Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary Canada

THS 691: Mennonite Brethren Convictions (online)

Brian Cooper, Ph.D.
Fall 2017
3 credit hours
Prerequisites: 1 introductory theology course

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We will meet weekly
somewhere in cyberspace.

I. Course Description

This course is a study of Mennonite Brethren theology and practice as a shared conviction set that reflects continuity with the MB journey and offers a vision for the church today. Attention will be given to biblical support, contextual expression, and contemporary application.

II. Objectives

By the end of this course, each student should:

1) Embrace the core commitments of the Mennonite Brethren Church in personal practice and ministry (Character).

2) Articulate an understanding of Mennonite Brethren convictions as well as the biblical teachings and methodologies from which they arise (Content).

3) Assess the contextual nature of Mennonite Brethren confession and describe how that enables witness to Christ in contemporary society (Cultural Analysis).

4) Demonstrate the skills to faithfully proclaim and live out Mennonite Brethren convictions in the contemporary world (Professional Capacities).

III. Course Textbooks

There will be no required textbooks for this course. All of the required reading will come from materials that will be linked to the course web site.

If students are looking for recommended theological reference books to add to their personal libraries, here are some suggestions:

McKim, Donald K. *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996. This dictionary will help clarify terms that students are likely to encounter while doing reading and research.

Olson, Roger E. *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform*. Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1999. Olson's approach traces theological developments in their historical context and gives a very helpful survey of the major currents in Christian theology.

I also recommend owning a good one-volume systematic theology. Here are a few suggestions:

Erickson, Millard. *Christian Theology* (3rd ed). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013.

Grenz, Stanley, J. *Theology for the Community of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994.

Migliore, Daniel L. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (2nd ed.). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.

I also highly recommend the seven-volume Christian Foundations series by Donald G. Bloesch.

IV. Course Assignments

A. Assessment and grading system for major assignments

Each week will include the following:

- Forum discussions that grow out of the assigned readings

- A theological exercise (e.g., the gathering and analysis of worship song lyrics, the creation of a back-of-the-bulletin theological statement, a deliberate "theological" conversation with fellow church member, etc.)

- A journal entry titled "how my thinking about (the topic for the week) has been shaped." This short entry is due for Lessons 2-13 and is intended to form the basis for the Signature Assignment for the course to be submitted at the end of the course.

At the end of the semester:

- The Signature Assignment is a confessional statement that seeks to articulate a confessional understanding of the Christian faith. The weekly journal entries should form the basis for this final, well-edited assignment.

Weekly forums	40%
Theological exercises	35%
Weekly journal entries	10%
Signature Assignment	15%

Estimated time to complete assignments

- Each week's lesson and related assignments should take approximately 10 hours. Revising and polishing the signature assignment should take approximately 5 hours.

Course/classroom policies

- Missed forum discussions cannot be made up. All other assignments will be accepted throughout the semester however a 5% penalty will apply for every week they are late. All work must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. (PST) on December 18, 2015.

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	Grade Point
A+	Blew my mind	4.30
A	Excellent	4.00
A-	Very Good	3.70
B+	Proficient	3.30
B	Good	3.00
B-	Average	2.70
C+	Adequate	2.30
C	Marginal	2.00
C-	Needs Work	1.70
F	Unacceptable	0.00

V. <u>Course Outline</u>

The course is divided into 13 units. The idea is to do one unit per week, consisting of directed reading, online forum participation, a theological exercise, and a journal entry. The written work is due on the day on which the online forum work takes place (dates listed below). It's so simple!

September 7:
- Unit 1: Framework/design of course: Theological method, definitions, Mennonite Brethren Context, Course Framework

September 14:
- Unit 2: God – Trinity as Father, Son, Spirit – What difference does this make?

September 21:
- Unit 3: Revelation -- Creation, Scripture – How does God speak to us?

September 28:
- Unit 4: Humanity -- *Imago Dei*, gender, relationships, depravity – Is being human a blessing to enjoy or an obstacle to overcome?

October 5:
- Unit 5: Salvation – Sin and evil, Atonement – Why dying is not the problem

October 12:
- Unit 6: Church -- Nature, baptism, Lord's Supper, membership, leadership, ministry, community hermeneutics; polity, leadership, ordination – and other details

October 19
- Unit 7: Eschatology -- Why thinking about the end is just the beginning

October 26 – Reading Week

November 2:
- Unit 8: New Life -- Conversion, Following Christ – Why "no one may truly know Christ except one who follows Him in life."

November 9:
- Unit 9: Church/World -- Culture, State – What does it mean to be in the world but not of it?

November 16:
- Unit 10: Ethics – Issues – Brave new advice for a brave new world

November 23:
- Unit 11: Mission -- Evangelism, Service, Spiritual Warfare – The Whole Gospel for the Whole Person across the Whole World

November 30:
- Unit 12: Reconciliation -- Peace, justice – Choosing the right sword is only half the battle

December 7:
- Unit 13: Pluralism – If there is only one way to God, why don't all Christians look the same?

Supplement: Important Academic Notes from ACTS

Web Support – Student Portal https://students.twu.ca

All students at TWU have a TWU Pass 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 (Not for class, but in case you want to come to campus to use the library)

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 (to create an account or log in, go to: http://libguides.twu.ca/EndNote/) 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 or
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, go to http://www.eturabian.com/turabian/index.html or http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/ ("Chicago" stands for "Turabian").

CANIL students should consult with their own faculty on specific requirements.

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. ACTS uses the TWU Student Handbook as a guide for our seminary students. Though some features in the handbook are focused on the university's undergraduate population, it provides the essential student life information for ACTS students as well. It can be found online at: http://www.twu.ca/studenthandbook/.

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://williambadke.com/plagiarism.ppt
http://williambadke.com/Plagiarism.swf (14 minute flash tutorial)
http://williambadke.com/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.

Policy Information and Student Concerns

Information on academic and community life policies and procedures that affect students can be found in the ACTS *Academic Catalogue*, which is available on the ACTS website (www.actsseminaries.com) under the *Academics* tab. Students who wish to communicate concerns or to lodge academic appeals are welcome to contact the appropriate faculty or staff member directly, or to fill out and submit the relevant Concerns & Grievances or Appeals form found on the *Files & Forms* page of the *Current Students* section of the ACTS Website.