

**ST506 Systematic Theology I: God and Creation**  
**Tuesdays 6:00-8:50 p.m.**

**Dr. Tim Sansbury**

### **The Catalog Description**

In this course students will examine the character of God, the creation, and the nature of humanity. The students will be introduced to pertinent biblical texts and themes, theological terms, key figures, and the importance of culture and history in framing various debates. As the first in three courses in systematic theology, particular attention will be given to theological method and the nature of theology as biblical reasoning within God's economy of grace.

### **Learning Objectives**

The student will be able to:

- (1) Explain the nature and purpose of Systematic Theology as well as its connection to revelation, especially as found in Scripture.
- (2) Articulate and defend a position on the knowledge of God.
- (3) Explain the right role of church tradition/doctrinal history in the defense of particular doctrines.
- (4) Understand and explain the role of God/human perspective in presentation of doctrine as well as in unnecessary theological conflict.
- (5) Articulate the doctrine of the Trinity and describe the development of the doctrine in connection with historical trinitarian heresies.
- (6) Explain the so-called Attributes of God and particularly, explain the role of the doctrine of simplicity in considering individual attributes.
- (7) Articulate the connections between God's power, knowledge, and eternal nature to a right doctrine of creation, sovereignty/providence, and salvation
- (8) Understand how the doctrine of creation fits with various historical, theological, and scientific views of the reality, time, and cosmology.
- (9) Articulate a theological anthropology consistent with the nature of God, revelation in Scripture, and natural studies of human beings
- (10) Provide a reasonable answer to the nature and problem of sin compatible with their system of doctrine.
- (11) Demonstrate the role of systematic theology in the practical life of the church.

### **The Instructor**

Tim Sansbury

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Feel free to contact me whenever needed (preferably via email).

## Readings

The student is required to read carefully the following texts as assigned (not all will be read in their entirety). These texts will also be used in Systematic Theology II and III, so purchase is advised and reading beyond the class assignments may be fruitful in future classes. Thoughtful reading involves note-taking and preparation of reading notes for class discussion, noting lingering confusions, possible objections, comparisons, or anecdotal observations which might aid class discussion of the text. The Horton and Allison texts must be purchased prior to the start of class, and students should expect them to be used in all three systematic theology courses at Knox beginning in 2017-18.

- (1) Michael Horton, *Pilgrim Theology* (PT)
- (2) Greg Allison, *Historical Theology* (HT)
- (3) Additional texts and selections will be distributed, made available electronically, or are found in the student's Logos library. See below

## Tentative Calendar

### Section 1: The Nature, Purpose, and Source of Systematic Theology

#### Jan. 28 – What is Theology?

- PT, 13–24 [11 pages]
- HT, 23–34 [11 pages]
- selection from Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*

#### Feb. 4 – Knowledge of God

- PT, 25–50 [25 pages]
- HT, 187–209 [22 pages]
- selection from Calvin's Institutes, PDF

#### Feb. 11 – Revelation

- HT, 79–119 [40 pages]
- selection from Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*
- selection from Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man*

#### Feb. 18 – Scripture and Church Tradition

- PT, 51–72 [21 pages]
- HT, 162–184 [22 pages]

### Section 2: The Nature of God

#### Feb. 25 – Attributes of God

- PT, 73–88 [15 pages]
- HT, 187–209 [22 pages]

#### Mar. 3 – Attributes of God

- St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book XI (in Logos)
- HT 210–230 [20 pages]

#### Mar. 10 – Midterm exam

- Berkof, Louis, *Systematic Theology*, 64–81 (PDF) [16 pages]
- Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 259–272 (PDF) [13 pages]

**Mar. 17 – Spring Break**

**Mar. 24 – The Trinity**

- PT, 89–106 [17 pages]
- HT, 231-253 [22 pages]

**Mar. 31 – The Trinity**

- Gregory of Nyssa, *On Not Three Gods* (in Logos)
- Augustine, *On the Trinity*, Book I chs. 1-9 (in Logos)

**Section 3: Creation, Sovereignty, and Sin**

**Apr. 7 – Creation**

- PT, 107–130 [23 pages]
- HT, 254-276 [21 pages]

**Apr. 14 – Providence and Sovereignty**

- HT, 277-297 [20 pages]
- Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, Book V, available at:  
[http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14328/14328-h/14328-h.htm#Page\\_221](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14328/14328-h/14328-h.htm#Page_221)

**Apr. 21 – Humanity**

- HT, 321-341 [20 pages]
- Russell A Poldrack, *The New Mind Readers*: chapter 1 [23 pages]

**Apr. 28 – Sin**

- PT, 131–158 [27 pages]
- HT, 342-362 [20 pages]

**May 5: Final Paper Due**

**May 12: FINAL EXAM:** Cumulative exam on class lecture and reading content, focused especially on second half course topics not found on the midterm. All course learning objectives evaluated.

**The Assignments**

***Reading***

Reading must be completed before the class in which it is to be discussed. Class discussions will focus on readings, so you must be prepared to talk. Read carefully. Read charitably. Read with others. Read with the expectation that you will learn from others, even when you disagree with their main point. Read even when a text is dense and difficult, for you will learn perseverance and fortitude here. Read that which seems trite and obvious, asking how others might object or criticize. Most importantly, read because God was willing to reveal himself in written words, and because you will be called on to witness to God’s grace with words of your own.

***Reading Quizzes***

Brief reading quizzes may be distributed at the beginning of class. Expect one or all of the quiz questions to be of the form, “Did you do all of the reading?” Honesty is always expected and appreciated, but it will only receive class credit when it comes in the form, “yes.”

### ***Class Discussions***

Each student will be required to participate in class discussions during the semester. This simply involves prompting and engaging in discussion by raising pertinent questions related to the reading. All students will have brought their reading notes and, thus, be ready to engage in lively and helpful conversation.

Note: a particularly helpful way to further discussion may be to pose devil's advocate sort of questions: "what would you say if someone asked this?" or "how would you respond to this objection?"

### ***Final Paper (2500 word limit)*** (Learning Objectives 1,3,4,10)

It is not hard to find popular and even academic statements that theology, and academic theological study, is of no value and even hurts the church by cause unnecessary division over speculative proposals. Students will write an analytical paper demonstrating the practical and pastoral importance of a doctrine from the content of this course. The more seemingly esoteric the topic the better to demonstrate why theological studies are valuable for the real life church.

A good paper will (1) clearly explain the doctrine in question, including the Scriptural and historical background to it, (2) acknowledge and explain any real controversy or schism that have arisen from the doctrine in question, and (3) demonstrate the practical value for preaching, teaching, counseling, discipleship, etc. of the doctrine, and the consequences for the church of ignorance of it.

I will approve topics; some are too easy to provide much value to the student. I will also consider paper topics arguing a particular doctrine has no practical value for the church and what, then, should be done with it.

A brief synopsis will be scheduled in the appropriate week (10-13) of the semester. **Paper due date is May 5 by midnight.**

### **Grading Distribution**

Grades are apportioned as follows:

Reading, participation, and quizzes	20%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Paper	30%
Final Exam	30%

Grades may be adjusted based on attendance and participation in class.

### ***Rules for Papers***

Papers should be presented well-formatted, in 12 pt. Times New Roman or similar font, double spaced, and with reasonable margins. Proper grammar, structure, and style is expected, and when they are not present, grades will be affected. Edit carefully. Read and re-read what you have written. Ministry involves communication, so you should grow in the ability to structure your thoughts and express them well, even as you grow in the knowledge to be expressed. Paper lengths are mandatory. Communicating well is as much about communicating succinctly as it is about communicating sufficiently. Over-length papers will be graded only on the argument accomplished in the space allotted.

All written assignments may be turned in paper format or emailed to the instructor as .doc or .pdf files. You will receive email confirmation that they have been received.

Make sure you have done appropriate research, especially in primary sources. Document not only quotations but data and ideas well to ensure there is neither the reality nor the appearance of plagiarism.