

BRITE–BLUE RIDGE INSTITUTE FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Systematic Theology I Syllabus *Spring 2019*

Green Ridge Baptist Church, 5521 Green Ridge Road, Roanoke, VA
January 29–May 7, 2019
Tuesdays 6:30pm to 8:30pm

Dr. W. Duncan Rankin

Course Description

This course is a study of **Theology proper** (God, Trinity, decree, creation, providence) & **Anthropology** (man, Fall, sin). Our survey of doctrine will be based on the exegesis of Scripture, with continual reference to historical theology. All along we will remember the crucial nexus between faith & life, doctrine & practice, endeavoring to stress the importance of these doctrines for Christian thought, life, & ministry.

Course Objectives

To introduce the student to the main Biblical themes concerning the Doctrine of God & the doctrine of Humanity is the main objective of this course. We also will endeavor to increase the student's understanding of these doctrines & the historical/contemporary debates surrounding them, as well as the ability to communicate them in both academic & popular settings. To strengthen the student's commitment to historic Christian theology (for BRITE's Theological Foundations, see <https://www.brite-va.org/about-brite/>) & to assist in preparing the student to deal with unbiblical systems of theology in their various contemporary manifestations are also important course goals. Finally, we will seek to move the student to obedience & worship of the God who redeemed him or her.

Course Reading Prerequisite

All students who have never taken a systematic theology class should before the first class read Donald Macleod's *A Faith to Live By* (Christian Focus, 2015), which is only \$9.99 in Kindle format from Amazon for a Kindle device, app, or any browser. Yes, physical copies also meet this requirement, but only if they are also the revised edition, which was published in hardback in 2002 & in softback in 2010. While a little weak on the doctrine of creation, the sweep of this fine work will introduce you to a broad range of theological concepts.

Course Digital Library Requirement

Providing affordable theological education to the Virginia Blue Ridge region, BRITE now requires all students taking courses for credit to invest in its boutique institutional digital library resource: the Custom Designed BRITE Logos Package.

Core textbooks for BRITE theology courses are included in this digital library resource at a lower cost than the physical texts.

You will also benefit in other ways from your BRITE digital library:

- * Cut & paste quotations, letting Logos automatically do the work of providing the perfect proper footnotes for your reaction papers, Berkhof Study Guide Questions, & term papers!
- * Read more quickly & with better comprehension, since key passages highlighted by other readers are visible in each ebook!
- * Speed research by effortlessly searching within books for key theological words & biblical texts.

Adding to your Logos digital library thru your years of study will also be a help:

- * Gather the commentaries you need for teaching & preaching in Logos: there is no better way to prepare a lesson or sermon.
- * Never buy a bookshelf or pack a box of books again!
- * Always have your library readily at hand on your laptop!
- * Keep your library at your fingertips with the Logos iPhone or Android app, so you have a fighting chance to answer those “I’m gonna stump you!” questions we all get at the most inconvenient times....

Do not rush out & get a Logos package directly yourself: it will cost more & not contain all that you need. A special institutional discount has been negotiated by BRITE for our own boutique package resource! After registration, all for-credit students will receive an email from Logos with details on how to get the Custom Designed BRITE Logos Package at this helpful discount.

Course Requirements

Class Attendance

Class attendance for all lectures will be imperative for successful completion of this course.

Spring Break is scheduled for March 19th, with class cancelled for this middle day of the semester, unless a previous class had to be cancelled as a Snow Day, ruining our dreams of a Spring Break beach holiday! Snow Day cancellations will be announced by the professor or Dean by email.

During lecture hours, questions are welcomed, but students are asked to hold them until asked for by the instructor.

All students should bring a Bible, the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, & the *Trinity Hymnal* (1990) to class each week. Classes will begin with a student devotional & singing. Musical accompaniment provided by the prof!

Three additional reading seminars will also be held outside of class lecture time via small group Zoom online video conference arranged by the professor with all for-credit students. Audit students who have completed the seminar reading will also be welcome. These monthly Zoom seminars will cover the reading seminar texts assigned below.

Required Textbooks

- (1) John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Westminster/John Knox, 1960 translation of the 1559 Latin edition, edited by John T. McNeill & translated by Ford Lewis Battles), 1:96-423. [Included in Custom Designed BRITE Logos Package]
- (2) Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Eerdmans, revised & enlarged 1996 edition), 19-261. [Included in Custom Designed BRITE Logos Package]
- (3) Donald Macleod, *Shared Life* (Christian Focus, 2005), 9-136.
 - * This book is not yet in ebook format on Logos or Kindle.
 - * It is currently in print (ISBN 978-1857921281), available via Westminster Seminary Bookstore or Amazon for under \$10.
 - * Audit students are also encouraged to read this excellent small book, so that they may participate in the classroom discussion of it during the Trinity lectures.

Required Zoom Reading Seminar Texts

- (1) Gerald Bray, *The Doctrine of God* (IVP, 1993) [Included in the Custom Designed BRITE Logos Package]
- (2) Charles Sherlock, *The Doctrine of Humanity* (IVP, 1996) [Included in the Custom Designed BRITE Logos Package]

- * Details on each of these Zoom Online Video Conferences TBD with prof.
- * Do not panic: these Zoom seminars will be more manageable than you might think!
- * The first Zoom will be held in February & the second in April.
- * See the professor at the close of the first course for more details.

Evaluation:

Because of its central & essential importance to the Gospel, pour your heart, mind, & strength into the learning of this course. It will glorify God & bless His people for years to come!

1. Reading Seminars (20%)

Three reading seminars will be held outside of class lecture time via small group Zoom online video conference arranged by the professor with all for-credit students. Audit students who have completed the seminar reading will also be welcome.

The 2 Zoom seminars will cover the reading seminar texts assigned above. Details on each of these Zoom Online Video Conferences TBD with prof. The first will be held in February & the second in April. See the professor at the close of the first course for more details

A three page reading response report will be required for each Zoom seminar, due one week after each respective seminar.

2. Berkhof Study Guide Questions (20%)

Answers to the Berkhof Study Guide Questions which follow later in the syllabus should be submitted by each student taking the course for credit.

Special care should be made to footnote where in Berkhof's *Systematic Theology* the answers may be found, as well as in any relevant parallel places in Calvin's *Institutes* & the *Westminster Confession and Catechisms*.

Answers are due a week after the close of the appropriate section of overlapping lectures. See the professor after class for more details on this assignment.

3. Calvin Outline (20%)

Each for-credit student should prepare an original outline of the reading assigned in Calvin's *Institutes*. Beginning with the book, chapter, & section divisions included in the text, expand your outline by briefly summarizing a key point or two in each section, but no more. Outlines will be graded comparatively.

Outlines should be submitted in two parts:

- (1) Outline of Book I, chapters 10-18 is due March 26
- (2) Outline of Book II, chapters 1-8 is due with the Final Exam

4. Term Paper (20%)

A 10 page theological research paper is required for this course, including a title page, introductory paragraph, clear thesis statement, section headings, concluding paragraph, footnotes, and bibliography.

Papers must only cover a theological substantially matter raised in Donald Macleod's *Shared Life* & agreed with the professor. No exceptions will be allowed.

Sources cited in a footnote & included in the bibliography must at least include the following 20 items:

- (1) One dictionary of theology or historical theology
- (2) Two commentaries on Old Testament books
- (3) Three commentaries on New Testament books
- (4) Four creeds or confessions of faith
- (5) All three required course textbooks
- (6) One course seminar text
- (7) Two journal articles
- (8) Three major systematic theology works
- (9) One other work

The following schedule should be followed in submitting this paper:

- (1) One page topic proposal is due on February 15
- (2) Two page bibliography is due on March 1
- (3) Three page thesis statement & outline is due on March 15
- (4) A draft of the paper is due on April 10
- (5) The final paper submission is due with the Final Exam

Draft papers will be marked extensively by the professor & returned to the students, so that their final paper submissions & grades will be stronger. With this in mind, draft papers must be submitted in MS Word, so that the professor can use the Review function to include comments & proposed changes, which the students can then read & either accept or reject.

Students should expect to lose marks for deficiencies in deadlines, form, content, or argument. See the Course Grading Guide at the end of this syllabus for more detail on how papers will be marked.

However, students that submit their draft in a timely fashion & do not

shrink from completing this assignment have good grounds on which to hope for a strong grade!

5. **Final Exam** (20%)

The examination will test the student's mastery of all the material covered in the course lectures & reading & allow the student to apply principles learned in the course to theological test cases.

Berkhof Study Guide Questions

Part One: THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

THE BEING OF GOD

1. In what sense is God knowable, and in what sense unknowable?
2. What is innate knowledge of God?
3. What is acquired knowledge?
4. Is it possible to know something of the very being of God?
5. Is it possible to define God?
6. What is involved in God's spirituality?
7. What do we mean when we ascribe personality to God?
8. How can His personality be proved?
9. What is the divine infinity?
10. How are the being of God and His perfections related?

THE NAMES OF GOD

11. What does Scripture mean when it speaks of the name of God in the singular?
12. Are the special names of God of human origin?
13. What is the general difference between the names 'El, 'Elohim, 'Elyon, & 'Adonai, on the one hand, and Shaddai, 'El-Shaddai, & Jehovah, on the other?

14. What is the specific meaning of each one of these names?
15. What is the meaning of the name Kurios (Lord)?
16. Is the name Father ever used of God in the Old Testament?
17. In what different senses is it used in the New Testament?

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

18. How do we divide the attributes of God?
19. Which belong to each one of these classes?
20. What is the independence of God?
21. His immutability?
22. How can we explain that the Bible apparently ascribes change to God?
23. What is God's eternity and immensity?
24. How can we prove the simplicity of God?
25. What is the nature and extent of God's knowledge?
26. How is His wisdom related to His knowledge?
27. What is the goodness of God, and what other names are used for it?
28. Should we speak of love as central in God?
29. How do we distinguish God's grace, mercy, and longsuffering?
30. What is the holiness of God?
31. Under what different aspects can the righteousness of God be considered?
32. What is included in the veracity of God?
33. What distinction do we apply to the will of God?
34. Is His will free or necessary?
35. Does God's decree make Him the author of sin?

36. Do the secret and revealed will of God conflict?
37. Does God's omnipotence imply that He can do everything?

THE TRINITY

38. Can we discover the doctrine of the Trinity from nature?
39. How do the persons in God differ from three persons among men?
40. Is there any subordination of the persons in God?
41. How can we prove the Trinity from the Old Testament?
42. From the New?
43. Against what errors should we guard in this doctrine?
44. In how many different senses is the name "Father" applied to God? What works are especially ascribed to the Father?
45. In how many different senses is the name "Son" applied to Christ? Is the generation of the Son a past act?
46. What works are especially ascribed to the Son?
47. How can you prove the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit?
48. How can you prove that the Holy Spirit is a person, and not merely a power or influence?
49. How is the Spirit related to the other persons?
50. What works are especially ascribed to the Holy Spirit?
51. What is the characteristic property of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit?

THE DIVINE DECREES IN GENERAL

52. What is the divine decree?
53. Why do we sometimes speak of decrees in the plural?
54. Which are the characteristics of the divine decree?

55. In what sense is it eternal?
56. What is implied by the fact that the decree is efficacious?
57. In what sense is it unconditional?
58. What is included in the decree?
59. What is the nature of God's decree respecting sin?
60. What objections are raised against the doctrine of the decrees?
61. What can be said in answer to these objections?

PREDESTINATION

62. How is predestination related to the decree of God in general?
63. Who are the objects of the decree of predestination?
64. How should we conceive of the predestination of the angels?
65. In what sense is Christ the object of predestination?
66. Which are the parts of predestination?
67. In how many different senses does the Bible speak of election?
68. What is election as distinguished from reprobation?
69. What does the decree of reprobation include?
70. What Scriptural proof is there for the doctrine of reprobation?
71. Does this doctrine involve injustice on the part of God?
72. What is the difference between Infra- and Supralapsarianism?

CREATION

73. What is creation?
74. Was creation a free or a necessary act of God?
75. How is God related to the world?

76. What is meant by "the beginning" in Gen. 1:1?
77. Is the word "create" always used in the same sense in Scripture?
78. How can we prove that God created the world without the use of pre-existent material?
79. What two views are there as to the final end of creation?
80. In what sense is the glory of God the final end?
81. What substitutes have been suggested for the doctrine of creation?
82. What is the nature of the angels?
83. What orders of angels are indicated in Scripture?
84. What is the function of Gabriel and Michael?
85. What is the work of the angels?
86. What proof have we for the existence of evil angels?
87. How should Gen 1:1 be interpreted?
88. Were the days mentioned in Gen 1 ordinary days or long periods? Why?
89. What did God create on each of the six days?
90. Why is the doctrine of evolution inconsistent with the Biblical narrative of creation?
91. Does the theory of creative evolution agree with Scripture?

PROVIDENCE

92. How is the doctrine of providence related to that of creation?
93. What is divine providence?
94. What is the deistic view of God's relation to the world?
95. How does the pantheist conceive of this relation?
96. What is the difference between general and special providence?
97. Why do some deny special providence?

98. Which are the objects of divine providence?
99. What is meant by divine preservation?
100. By divine concurrence?
101. How should we conceive of this concurrence?
102. To what difficult problem does it give rise?
103. How far does the divine government extend?
104. What is a miracle?
105. Why are miracles considered by some to be impossible?

Part Two: THE DOCTRINE OF MAN IN RELATION TO GOD

THE CONSTITUTIONAL NATURE OF MAN

106. What is the dichotomic view of the essential elements of human nature?
107. How can this view be proved from Scripture?
108. What is the trichotomic view?
109. What Scriptural proof is advanced for it?
110. What objections are there to this view?
111. What theories are there as to the origin of the soul in the individual?
112. What does Pre-existentism teach?
113. What is the Traducianist view?
114. What arguments can be advanced in favor of it?
115. What objections are there to it?
116. What is the theory of creationism?
117. What considerations favor this view?
118. What objections are there to it?

MAN AS THE IMAGE OF GOD AND IN THE COVENANT OF WORKS

119. Why is the doctrine of the image of God in man important?
120. Do the words "image" and "likeness" denote different things?
121. What is the Roman Catholic view of the image and likeness of God in man?
122. What is the Lutheran view of the image of God in man?
123. What objection is there to this view?
124. What distinction do the Reformed apply to the image of God in man?
125. What constitutes the image of God in the restricted sense?
126. In the more comprehensive sense?
127. What Bible proof have we for the covenant of works?
128. Which are the parties of the covenant?
129. What are the promise, the condition, the penalty, and the sacrament of the covenant?
130. In what sense does the covenant still hold?
131. In what sense is it abrogated?

MAN IN THE STATE OF SIN

132. What is the Biblical view of the origin of sin?
133. Can you name any other views?
134. What was the first sin?
135. Why was the tree concerned called "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil"?
136. What elements can be distinguished in the first sin?
137. Why did the tempter approach Eve?
138. Can you prove that Satan was the real tempter?
139. Which were the results of the first sin?

140. Why is it undesirable to substitute the word "evil" for "sin"?
141. Is it possible for man to occupy a neutral position, neither good nor bad?
142. Is it correct to interpret sin with reference to man?
143. How can we prove that sin includes guilt?
144. Where does sin have its seat in man?
145. How can we prove that sin does not consist exclusively in outward acts?
146. What are the Pelagian, the Roman Catholic, and the evolutionary views of sin?

SIN IN THE LIFE OF THE HUMAN RACE

147. What different opinions are there respecting the connection between Adam's sin and that of his descendants?
148. What is the realistic theory, and why is it objectionable?
149. How does the doctrine of the covenant of works conceive of the connection between the sin of Adam and our sinful condition?
150. What advantages has this view?
151. What solution to the problem is suggested by the theory of mediate imputation?
152. What objections are there to this solution?
153. What is original sin?
154. What two elements does it include?
155. How should we conceive of man's total depravity?
156. How must his total inability be understood?
157. What is included in actual sin?
158. How does actual sin differ from original sin?
159. What is the nature of the unpardonable sin?
160. Can there be any reasonable doubt as to the universality of sin?

161. What explanation do some offer for this?
162. How does the Bible account for it?

Sample of a Good Answer to a Berkhof Study Guide Question

1. *In what sense is God knowable, and in what sense unknowable?* p.29-30.

God can be known through his attributes and nature expressed in his creation, but true knowledge of God is through special revelation, illuminated by the Holy Spirit. Though we can have knowledge of God, there are still elements of his divinity and essential being which are incomprehensible to us. See also Romans 1:19-20; Westminster Confession of Faith 1.1 & 1.8; Westminster Larger Catechism 2-6; Westminster Shorter Catechism 2-3; Calvin, *Institutes* I.2-3 & I.5-6.

Course Lecture Topics

The projected lecture topic schedule is as follows:

- (1) Course Introduction
- (2) God
- (3) Trinity
- (4) Decree
- (5) Creation
- (6) Providence
- (7) Anthropology
- (8) Fall
- (9) Sin

Office Hours

The professor will be available to meet with students before each class by appointment.

In addition, telephone or Zoom online conferences can be scheduled as needed. Students may contact the professor by phone/text (706-691-3702) or email (drankin@brite-va.org), but preferably before 10pm in the evening.

Recommended Books

The following books are highly recommended for your reference during the course:

Systematic Theology

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559 McNeill-Battles)
Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (3 vols.)
W. à Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service* (4 vols.)
John Owen, *Collected Works* (16 vols.)
Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (3 vols.)
Robert L. Dabney, *Systematic Theology*
B.B. Warfield, *Collected Works* (10 vols.)
H Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* (4 vols.)
H Hepppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*
L Berkhof, *Summary of Christian Doctrine*
L Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine*
L Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*
John Murray, *Collected Writings* (4 vols.)
R.L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*
Wayne Gruden, *Systematic Theology*
Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* (+4 vols.)
Donald Macleod, *Faith to Live By*
Joel Beeke, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*
Douglas Kelly, *Systematic Theology* (+2 vols.)

Theology proper (God, Trinity, creation, providence)

Herman Bavinck, *Doctrine of God*
Gerald Bray, *The Doctrine of God*
J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*
Donald Macleod, *Behold Your God*
Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*
Douglas Kelly, *Creation & Change*
Lorraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*
RC Sproul, *Chosen by God*
Paul Helm, *The Doctrine of Providence*

Anthropology (man, Fall, sin)

Thomas Boston, *The Fourfold State of Man*
George W. Knight III, *The Role Relationship of Men and Women*
John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*
A Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*
Charles Shirlock, *The Doctrine of Humanity*
Iain D. Campbell, *The Doctrine of Sin*
John Murray, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*

Paper Grading Guide

The following criteria will be used in grading all written work for this course:

GENERAL

- Interesting. Substantial. Well-written.
- Sufficiently [Not sufficiently] focused or developed.
- Not organized clearly. Read instructions again.

DEVELOPMENT

- Shows Does not show clear plan and purpose.

TREATMENT

- The thesis or objective of your piece should be stated more clearly.
- Raises more issues than can be adequately treated in a piece of this length.
- Contains [does not] contain enough to enable the reader to understand the problems/ issues.
- Gives attention to Biblical principles Paper contains good exegetical work.
- Interacts well with Confessional documents (esp. WCF and Catechisms).
- Displays knowledge of and interacts with views within the broader Reformed tradition
 - views within modern evangelicalism contrasting secular views.
- Paper contains good pastoral advice to Christian seeking to obey the Word of the Lord.
- The treatment [is is not] objective enough.
- You have too much material not germane to the subject.
- Too short to adequately develop your subject.

DOCUMENTATION

- Good. Adequate. Lacking adequate documentation.

APPENDICES/EXHIBITS

- Appropriate to the case.
- There are good, available documents you could have used.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- No bibliography!
- The bibliography is adequate.
- The bibliography is excellent.
- The bibliography leaves out some important sources on your topic.

APPEARANCE

- Neat
- Sloppy

ERRORS

- Grammatical. Spelling errors. Some typographical errors.
- Because the paper was late, I have unfortunately had to reduce your grade by five points per day from the due date, in fairness to your peers.

The grade I have assigned you is based upon your fulfillment of the instructions for the assignment, the overall quality of your presentation, my assessment of your grasp of the subject matter, your skill in communication of the material, and how well you did your work in comparison with your peers in the course.