



Birmingham Theological Seminary
2200 Briarwood Way
Birmingham, Alabama 35243
(205) 776-5650

Contemporary Theology Syllabus

Semester: Fall 2025

Day & Time: Mon. 5:30-8:30

Professor: Jay Haley, PhD

Email: jay@bts.education

Course: DM4910 Contemporary Theology

Room: VC

Credits: 3

Phone: (205) 790-0734

Course Description: This course will instruct the student in understanding contemporary theological thought within a biblical-theological context. Emphasis will be given to developing a biblical-theological response to contemporary and emerging theological thought relevant to the Church today.

Course Objectives:

1. Engage both internal and external evidence with respect to the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures in response to the de-emphasis of the Bible in contemporary theology.
2. Examine the work, results, and theological implications of redemption in Christ, as revealed in the Scriptures, in response to inclusive and universal systems of redemption in contemporary theology.
3. Develop a Biblical theology of redemption in Christ with respect to the relationship between law and grace in the life of a believer in Christ.
4. Develop a Biblical/anthropological theology with respect to Christian thinking and what it means to be human, in response to the secularization of human beings in contemporary theology.

Required Texts:

Comfort, Philip Wesley, Editor. *The Origin of the Bible*. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. (308 pages)

Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book Two, The Knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ, First Disclosed to the Fathers Under the Law, and Then to Us in the Gospel*, The Library of Christian Classics, Volume XX. (293 pages)

Lloyd-Jones, D. Martyn, *Romans, Exposition of Chapter 6, The New Man*. The Banner of Truth Trust. (313 pages)

MacGregor, Kirk R, *Contemporary Theology: An Introduction*. Zondervan Academic. (365 pages)

Trueman, Carl. R. *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*. Crossway. (407 pages)

Collateral or Recommended Texts:

Bruce, F. F., *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* Eerdmans.

Blomberg, Craig. *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*. Inter-varsity Press.

Stewart, Kenneth J. *In Search of Ancient Roots: The Christian Past and the Evangelical Crisis*. Inter-varsity Press.

Smith, David L. *Theologies of the 21st Century: Trends in Contemporary Theology*. Wipf & Stock.

Yarhouse, Mark A., *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*, Intervarsity Press.

Hoekema, Anthony A., *Created in God's Image*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Course Requirements and Assessments:

This course is an analysis of contemporary theology through the lens of Reformed theology, informed by the Word of God. In so doing, we will think through and develop biblical and theological responses to nonbiblical contemporary theology and its cultural influencers.

This course involves the reading of various texts concerned with:

1. The literary structure of the Scriptures and the reliability of the Scriptures.
2. The theology of biblical atonement and redemption.
3. The ontological reality of being in union with Christ as a believer in Christ and the implications of this union.
4. The contemporary theological systems that reject the Scriptures and its theology.
5. Contemporary cultural thinking and doctrines that oppose the doctrines of Scripture and the Church

The class expectations and grading are comprised of the following:

1. Reading the assigned texts
2. Completing weekly assignments and participation in class discussions
3. Submitting four personal response papers based on the reading
4. Submitting a research paper

Note: The research paper is designed for the student to choose a subject that will contribute to the development of the student's dissertation development.

COURSE REQUIREMENT	GRADE WEIGHT	COMMENTS
Class Participation	20%	
Readings / Personal Response Papers	50%	
Research Paper	30%	
Total	100%	

BTS Format, Style, and Writing Standards:

All research papers must be formatted in accordance with Turabian Chicago standards including the title page. All papers are to be #12 font Times New Roman and Double-Spaced. Any paper not

conforming to these standards will automatically be dropped one letter grade. Please see the BTS Turabian Form and Style Guide for more information on turning in papers and assignments.

The BTS Turabian Form and Style Guide and other resources are available on the BTS Research and Writing Center webpage: <https://www.btswritingcenter.net/>

In addition, the Research and Writing Center runs 2-3 writing workshops every semester. They are very helpful and highly recommended.

BTS Plagiarism / Generative AI Policy

Unless clearly directed by the instructor, the students should submit their own work, independent of artificial intelligence tools. Use of generative AI to write papers or to write significant portions of assignments is considered an ethical violation of our Student Code of Conduct and to be a violation of general academic integrity, which could result in a zero on the assignment and/or a lowered letter grade for the course by the professor. If determined to be an egregious violation, it could lead to further sanctions administered through the Academic Committee, including expulsion from BTS.

Course Schedule

DAY	DATE	AGENDA / TOPIC
Monday	9/8	Readings and Materials Read Comfort, <i>The Origin of the Bible</i> , Sections One and Two. Assignments Develop responses to the following questions. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe in your own words the content of the Bible as a whole and its significance for the Church and orthodox theology today. 2. How would you argue that the Bible is the Word of God based on its content alone? 3. How do you present the Scripture as the inerrant and infallible Word of God in your teaching or preaching? 4. Describe the overall attitude of the members in your church regarding the authority of the Bible.
Monday	9/15	Readings and Materials Read Comfort, <i>The Origin of the Bible</i> , Sections Three, Four, and Five Assignments Develop responses to the following questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In your opinion, how should a pastor or teacher of the Scriptures pursue his personal development in biblical scholarship? 2. Describe the proper role of Christian apologetics in relationship to biblical exegesis in teaching and preaching. 3. How much to you teach or preach from the New Testament compared to the Old Testament? Describe your approach in determining the texts from which you preach.

		4. Briefly describe the literary styles of Scripture and its importance to the reader of Scripture.
Monday	9/22	<p>Readings and Materials Read Calvin, <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book Two, The Knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ, First Disclosed to the Fathers Under the Law, and Then to Us in the Gospel</i>, Chapters I – VIII.</p> <p>Assignments Develop responses to the following questions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does Calvin develop biblically the condition of fallen humanity? 2. How does Calvin develop the relationships between spiritual depravity, freedom of the will, and God’s grace bestowed upon believers in their redemption in Christ? 3. How does Calvin develop the role of the Holy Spirit in the work of redemption in Christ? 4. How does Calvin develop the reasons for God giving us His Law?
Monday	9/29	<p>Readings and Materials Read Calvin, <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book Two, The Knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ, First Disclosed to the Fathers Under the Law, and Then to Us in the Gospel</i>, Chapters IX – XVII.</p> <p>Assignments Write a five to six-page paper, which develops redemption in Christ through the atonement of Christ, as our Mediator of the covenant, in response to contemporary theological systems of inclusive atonement.</p>
Monday	10/6	<p>Readings and Materials Read Lloyd-Jones, <i>Romans, Exposition of Chapter 6, The New Man</i>, Chapters 1 – 11</p> <p>Assignments Develop responses to the following questions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does Paul develop our union in Christ and the effects of sin in the life of the believer? 2. How does Paul view the relationship between grace and sin in the life of the believer? 3. How does Paul develop union in Christ with obedience to Christ?
Monday	10/13	<p>Readings and Materials Read Lloyd-Jones, <i>Romans, Exposition of Chapter 6, The New Man</i>, Chapters 12 – 22</p> <p>Assignments Write a five to six-page paper, which develops our union in Christ and the work of sanctification in a Christian’s life, in response to the growing antinomian view of Christianity.</p>
Monday	10/20	Fall Break

Monday	10/27	Readings and Materials Read MacGregor, <i>Contemporary Theology</i> , Chapters 1 – 19 Assignments Develop responses to the following questions. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Briefly explain the influence of eighteen and nineteen century philosophical thought upon evangelical / Reformed theology and the Church. 2. How would you characterize contemporary evangelicalism today with respect to its understanding of the person and work of Christ? 3. Explain your understanding of 21st century Pentecostalism and its impact on the Church? 4. How do you respond to Pentecostalism today?
Monday	11/3	Readings and Materials Read MacGregor, <i>Contemporary Theology</i> , Chapters 20 – 38 Assignments Develop responses to the following questions. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write a five to six-page paper that engages liberation theology and feminist theology with a biblical view of redemption in Christ.
Monday	11/10	Readings and Materials Read Trueman, <i>The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self</i> , Chapters 1 – 4 Assignments Consider Trueman’s analysis of the philosophical development of the nature of selfhood. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain the significance of the philosophies of Rousseau, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Blake on cultural perceptions of human beings today? 2. How did this historical philosophical development impact cultural morality? 3. How has the Church responded to this philosophical and cultural development?
Monday	11/17	Readings and Materials Read Trueman, <i>The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self</i> , Chapters 5 – 7 Assignments <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why did the writings (philosophies) of Nietzsche, Marx, and Darwin impact secular culture so dramatically even up to this day? 2. How would you characterize this impact upon the Church today? 3. How should the Church respond to these ideas?
Monday	11/24	Thanksgiving Break
Monday	12/1	Readings and Materials Read Truman, <i>The Rise and Fall of the Modern Self</i> , Chapters 8 – 10 and Part IV Assignments

		Write an eight to ten-page paper where you respond to the “sexualization” and “politicizing” of the modern self from a biblical perspective. How should the Church respond to this cultural development? What is the risk to our culture if the Church does not respond biblically?
Monday	12/8	Assignments Write a fifteen-page research paper on a topic relevant to the class (if possible) that contributes to your dissertation development. Use the Turabian style of formatting for your paper. Include at least fifteen scholarly references.

Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to demonstrate punctuality and attend all class sessions. Any absences should be communicated to the professor beforehand. Students may miss up to three classes with impunity.

[NOTE: Standard BTS Attendance Policy is that students may not miss any more than three classes without a course penalty. Given the reality of distance-based students and video conference options, if students **clearly identify at the beginning of the semester that they will primarily be asynchronous students (depending on the digital recording of class because of a conflict with their schedule)**, then the student may attend without incurring a penalty for their “absences,” providing they are turning in all their work on time. Please see the BTS Faculty Handbook for more information on synchronous and asynchronous video conference students and policies and the commitments a faculty member agrees to when they teach a video conference or a live hybrid class]

Class Policies and Procedures:

- BTS highly recommends using handwritten note taking methods in class and keeping computer usage to a minimum.
- Other electronics should be used sparingly.
- All assignments must be submitted by email by 11:59 (CDT/CST) on the due date.
- Late assignments will incur a -3-point deduction per weekday after the due date, except in cases of emergency communicated to the professor.
- Missed tests/exams may only be made up with an excused absence, preferably in advance of class. Excused absence tests/exams must be made up before the final day of the semester.

Video Conference Policies and Procedures:

- Please utilize the BTS “Best VC (Video Conference) Practices” information for the course.
- Laptops/Desktops are the preferred method of attending a video conference course. Information will be shared on the screen, so phones will be less useful.

- In Video Conference, it is preferable for the student to keep their video on (when possible) so that students and faculty may engage with one another. Extended periods of dark screen will result in follow-up and potential removal from class.
- Other electronics should be used sparingly.

Course Bibliography / Extended Bibliography

Baucham, Voddie T. Jr. *fault lines. The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe*. Salem Books.

Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 volumes. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic. 2203 ISBN 0-8010-2632-6

Berkhof, Louis. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1941. ISBN: 080283020X. (784 pp.).

Berkhof, Louis. *Summary of Christian Doctrine*. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997. ISBN: 0851510558. (184 pp.).

Blamires, Harry, *The Christian Mind: How should a Christian think?* Regent College Publishing.

Boice, James Montgomery. *Foundations of the Christian Faith*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986. ISBN: 0877849919. (740 pp.).

Buchanan, James. *The Doctrine of Justification*. The Banner of Truth Trust.

Boston, Thomas. *Commentary on the Shorter Catechism*. Edmonton: Still Waters Revival Books, 1993 reprint. ISBN: 0921148248. (2 vols.: 1335 pp.).

Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. John T. McNeill, editor; Ford Lewis Battles, Translator. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960. ISBN 0664220207 (vol. 1) ISBN: 0664220215 (vol. 2). (1734 pp.).

Dabney, Robert L. *Systematic Theology*. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1985 reprint. ISBN: 0851514537. (903 pp.).

Ferguson, Sinclair B. *The Holy Spirit*, Intervarsity Press.

Grudem, Wayne A. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1995. ISBN 0310286700. (1296 pp.).

Hodge, Charles. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1982 reprint. ISBN: 0802881351. (3 vols.: 2260 pp.).

Murray, John. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*. Eerdmans.

- Myers, Kenneth A. *All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes, Christians and Popular Culture*, Crossway Books.
- Reymond, Robert L. *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith, 2nd Edition*. Nashville: Nelson Reference and Electronic Publishing, 1998. ISBN: 0849913179. (1252pp)
- Ridgeley, Thomas. *Commentary on the Larger Catechism*. Edmonton: Still Waters Revival Books, 1993 reprint. ISBN: 0921148305. (2 vols.: 1313 pp.)
- Sproul, R. C. *The Consequences of Ideas*, Crossway Books.
- Stewart, Kenneth J. *In Search of Ancient Roots: The Christian Past and the Evangelical Identity Crisis*. IVP Academic.
- Turretin, Francis. *Institutes of the Elenctic Theology*, 3 volumes. Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing Company. 1992 ISBN 0-87552-451-6
- Watkin, Christopher. *Biblical Critical Theory: How the Bible's Unfolding Story Makes Sense of Modern Life and Culture*, Zondervan Academic.

GRADING CRITERIA AND ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

A to A-	B to B-	C to C-	D to D-
Correct spelling and grammar/punctuation	Minor errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation	Multiple errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation per page	Difficult to read due to English writing errors
Smooth writing that provides for effective and efficient reading	Writing is acceptable, but not as organized and coherent	Writing is not smooth, sometimes confusing and inconsistent	Writing lacks clarity, focus, structure, and is incoherent
Person and format are proper for assignment	Person and format are inconsistent	Person and format are not appropriate	Person and format are totally inappropriate
Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriately used, cited, and clearly supports main argument	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriate but need more depth and use of critical thinking	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are inadequate for main argument and do not reflect understanding	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are improperly used, over used, under used, or cited in error
Paper completely conforms to <i>Turabian's Manual for Writers</i>	Paper generally conforms to <i>Turabian's Manual for Writers</i>	Paper somewhat conforms to <i>Turabian's Manual for Writers</i>	Paper does not conform to <i>Turabian's Manual for Writers</i>

BTS Outcomes Evaluation

Please rank each outcome on a scale of 1-5

1: this outcome is not covered in this class

2: this outcome is only touched on in this class

3: this outcome is discussed in conjunction with class material

4: this outcome lightly assessed as part of course assessment (one assignment)

5: this outcome is fully integrated into the assessment of this course (multiple assignments)

1. Scripture: Students will effectively articulate the truth of Scripture and Scripture as truth, engaged with learning biblical knowledge and reformed principles of the supremacy of Scripture as God's word.
2. Reformed Theology: Students will be able to engage and reproduce the primary and essential elements of Reformed Theology.
3. Local Church: Students will be engaged in applied ministry projects in the local church
4. Wisdom: Students will grow in character; increasing in their demonstration of wisdom and its fruits.
5. Discipleship: Students will be able to understand and articulate the nature and importance of discipleship—both ordinary (means of grace) and extraordinary (biblical counseling).
6. Communication: Students will grow in the efficacy of their communication (articulation, teaching/speaking, and preaching—respective to various departments) both in content knowledge and rhetorical strategies.
7. Worldview: Students will demonstrate a growing ability to apply God's word to all spheres of life, evidenced through class discussion and other assigned assessments.
8. Leadership: Students will grow in their understanding of godly leadership and ability to lead others in service of the local church.

Outcome	Rank	Rational (one sentence)
Scripture	5	Integral component of the class
Reformed Theology	5	Integral component of the class
Local Church	3	Important application to the local church
Wisdom	2	Application of Godly wisdom to worldly wisdom
Discipleship	1	Not meaningfully addressed in this class
Communication	2	Theological development through writing
Worldview	5	Application of biblical worldview to philosophical worldview
Leadership	2	Not meaningfully addressed in this class