academie, 1990. 230.2 *One of the foremost theologians in the Pentecostal movement, represents that tradition well.*

Some other possibilities, mostly older (and less recommended unless you've done reading in the newer volumes already and you're looking for something different) ...

Berkhof, Louis. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939,41. (4th edition) 230.2 *A classic of Reformed theology. Not easy, but very thorough.*

Boettner, Loraine. *Studies in Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947. 230.2

Chafer, Louis Sperry. *Systematic Theology*. Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947. R 230.2 *Key figure in the U.S. Dispensational movement, useful as a representative of Dispensational theology.*

Hodge, Charles. *Systematic Theology*. (3 volumes) Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977 (=1872). 230.2 *Note the original publication date; a classic of the Old Princeton approach to Orthodoxy in a Reformed variation.*

McClendon, James W., *Systematic Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986-2000. BT75.2M39.

Pieper, Francis. *Christian Dogmatics*. (4 volumes) St. Louis: Concordia, 1950-57. 230.2 *For those who would like a Lutheran angle on things.*

Shedd, William G.T. *Dogmatic Theology*. (3 volumes) Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1953. R 230.2 *An older Baptist classic.*

Strong, A.H. *Systematic Theology*. Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1912. R 230.2 230.2 *An even older Baptist classic—very detailed, not easy reading.*

Thiessen, Henry C. *Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979. (from 1949) R230.2

Wiley, H.O. *Christian Theology*. (2 volumes) Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1940. R 230.2 *As the publisher suggests, a text in the Nazarene tradition.*



## ***Supplement: Important Academic Notes from ACTS***

### **Web Support – Student Portal <https://students.twu.ca>**

All students at TWU have a TWUPass username and password. This is determined at the time of an online application or can be managed through the computing services help desk or the link on the student portal. Your student email account is also available through this student portal and is vital for communication about grades, account statements, lost passwords, sign-up instructions, etc. If you do not know your account or password, there is a link at the login area called “I forgot my password.” When you click on that link, you will be walked through the process of retrieving your account information.

### **Campus Closure**

In the event of deteriorating weather conditions or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to the following radio stations: CKNW (980 AM), CKWX (1130 AM), STAR FM (107.1 FM), PRAISE (106.5 FM) and KARI (550 AM). As well, an announcement will be placed on the University’s campus closure notification message box (604.513.2147) and on the front page of the University’s website (<http://www.twu.ca> – also see <http://www.twu.ca/conditions> for more details).

An initial announcement regarding the status of the campus and cancellation of classes will be made at 6:00 a.m. and will cover all classes that begin before 1:00 p.m. A second announcement pertaining to classes that begin between 1:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. will be made at 11:00 a.m. A third announcement pertaining to classes that begin after 5:00 p.m. will be made at 3:00 p.m.

### **Paper Formatting**

Students need to adhere to Turabian Notes (Bibliography) format except in counselling courses, for which APA format is used, and in CanIL courses.

Students are strongly encouraged to use EndNote Basic/Web (available through the library home page [www.twu.ca/library](http://www.twu.ca/library) - lower left) as their bibliographical manager and as a tool for formatting bibliographies. It is free. The link to EndNote from the library home page provides detailed instructions. Students will need to be aware that it is necessary to “clean up” most bibliographies generated by this program. Students are encouraged to view the documents on the following websites for format samples:

[http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian\\_citationguide.html](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html) or

[www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/](http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/). In EndNote Basic/Web the available formatting styles are those of Turabian Bibliography, and APA 6th edition. For Turabian, there are two formats – Notes

(Bibliography) and Reference List (a short format citation style). ACTS uses the Notes (Bibliography) format, not Reference List.

Counselling students are expected to purchase the APA Publications Manual. More information may be found at the following website: <http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html>.

For free online programs that will enable students to create properly formatted bibliography citations, they should go to <http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/> (“Chicago” stands for “Turabian”) or <http://www.sourceaid.com/citationbuilder/>

CANIL students can locate this on the CANIL intranet, under the “student” side. More information is given to incoming students in the fall.

**Please check with your professor to find out which style he/she recommends you use!!**

### **Course Evaluations**

Course evaluations are important for improving teaching outcomes, faculty professional development, and the student learning context. Completion of course evaluations is, therefore, considered to be a course expectation. Professors will schedule time for students to fill out online course evaluations (20-30 minutes) on their personal laptops or a collegium computer during the last scheduled class of the semester. Students who are absent that day or who are otherwise unable to complete the online course evaluation during the last class will be expected to make every effort to do so by the last day of exams. Information about how to access online evaluation forms will be provided to the faculty and students prior to the last week of classes by the ACTS Administration.

### **Research Ethics**

Please note that all research projects involving human participants undertaken by members of the TWU university community (including projects done by ACTS students to satisfy course or degree requirements) **MUST** be approved by the Trinity Western University Research Ethics Board. Information and forms may be found at <http://www.twu.ca/research/research/research-ethics/default.html>. Those needing additional clarification may contact the ACTS Academic Dean’s office. Please allow at least three (3) weeks from the date of submission for a review of the application.

### **Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism at TWU**

Christian scholars at TWU regard academic integrity to be a core value. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and are required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship. This means that all members of the TWU academic community must avoid all forms of

plagiarism and cheating in scholarly work. TWU has a strict policy on plagiarism (see academic calendar 2008-09, pp. 37-38). Further details on this subject are contained in the ACTS Student Handbook in section 4.12. The handbook is available online on the ACTS webpage ([www.acts.twu.ca](http://www.acts.twu.ca)) at the following link: <http://acts.twu.ca/community/student-handbook-2011-12.pdf>.

Learning what constitutes plagiarism and avoiding it is the student's responsibility. An excellent resource in this regard has been prepared by TWU Librarian William Badke and is freely available for download (PPT file) or can be viewed in flash (self-running) tutorials of different lengths:

<http://acts.twu.ca/library/plagiarism.ppt>

<http://acts.twu.ca/library/Plagiarism.swf> (14 minute flash tutorial)

[http://acts.twu.ca/library/Plagiarism\\_Short.swf](http://acts.twu.ca/library/Plagiarism_Short.swf) (8 minute flash tutorial)

### **Equity of Access**

Students with disabilities who need assistance are encouraged to contact the Equity of Access Office upon admission to TWU to discuss their specific needs. All disabilities must be recently documented by an appropriately certified professional and such documentation should include a statement regarding the educational impact of the disability along with recommended accommodations. Within the first two weeks of the semester, students must meet with their professors to agree on accommodations appropriate to each class. Students should follow the steps detailed by the Equity of Access Office outlined on the TWU website at

<http://twu.ca/life/wellness/learningresources/disabilities-and-equity-of-access/steps-to-attaining-disability-services.html>.