

Introduction to Theology

Dr. Vial
Spring 2020
Office Hours: by appointment

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Each student will prepare 3 papers of 3 double-spaced pages each (plus a final paper). You will choose which three readings you will write about in the Paper Sign up assignment. Papers will be posted Tuesday mornings. All students will post a one-paragraph response to the paper and/or reading by Wednesday at midnight. All students will read all postings and post an additional one paragraph reflection or comment by Friday at midnight. Each paper is worth 20% of your grade, and the quality of your postings over the quarter is part of your participation grade, worth 10% of your final grade. Late postings will not be accepted.

Papers will be graded according to the following 4 criteria:

1. A clearly stated claim;
2. Textual evidence to support the claim;
3. Quality of writing (organization, proper use of sentences and paragraphs, grammar, spelling, and all other mechanics);
4. Depth and seriousness of analysis.

In a short paper the claim typically appears as the last sentence of the introductory paragraph (if it is not there the writer needs clearly to mark where it is, since otherwise readers will assume that sentence is the claim). A claim states the conclusion of the argument put forward in the paper. You have a great deal of freedom here. A claim might state what is the most important idea in the reading, or what the author must assume to make his or her argument, or what the logical extension of that argument might be, or how that argument relates to other readings on our syllabus, or what the author gets right or wrong, etc. In a short paper you will likely not be able to summarize the all the points the author makes, nor should you try. Part of your task of analysis is to prioritize what is most important to lift up for discussion for our class. Your paper will likely not follow the same organization as the reading under analysis, since the logic of your argument will not be the same as the logic of the argument of the reading. If your paragraphs tend to begin “And then . . . ; Next . . .” then it is probably time to go back and do at least one more draft and re-think what you are presenting and how. Papers for this class are a little closer to the summary end of the spectrum than a term paper might be, since they are the

basis for our discussion. But they are still papers that make engage the text by making a point about the text.

The purpose of the papers is three-fold: the first is to encourage deep engagement with the texts; the second is to encourage a habit of discussion that is open, respectful, and rigorous. This is best accomplished when the analytical essays take a charitable stance towards the readings. Some of them will seem old-fashioned, and the writers may have different concerns than do we. As in any good conversation, it is important first to try to see where the writer is coming from, rather than to be dismissive of his or her ideas. There will be plenty of time later to decide what is useful to you and what is not. We must begin with an accurate understanding of what is actually going on in the essay. Third, these section papers will help develop your skills as readers and writers. A great number of studies show that “peer-review” is a very effective way to teach writing. The feedback you get on these papers during discussion will be quite valuable.

Papers will be graded on the following scale:

4 = A

3 = B

2 = C

1 = D

0 = F

Writing Conventions: Citations and Punctuation

Are these academic conventions or my pet peeves? Is there a difference?

Basically, for citations, consistency is the main thing. These are not research papers, you don't need a bibliography. The two most common sets of conventions for citing texts are the MLA (Modern Language Association) and Chicago Manual of Style. Many people are also moving towards a system more commonly used in social sciences than in the humanities (APA—American Psychological Association).

I follow the Chicago Manual of Style--it is easily accessible on the library's page under "Browse Databases," and it is surprisingly un-intimidating to navigate and understand.

Here are some things especially of which to be aware:

I've noticed in the last year or so students suddenly putting periods and commas outside of closing quotation marks. They go inside unless you're a Brit. Question marks go outside if the question is yours, inside if the question is being quoted.

When you cite a quote, the citation is not part of the quote (e.g.: as Reimarus writes, "blah blah blah p. 67"), but it is part of your sentence. So you need to cite as follows: As Reimarus writes, "blah blah blah" (p. 67). And you need to manipulate the quote so that your sentence in which it is embedded is still a grammatically correct sentence. This means not just that the syntax has to work, but also standards of capitalization and punctuation. If the quote is the beginning of the sentence in the source material, but not the beginning of your sentence, you will need to fix the capitalization. But you need to indicate to your reader that you have altered it. This is done with brackets: A famous opening sentence is, "[c]all me Ishmael."

Clauses set off by dashes use dashes, not hyphens. That is done in word processing by using two hyphens--like this. Word will usually convert those into one dash, longer than the shorter hyphen. But if it doesn't that's OK, use the 2 hyphens.

Ellipses indicate text you omit when quoting. They are three periods--and they are separated by spaces (both from each other, and from the preceding and succeeding words . . .). If you omit text and then end a sentence, you will need 4 dots--three ellipses and a period

Finally, your reader knows that when you quote you are not quoting the entire text. So you very very rarely need ellipses at the beginning or end of a quote (unless it will not be clear that you have not quoted something in its entirety, and that will be confusing). No need to write, ". . . And the word became flesh."

And notice the way periods and parentheses work. If an entire sentence is in parentheses, the period goes inside the closing paren. (Like this.) If the paren ends a sentence but is not the whole sentence, the period goes outside (like this).

Throughout the quarter, we will have several discussions which will compose a large part of our engagement with each other in this online learning space. For these discussions to be meaningful conversation spaces, we all need to take responsibility for consistent and substantial participation. Over the course of a conversation, **substantial engagement** means:

1. **Extend the conversation** - creatively and critically push the conversation forward, do not just regurgitate what has already been said. If 1 or 2 other students have already responded directly to a point raised in a student

paper, **do not** simply write another response to that point unless it adds something new to the conversation. You need to extend the conversation by adding an additional or different insight from the course materials, by asking a new question that stems from one of the posts already offered, by offering a related and contextualized example of the issue being discussed from your own experience, or by creatively integrating your own perspective with what has already been posted.

2. **Ask contextualized questions** - situate your questions within the discussion by referencing the course materials and other parts of the conversation thread that inform your inquiry. Give us a little background as to why this question matters to you and how it relates to the course.
3. **Engage others in the course** - thoughtful engagement with other students in the course and with the instructional team.
4. **Engage the course materials** - thoughtful engagement with readings, lectures, student presentations, and any other materials related to the course. Referencing and citing course materials in your posts where appropriate is encouraged.
5. **Participate Respectfully** - discussions in this course are likely to raise sensitive topics. Please strive for respect in all your comments, and charity in reading the comments of others.

Each post need not do all of these things, but your overall participation in each conversation should demonstrate all of these components. You might have several short posts and a handful of longer posts in a week or you might have only a few strategic substantial posts (minimum of 2 posts per discussion). Either way, your overall participation in each conversation will be evaluated for substantial engagement. The goal of this discussion design is to encourage and reward interchange, so post often and engage each other with meaningful questions that open to other questions.

I am looking for posts that help us understand and analyze the text at hand. Application of our texts to new situations is of course the ultimate goal, but we can't do that responsibly without understanding what the author is doing first. And that can be hard!

If your first post (due Wednesday) focuses on one of the assigned papers/readings, please focus your second post on a discussion about another paper/reading.

Each student will prepare some background information on one person we are either reading or reading about. These should be posted by Sunday night at midnight on the week you signed up for in the discussion for that topic. They are intended as orientation to help understand the readings--"I've never heard of this person; what do I need to know"? They should be short, accessible, and fun if possible! You may write a paragraph (250 words-ish), post short videos of you talking, or link to clips. Please do not simply link to a webpage that gives background--that is your job! Please keep it to something your classmates can read/watch in 2 or 3 minutes.

Course Description:

This introduction to Christian theology will focus on systematic theology, that is, what are the traditional loci (topics or rubrics) that form a complete theological system, how do they fit together, and how does thinking them as a system influence theological thinking? We will look at how the Christian theological tradition provides resources for contemporary theology. As examples we will take a close look at the locus of theological anthropology.

This class will provide an introduction to artificial intelligence, and get at what it means to be human by asking some of the questions AI raises about the nature of humans: what is the relationship of humans to technology? What is intelligence? Must intelligence be embodied? Must it be social? Must it have a culture? What is the place of humans in the cosmos? Etc.

Professional Degree Learning Goals for Constructive Theology Area:

Constructive Theology (TH) : critically engage historical and contemporary theological expressions of religious traditions and articulate one's own constructive theological position in relation to contemporary events and/or situations.

Learning Outcomes:

After taking this class, students will be able to:

1. Say, with authenticity, "Wow. I read, engaged, and analyzed some really interesting authors. Some were fun, some were a slog, but they pushed me to think and respond in ways I hadn't yet."
2. Articulate what some of the theological genres are that writers in the Christian tradition have developed.
3. Articulate what systematic theology is.

4. Speak knowledgeably about some of the touchstones in the history of Christian thought in general and on theological anthropology in particular.
5. Be able to articulate some of the major concepts in artificial intelligence, and the questions they raise about what makes humans special (or not).
6. Demonstrate awareness of what the traditional theological loci are (and say what a theological locus is), and see how the loci hang together.
7. Write academic papers with increased ability to formulate a claim and support it with apt textual evidence.

Course Requirements

1. Preparation and attendance (see above). Participation is 10% of your final grade.
2. Each student will write three 3-page papers analyzing one of the readings. You may not write on the same author more than once, and you may not write more than one paper for any given class. Class will begin with my posting one or more student papers as a way of initiating and framing our discussion of the reading. Each paper counts for 30% of your final grade. Further instructions for these papers are below.

3-page papers:

Papers will be graded according to the following 4 criteria: 1. A clearly stated claim; 2. Textual evidence to support the claim; 3. Quality of writing (organization, proper use of sentences and paragraphs, grammar, spelling, and all other mechanics); 4. Depth and seriousness of analysis. In a short paper the claim typically appears as the last sentence of the introductory paragraph (if it is not there the writer needs clearly to mark where it is, since otherwise readers will assume that sentence is the claim). A claim states the conclusion of the argument put forward in the paper. You have a great deal of freedom here. A claim might state what is the most important idea in the reading, or what the author must assume to make their argument, or what the logical extension of that argument might be, or how that argument relates to other readings on our syllabus, or what the author gets right or wrong, etc. In a short paper you will likely not be able to summarize the all the points the author makes, nor should you try. Part of your task of analysis is to prioritize what is most important to lift up for discussion for our class. Your paper will likely not follow the same organization as the reading under analysis, since the logic of your argument will not be the same as the logic of the argument of the reading. If your paragraphs tend to begin “And then . . . ; “Next . . .” then it is probably time to go back and do at least

one more draft and re-think what you are presenting and how. The main thing is to make a point about the text.

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Readings:

Students must acquire the following books:

Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*

B. A. Gerrish, *Christian Faith: Dogmatics in Outline*

Further readings will be provided via Canvas

Special Needs

Iliff engages in a collaborative effort with students with disabilities to reasonably accommodate student needs. Students are encouraged to contact their assigned adviser to initiate the process of requesting accommodations. The advising center can be contacted at advising@iliff.edu or by phone at 303.765.1146 .

Date	Day	Details	
Jan 07, 2020	Tue	Sign up for papers	due by 06:59AM
Jan 07, 2020	Tue	Background Sign-up	due by 06:59AM
Mar 24, 2020	Tue	Week 1 Discussion	due by 05:59AM
Mar 31, 2020	Tue	Week 2 Papers	due by 05:59AM
Apr 03, 2020	Fri	Week 2 Discussion	due by 05:59AM

Apr 07, 2020	Tue	Week 3 Papers	due by 05:59AM
Apr 10, 2020	Fri	Week 3 Discussion	due by 05:59AM
Apr 14, 2020	Tue	Week 4 Papers	due by 05:59AM
Apr 17, 2020	Fri	Week 4 Discussion	due by 05:59AM
Apr 21, 2020	Tue	Week 5 Papers	due by 05:59AM
Apr 24, 2020	Fri	Week 5 Discussion	due by 05:59AM
Apr 28, 2020	Tue	Week 6 Papers	due by 05:59AM
May 01, 2020	Fri	Week 6 Discussion	due by 05:59AM
May 05, 2020	Tue	Week 7 Papers	due by 05:59AM
May 08, 2020	Fri	Week 7 Discussion	due by 05:59AM
May 12, 2020	Tue	Week 8 Papers	due by 05:59AM
May 15, 2020	Fri	Week 8 Discussion	due by 05:59AM
May 19, 2020	Tue	Week 9 Papers	due by 05:59AM
May 22, 2020	Fri	Week 9 Discussion	due by 05:59AM
May 26, 2020	Tue	Week 10 Papers	due by 05:59AM
May 29, 2020	Fri	Week 10 Discussion	due by 05:59AM
May 31, 2020	Sun	Participation	due by 05:59AM