



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

**Semester:** Fall 2025  
(Theology Proper – God)  
**Day & Time:** Tues., 5:30 – 7:30

**Professor:** Dr. Roy McDaniel  
**Email:** roy.e.mcdaniel@gmail.com

**Course:** ST 1421 Systematic Theology I

**Room:** Westminster Presbyterian Church,  
Huntsville

**Credits:** 2

**Phone:** (256) 600-3380

**Course Description:** This course introduces students to foundational theological topics, focusing on the doctrines of revelation, Scripture, and God (Theology Proper). Topics include the inspiration and authority of Scripture, the attributes and names of God, the doctrine of the Trinity, divine decree, providence, and predestination. A biblical and Reformed approach is used to establish a coherent and worshipful understanding of the triune God.

**Course Objectives:**

1. Understand the possibility, limits, conditions, and joy of knowing God according to classical Christian theology.
2. Identify and define the attributes of God according to classical Christian theology and proclaim their significance to Christian life and theology.
3. Articulate a classical Christian doctrine of the Trinity and identify its importance for Christian life and theology.
4. Articulate a classical Christian doctrine of creation and identify its implications for Christian life and theology.
5. Articulate a Reformed doctrine of providence and explain its application to pastoral care.
6. Identify and define the attributes of Scripture according to classical Christian theology.

**Required Texts:**

Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2021). **Or some other edition.** Part One. 167 pages.

Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion*; in *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, eds. Brian Davies and G.R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). Also readily available online; e.g., <https://archive.org/details/proslogionwithre0000anse/mode/2up>. 20 pages.

Michael Allen and Scott Swain, eds. *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016).

- “Introduction,” 6 pages
- Chapter 1: “Knowledge of God,” 23 pages
- Chapter 6, “Creation out of Nothing,” 18 pages
- Chapter 7, “Providence,” 17 pages.

Timothy Ward, *Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009). 170 pages.

Scott Swain, *The Trinity: An Introduction* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020). 110 pages.

John Webster, “What Makes Theology Theological?” in *Journal of Analytic Theology*, Vol. 3 (May 2015). PDF available from professor. 11 pages.

**Recommended Texts:**

The Nicene Creed (<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/109020/Nicene-Creed.pdf>)

*The Westminster Confession of Faith*, chs. 1-5 (cf. *London Baptist Confession*, 1689, chs. 1-5)

Thomas Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000).

John Webster, *God without Measure: Working Papers in Christian Theology, Vol. 1: God and the Works of God* (London: T&T Clark, 2016).

Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Donald Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009).

Kevin Vanhoozer, “Holy Scripture,” in *Reformed Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic*, ed. Swain and Allen (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016).

Ian A. McFarland, *From Nothing: A Theology of Creation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014).

### **Course Requirements and Assessments:**

1. Weekly attendance and participation, 10%
  - Be present consistently, ready to discuss the texts, assignments, and lectures
  - Notify instructor of reasons for any absences
2. Reading Questions, 20%
  - Each week, reflect on assigned questions that engage with a portion of that week's reading. Be prepared to share answers with the class.
  - Questions will be provided by professor on Blackbaud.
3. Short Essays, 40 %
  - Write four short essays, around 500 words each, answering the following prompts:
    - Short essay 1: *Of what value is general revelation?*
    - Short essay 2: *Scripture presents God as both compassionate towards the needy and furious with sinners. Does that contradict the doctrine of divine impassibility?*
    - Short essay 3: *What is the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son? Is it biblical?*
    - Short essay 4: *Identify and explain some of the pastoral implications of the original goodness of creation.*
  - Each essay must state its thesis in the opening paragraph in a single, well-crafted sentence.
  - The thesis should then be supported by a tight argument that draws from both biblical exegesis and sound secondary sources.
  - Papers should include a title page and be double-spaced. Place biblical references in parenthesis, but indicate reference to secondary sources with footnotes.
  - **Due dates:**
    - *Short essay 1 – September 16*
    - *Short essay 2 – September 30*
    - *Short essay 3 – October 14*
    - *Short essay 4 – November 4*
4. Research paper, 30%
  - A well-researched, tightly argued paper of 10-12 pages
  - Topics and thesis statements must be presented in a formal proposal and approved by the instructor before proceeding.
  - **Due dates: Proposal – November 17; Final Paper – December 12**

### **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 Style Guide for more information on turning in papers and assignments.

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

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

### **BTS Plagiarism / Generative AI Policy**

In addition to the BTS plagiarism policy, BTS is implementing a new 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:**

Date	Lecture	Reading	Assignments Due
Sept. 2	Lecture 1 – Knowing God: Possibility, Limits, and Conditions	<b>Allen and Swain</b> , Introduction & ch 1  <b>Webster</b> , “What Makes Theology Theological”?	
Sept. 9	Lecture 1 – Knowing God: Possibility, Limits, and Conditions	<b>Berkhof</b> , I.1, “The Existence of God,” I.2, “The Knowability of God;” I.3, “Relation of the Being and Attributes of God”	
Sept. 16	Lecture 2 – Infinite, Eternal, and Unchangeable Love: The Perfections of God	<b>Berkhof</b> , I.4, “The Names of God;” I.5, “The Attributes of God in General”  <b>Anselm</b> (all)	Short Essay 1
Sept. 23	Lecture 2 – Infinite, Eternal, and Unchangeable Love: The Perfections of God	<b>Berkhof</b> , I.6, “The Incommunicable Attributes of God;” I.7, “The Communicable Attributes of God”  <b>Swain</b> , Intro, chs. 1-3	
Sept. 30	Lecture 3 – Life in Himself: The Beauty and Mystery of the Trinity	<b>Berkhof</b> , I.8, “The Holy Trinity”  <b>Swain</b> , chs. 4-6	Short Essay 2
Oct. 7	Lecture 3 – Life in Himself: The Beauty and Mystery of the Trinity	<b>Berkhof</b> , II.1, “The Divine Decrees in General;” II.2, “Predestination”  <b>Swain</b> , chs. 7-8	
Oct. 14	Lecture 4 – From Nothing but Love: Creation and the Goodness of God	<b>Berkhof</b> , II.3, “Creation in General”  <b>Swain and Allen</b> , ch. 6, “Creation out of Nothing”	Short Essay 3
<b>Oct. 21</b>	<b>FALL BREAK</b>	<b>FALL BREAK</b>	
Oct. 28	Lecture 4 – From Nothing but Love: Creation and the Goodness of God	<b>Berkhof</b> , II.4, “Creation of the Spiritual World,” II.5, “Creation of the Material World”	

Nov. 4	Lecture 5 – God Meant it for Good: Providence and the Wisdom of God	<b>Berkhof</b> , II. 6, “Providence”  <b>Swain and Alen</b> , ch. 7, “Providence”	Short Essay 4
Nov. 11	Lecture 5 – God Meant it for Good: Providence and the Wisdom of God	<b>Ward</b> , chs. 1-3	
Nov. 17	Lecture 6 – <i>Viva Vox Dei</i> : Scripture in the Economy of Salvation	<b>Ward</b> , chs. 4-6	Research Paper Proposal
<b>Nov. 24</b>	<b>Thanksgiving</b>	<b>Thanksgiving</b>	
Dec. 2	Lecture 6 – <i>Viva Vox Dei</i> : Scripture in the Economy of Salvation		
Dec. 12			<b><i>Research Paper Due Friday, December 12</i></b>

### 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**

##### Patristic and Medieval (All available in multiple editions and/or online)

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*.

Augustine, *On the Trinity*.

Augustine, *Enchiridion*

Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theological Orations*.

Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity*.

John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*.

Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*.

##### Classic Reformed Theology

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960).

Petrus van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology, Vol. 2: Faith in the Triune God*, trans. Todd M. Rester, ed. Joel R. Beeke (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019).

*Synopsis of a Purer Theology*, eds. William den Boer and Riemer A. Faber (Davenant Press). Disputations 1-11.

Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1992-1997).

#### Systematic Theologies (Reformed and otherwise)

Daniel Treier, *Introducing Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2019).

Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, Vols. 1-2*, trans. John Vriend, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).

Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 1* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson).

J. van Genderen and W.H. Velema, *Concise Reformed Dogmatics*, trans. Gerrit Bilkes and Ed M. van der Maas (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008).

Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 1*. Multiple editions. Available online at <https://archive.org/details/systematictheolo01strouoft>.

Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity*, trans. Cyril Vollert (New York, Herder & Herder, 1946).

Thomas Oden, *Classic Christianity: A Systematic Theology* (New York: Harper One, 1992).

Katherine Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology, Vols. 1-2* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press).

#### Doctrine of God

Stephen J. Duby, *God in Himself: Scripture, Metaphysics, and the Task of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2019).

Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything* (Downers Grove, IL: Crossway, 2010).

Fred Sanders, *The Triune God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016).

J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1973).

Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012).

John Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002).



Kevin Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

James Dolezal, *All That is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Theism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017).

Gilles Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to the Catholic Doctrine of the Triune God*, trans. Matthew Levering (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2011).

Edward Feser, *Five Proofs of the Existence of God* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2017).

Richard Bauckham, *Who is God? Key Moments of Biblical Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2020).

#### Doctrine of Revelation and/or Scripture

Scott Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and Its Interpretation* (London: T&T Clark, 2011).

J. Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010).

John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1987).

J.I. Packer, *God Has Spoken* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1979).

Sinclair Ferguson, *From the Mouth of God: Trusting, Reading, and Applying the Bible* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2014).

Avery Cardinal Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983).

#### Doctrines of Creation and Providence

Andrew Davison, *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis*, trans. David G. Preston (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1984).

Henri Blocher, *Evil and the Cross: An Analytical Look at the Problem of Pain* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2004).

Paul Helm, *The Providence of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993).

Matthew Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of Creation: Cosmos, Creatures, and the Wise and Good Creator* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017).

David Bentley Hart, *The Doors of the Sea: Where Was God in the Tsunami?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).

Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011).

### 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 Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper generally conforms to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper somewhat conforms to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper does not conform to Turabian's <i>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	Systematic theology is rooted in and enlivened by sound biblical exegesis, and it exists for the sake of biblical exegesis.
Reformed Theology	4	The unique contributions of the Reformed tradition will often be discussed and evaluated.
Local Church	2	The tradition and life of the church will be a pressing concern throughout, but there will not be any applied ministry projects.
Wisdom	3	The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a healthy theology of God,

		creation, and providence is essential to Christian wisdom.
Discipleship	2	Theology serves discipleship by giving theodramatic direction, but practical matters of discipleship are not a focus in this course.
Communication	4	Several assessments will test the students' ability to communicate the truth accurately, winsomely, and pastorally.
Worldview	3	The doctrines of God, creation, and providence profoundly shape—even constitute—the Christian worldview.
Leadership	1	Not assessed in this course.