

Wesley Theological Seminary
Course of Study School
July 2016 Term 1 | July 11 – 21, 2016

COS 122 – Theological Heritage I: Introduction
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Course Objectives

This course introduces the student to theological reflection in the Wesleyan tradition. Basic terms, tasks, and methods of Christian theology will be introduced. Representative classical themes will be defined and illustrated. The course provides a foundation for further historical and theological study.

Students will be able to:

1. Examine their understanding of faith, sin, salvation, grace, and the place of doctrine in the life of the Church.
2. Use and understand classical theological terms and themes.
3. Critically consider the sources of theological reflection, including scripture, tradition, experience and reason.
4. Reflect theologically as a resource for pastoral ministry.

Pre-Course Assignment

Background

This course introduces the student to theological reflection in the Wesleyan tradition. Basic terms, tasks, and methods of Christian theology will be introduced. Representative classical themes will be defined and illustrated. The course provides a foundation for further historical and theological study.

One of the key elements of the course will be in examining the role of Christian doctrine in the life of the church, the relationship between doctrine and theology, and the role of a pastor as a practical theologian who knows how to engage in theological reflection with reference to the church's doctrinal heritage.

With this in mind, the pre-course assignment will be focused on taking some beginning steps in doctrinal understanding and theological reflection.

Instructions

The following assignment should be completed in 7-8 pages. Each question should be answered in 1 to 2 well-formed paragraphs. Students are welcome to cite biblical passages in their responses, but no citation of other outside sources is necessary. Additionally, if biblical passages are cited, they should be used judiciously and by way of example; that is, these questions are meant to be answered through reasoned responses by the student rather than by copious quotation.

Each of the questions below is intended to provoke you to think critically and reflectively about God, your experience of God, and your practice of the Christian faith. You can feel free to number the responses in your paper – 1), 2), 3), etc. – to make it clear when you move from one question to the next. For a paper of this type, no introductory or concluding paragraph is required.

Here are the questions:

- 1) Who are you? Why are you devoting your life to ministry in the church of Jesus Christ? What is your background? (Note – Asking biographical questions like these can tend to make the respondent answer in great detail. Stay to 1 to 2 well-formed paragraphs and use the discipline necessary to give a solid, but not overly long response.)
- 2) Who is God? How do we know anything definitively about God?
- 3) What was your first significant experience with God? How old were you, and what was the setting? Was it in the context of worship, personal conversation, prayer, mission, or something else? What did this experience teach you about God? What did it teach you about yourself?
- 4) Who is Jesus Christ? In your understanding, why do we say that Jesus is “truly God and truly man” in our confession?¹
- 5) Can you testify to an experience of new birth? (This is the same thing as regeneration, being born again, or being born by the Spirit.) What was that experience like? How old were you, and in what context did it occur?
- 6) When did you begin to study the Scriptures on a really serious level? What guide or guides do you use to help you understand the Bible? What does it mean to you to say that the Bible is the word of God?
- 7) What is the purpose of prayer? What is prayer? How often do you pray, and how do you pray?

¹ Article II—Jesus Christ of The Confession of Faith, ¶104, *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2012* (Nashville: UMPH, 2012), 71.

Guidelines

The paper should be written using a 12-pt font with 1-inch standard margins. The total paper should not exceed 7-8 pages. Students should include their name in the upper-right hand corner of the paper.

The pre-course assignment should be completed using Microsoft Word and submitted to Blackboard by Wednesday, June 1st, at 5:00 p.m. Since the assignment is being made five months in advance of its due date no extensions will be granted for late work. Students should make arrangements for completing the assignment in the allotted amount of time, and any student that does not submit the assignment on time will receive a failing grade. There are no exceptions to this policy.

Method of Evaluation

This pre-course assignment does not require any research into text-based sources and thus there is no right or wrong answer to most of the questions. Students should not fear that their answers to questions like “Who is God?” and “Who is Jesus Christ?” do not measure up to some pre-determined level of expertise, for example. Instead, students will be graded on how carefully and reflectively they write, how well-formed their sentences and paragraphs are, and how seriously they take the assignment in general.

These pre-course assignment instructions should be read carefully to insure that students are following instructions correctly. Grammar and syntax will be taken into account in grading. The degree to which students are able to demonstrate the ability to reason and reflect insightfully is important to the ability to do well on the assignment.

The grading scale is listed below:

A+	Superior
A	Outstanding
A-	Excellent
B+	Very Good
B	Good
B-	Above Average
C+	Slightly Above Average
C	Average
C-	Slightly Below Average
D+	Deficient
D	Significantly Deficient
D-	Almost Failing
F-	Failing

Any questions should be directed to the course instructor at the contact information listed at the head of this assignment.