

**Saint Paul School of Theology**  
**THL 301 Introduction to Systematic Theology**  
**Spring 2008**

<b>Instructor</b>	Nancy R. Howell
<b>Office</b>	Kansas Winger 308
<b>Email Address</b>	howellnr@spst.edu
<b>Campus Telephone</b>	(816) 245-4826 or (816) 483-9600 ext. 126
<b>FAX Number</b>	(816) 483-9605
<b>Website</b>	www.nancyrhowell.com
<b>Office Hours</b>	By appointment anytime or during posted office hours, including Tuesday, 3:00-5:00 p.m.

**Class Meeting:** Tuesday, 6:00-8:50 p.m.

**Moodle:** <http://saintpaul.fishersnet.net/moodle>  
Enrol key: IntroTheo2008

### **Course Description**

*Catalog Description:* This course is an initial exploration of the discipline of theology and the rich dimension of life of the Christian church, for and in which theology serves critical and constructive roles. Readings and lectures cover such areas as theological genres (creeds and statements of faith), theological methods, significant theological thinkers, varying ways of interpreting Christian teachings in relation to the historic doctrinal loci such as authority of the Bible, reason and revelation, Trinity, Jesus as the Christ, human nature/condition, Church, worship and sacraments, death and resurrection.

Semester credit hours: 3

### **Course Teaching-Learning Objectives**

1. The primary goal of the course is to promote understanding and appreciation of the breadth and depth of theological strands within the Christian tradition.
2. Learning begins with attention to methods, tasks, language, source, and criteria for adequacy that permit sustained theological reflection necessary in systematic theology and which also inform the scholarly and pastoral work of Christian vocations.
3. Learning includes familiarity with historical doctrines and constructive contemporary theology, which attends to the continuity, diversity, and development of the Christian tradition.
4. Learning recognizes the diversity of doctrinal and theological expression within Christianity and acknowledges that contexts, class, gender, and race are some of the factors that shape the development of Christian thought and express the valuable tensions in Christian theology.

## Curricular Outcomes

The course contributes to the following curricular outcomes established by the Saint Paul School of Theology faculty:

- Knowledge and proficiency in interpreting doctrinal traditions
- Proficiency in research skills and in reading, writing, and thinking critically, coherently, and with understanding
- Proficiency in theologically understanding the nature of persons
- Proficiency in theological, structural, and practical understandings of the church
- Development of a commitment to peace and justice and to the ability to articulate an informed understanding of the good news

## Required and Recommended Texts

Each student must choose one of the following reading options and must read all books in the option selected:

Option 1:

- Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: A Selection* (a one volume selection of excerpts) or *Church Dogmatics* (all volumes).
- John B. Cobb, Jr. and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*.
- James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*.
- Jon Sobrino, ed., *Systematic Theology*.

Option 2:

- Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: A Selection* (a one volume selection of excerpts) or *Church Dogmatics* (all volumes).
- James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*.
- Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*.
- Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*.

Option 3:

- Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: A Selection* (a one volume selection of excerpts) or *Church Dogmatics* (all volumes).
- Clara Sue Kidwell, Homer Noley, George E “Tink” Tinker, *A Native American Theology*.
- Ted Peters, *God—The World’s Future*.
- Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*.

## Course Schedule: February 5-May 16, 2008

February 5

Topic: Definitions and Tasks of Theology  
Class Activities: Introduction to the Course  
Definitions of *Theology*  
Tasks of Theology

February 12

Topic: Sources, Methods, and Language in Theology  
Reading Key Words: scripture, tradition, experience, culture, formative factors, metaphor, analogy, epistemology, faith/belief and reason/knowledge, Truth/truth, criteria for adequacy  
Discussion: “method in theology and locus of authority”

February 19

Topic: Doctrine of God (or Models of God)  
Reading Key Words: deism, monarchialism (King), dialogical (I-Thou) model, agential model, organic model, supernaturalism, pantheism, panentheism, God as Liberator, God as Black, God as Red, God/dess,  
Discussion: “God and God’s relation to the world”

February 26

Topic: Attributes of God  
Reading Key Words: attributes, perfection, transcendence, immanence, goodness, righteousness/justice, omnipotence, freedom, omniscience, eternal (everlasting), omnipresence, love, *via negativa*, gender, race, and inclusive language  
Discussion: “describing God”

March 4 (Advising Day, but we will still meet in the evening)

Topic: Doctrine of Creation (Theology of Nature)  
Reading Key Words: creation, miracle, nature, world, revelation, general revelation, existence of God, science and religion, biblical creation accounts, contingency and dependence on God, creation *ex nihilo*, *creation continua*, providence  
Discussion: “divine action in nature”

March 11

Topic: Theodicy (Problem of Evil)  
Reading Key Words: sin, evil, moral evil, natural evil, free will  
Discussion: “moral and natural evil”

March 18

Topic: Christology  
Reading Key Words: historical Jesus, person, special revelation, parables, miracles, Christological councils, gender, Black Christ  
Discussion: “person of Jesus Christ as revelation”

March 25

Reading Week  
No Class Meeting

April 1

Topic: Christology, Soteriology  
Reading Key Words: salvation, atonement, redemption, grace, liberation, election, predestination, universal salvation, justification, sanctification, law and gospel  
Discussion: “work of Christ”

April 8

Topic: Doctrines of the Holy Spirit and Trinity  
Reading Key Words: pneumatology, metaphors for the Holy Spirit (Advocate, Comforter), immanent Trinity, economic Trinity, triune God, Godhead, symbolism and metaphors  
Discussion: “symbolism of the Trinity and contemporary theology”

April 15

Topic: Doctrine of Humanity (Theology of Humanity)  
Reading Key Words: image of God (*imago Dei*), soul-body, ontology, male and female  
Discussion: “the nature of humanity”

April 22

Topic: Doctrine of Humanity (Theological Anthropology)  
Reading Key Words: freedom and free will, the Fall, sin, moral evil, social or systemic sin, power and sin, *hubris*, radical evil, gender and sin, faith and works  
Discussion: “fallen humanity”

April 29

Topic: Eschatology  
Reading Key Words: last things, eschatology, afterlife, eternal life, Kingdom of God, new creation, new heaven and earth, realized or future eschatology, liberation  
Discussion: “Christian hope”

May 6

Topic: Doctrine of the Church (Ecclesiology)  
Reading Key Words: marks of the church, ecclesiology, body of Christ, models of the Church, sacraments, worship, ministry, (*kerygma, koinonia, diakonia, didache, leitourgia*), discipleship  
Discussion: “mission and ministry of the Church”

May 13

Because we can meet on Advising Day (March 4), we will not meet on May 13 unless we need to compensate for a weather cancellation of class.

## Course Requirements

1. Class participation is expected of each student. By class participation, I mean that each student must attend class regularly and engage in discussions. Students must attempt seriously all required assignments, and the instructor expects that advanced students are capable of completing all reading and written assignments. This does not mean that students fully understand material, but that they are familiar with the texts and know which passages are puzzling. Class participation allows students to raise questions and to achieve some understanding of course content. Good class participation in a seminar course includes active listening to and support for other students. At the end of the semester, students assess the quality of their class participation and assign themselves a letter grade using a self-evaluation work sheet, which makes explicit the criteria for good class participation. The instructor also assigns a class participation grade. The Class Participation Self-Evaluation Work Sheet (attached to the syllabus) is due Tuesday, May 6.
2. Students are expected to read Barth's systematic theology and three other systematic theologies during the semester. The selection of texts is limited to those listed as required reading in the syllabus, and students are expected to engage examples that differ in context of and approach to Christian thought. To succeed in the course, students must read approximately 75-100 pages per week.
3. Students must write two essay assignments during the semester. The deadlines for writing assignments are set by students, but one essay is due before reading week and a second must be submitted after reading week. Students must allow two-three weeks between submissions of assignments in order to receive feedback on the preceding assignment before writing again. Each essay must be 5-7 pages in length and double spaced with 1-inch margins. Essays must include footnotes or endnotes (included in the page limit), which follow the style described in Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (sixth edition). Students may choose from among the following options for writing assignments:
  - a. Following completion of reading assignments for the week, students may write an essay comparing approaches, doctrines, and issues expressed by two or more theologians. Rather than covering an entire doctrine, students are encouraged to limit and define a topic that permits detailed explanation of a key feature of each theologian's work and careful comparison and discussion of the relationship and differences among the theological perspectives.
  - b. A midterm take-home essay exam will be distributed during the first month of the course. The exam includes several questions, from which students choose one. The essay is due no later than March 18.
  - c. Similarly a final take-home essay exam will be distributed after reading week. The exam includes several questions, from which students choose one. The essay is due no later than May 6.

4. Extra credit is possible in the course when important lectures or events are relevant to the course. To receive extra credit, submit a one- or two-page, double-spaced paper with one paragraph summarizing the main thesis and supporting points in the lecture and with a second paragraph discussing the relevance of the lecture to a theme or issue in the course. If the two assigned paragraphs are not included, no extra credit will be awarded. Extra credit papers never penalize student grades, but an accepted extra credit paper will add 0.1 points to the final grade (based on a 4.0 grading scale). While other extra credit options may become available, the following lectures are approved by the instructor for extra credit:

February 19, 2008, Slater-Willson Lecture, William Placher

April 23, 2008, Evangelical Society, Clark H. Pinnock, "Confessions of a Post-conservative Evangelical Theologian"

### **Inclusive Language**

In both oral and written contributions to the course, students are expected to be conscious of the power of language in theology. Inclusive language respects both gender and racial diversity, and students should demonstrate awareness that language about persons and God expresses values and impacts theological ideas in the details of race and gender connotations. Both gender and race are socially-constructed categories, and changing language is part of bringing justice to theological discourse

### **Grading**

Students in consultation with the instructor determine how grading will be assessed. At the end of the term, students receive letter grades in accordance with policies and descriptions outlined in the current catalog. Criteria for grading follow.

Class Participation	_____	%
Self-evaluation	_____	%
Professor evaluations	_____	%
Written Assignments	_____	%
First Essay	_____	%
Second Essay	_____	%
Third Essay	_____	%

## **Student Responsibilities**

Students must abide by policies established in the Saint Paul handbook and catalog. Pay special attention to the policies on Integrity of Work Submitted and Class Attendance found in the catalog. The instructor reserves the option to fail a student for a single instance of plagiarism. The professor reserves the option to fail a student strictly for habitual failure to attend class or for habitual tardiness.

Students are invited to communicate with the instructor. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of illness, if you have emergency information to share with the instructor, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. Please see the instructor for any assistance with your learning and class attendance.

## **Professor's Responsibilities**

My job is to teach with integrity the scholarship representative of my field, to see that students learn as much as possible, and to create a comfortable environment for learning. These goals cannot be accomplished without genuine attention to the unique strengths, experiences, and expectations that both the professor and students bring to the classroom. My goal is to provide encouragement and support for your learning. Sometimes flexible procedures and learning options are necessary to facilitate the kind of teaching and learning that should occur here. I am anxious to hear what energizes you, what disappoints you, where you disagree, and what helps you learn. PLEASE SEE ME IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR SPECIFIC NEEDS.

## **Learning-Disabling Conditions**

Saint Paul faculty are committed to facilitating the learning of students capable of graduate-level seminary work. Any student who has a condition that may prevent full demonstration of his/her abilities (e.g., difficulty seeing or hearing, dyslexia, or other learning disabilities) should contact the office of the Dean of Students immediately to discuss evaluation and documentation of learning needs, alternative learning strategies that have worked for the student in the past, and mutually accountable accommodations to ensure the student's full participation and evaluation in the course. Students with documented learning disabilities should consult the Saint Paul School of Theology Handbook and comply with institutional guidelines and policies. Similarly, mental or physical conditions should be documented and discussed with the Dean of Students, who is authorized to arrange accommodations, and all handbook guidelines and policies apply.

## **Criteria for Evaluating Course Work**

Regardless of whether you write a paper, answer an essay question, voice an oral presentation, or create any original project, the academic context requires that certain minimal requirements characterize your work. While there are subjective components in the grading process, most professors are concerned that you become well educated in four basic qualities of excellent academic work:

### **1. *Demonstration of an empathetic understanding of the content of texts and resources.***

Your topic should not only be well researched in the library, through interviews and observations, and/or from assigned readings and class discussions, but you should be able to provide a fair description and a clear understanding of texts and resources. This is apparent in the ability to describe and discuss precisely and accurately what an author has written or a speaker has said. Evaluation, response, and critique follow accurate representation of another's ideas—earn the privilege of criticizing a viewpoint by showing that you really understand it.

### **2. *Clear critical thinking that provides appropriate specific evidence for conclusions.***

Use the most precise historical, empirical, or contemporary data or information to support the claims of your thesis and paragraphs. Conclusions follow from and are supported by evidence. Be sure that your evidence is relevant, accurate, and detailed. Adherence to clear critical thinking, relevant and accurate evidence, and logical organization constitute sound arguments. Even creative writing requires logical relationships among ideas to assist your readers in following the plot or main point.

### **3. *Creativity that moves beyond reporting someone else's ideas.***

Your creative addition to academic discourse might include questioning, evaluating, applying, criticizing (positively or negatively), developing, or responding. You might see a connection between two or more ideas. You might see information from a unique perspective. The minimal requirement of academic work is correctly repeating what is read or discussed. Excellent work moves beyond repetition to unique insights, organization, correlations, and theses. Work to find your own scholarly and professional voice.

### **4. *Flawless grammar, spelling, and form.***

Excellent written work is conscious of proofreading and good communication. Oral presentations are equally accountable for careful expression. A brilliant thesis can be lost in a paper or project that obscures its ideas with careless communication. Your readers and listeners should not have to guess what you mean—help them by speaking and writing well.

**Class Participation Self-Evaluation Work Sheet Nancy R. Howell**  
**Saint Paul School of Theology**  
**Spring 2007**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Course:** THL301 Introduction to Systematic Theology

Circle the number that best describes your class participation in each category if 1 is excellent, 2 is very good, 3 is average, 4 is satisfactory, and 5 is poor.

**Preparation**

- I conscientiously attempted reading assignments. 1 2 3 4 5
- I reflected seriously on reading assignments. 1 2 3 4 5
- I worked to bring depth to comments and questions by preparing more than superficially for class. 1 2 3 4 5
- I prepared written assignments on time and when the syllabus or my self-assigned deadlines required them. 1 2 3 4 5
- I checked spelling, grammar, quotations, and footnotes before submitting papers. 1 2 3 4 5

**Class**

- I attended class weekly. 1 2 3 4 5
- I always attended class on time. 1 2 3 4 5
- I contributed to class discussions. 1 2 3 4 5
- When I talked in class, I remained focused on the topic of class discussion. 1 2 3 4 5
- I listened respectfully to comments and questions raised by other students. 1 2 3 4 5
- I brought my questions to class or to the professor. 1 2 3 4 5
- I expressed disagreement constructively. 1 2 3 4 5
- I shared my responsibilities for successful class sessions. 1 2 3 4 5
- I supported other students' efforts in class discussions or assignments. 1 2 3 4 5

**Attitude**

- I remained involved and engaged in the course. 1 2 3 4 5
- I was constructive in relationships with others. 1 2 3 4 5
- I put extra effort into the course—such as study groups/partners, library research, recommended or supplemental reading. 1 2 3 4 5
- I contributed my share of the work in collaborative writing or projects. 1 2 3 4 5
- I made appointments with a professor when I needed assistance or wanted to discuss the course. 1 2 3 4 5
- I took responsibility for my learning. 1 2 3 4 5
- My understanding of theology has grown. 1 2 3 4 5
- My understanding of ministry has grown. 1 2 3 4 5

I assign myself the following letter grade: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Enter A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D, or F in the blank.)

Please submit any additional reflection on class participation that should affect your grade in writing on the back of this page. This work sheet is intended to assist you in thinking about the quality of your participation in class. Any interpretations, additions, or connections of criteria should be included in your additional reflections.