

# Introduction to Theology

CT 549 – Fall 2023

10:30am – 12pm EST

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Professor Christopher Carter

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Office hours: By appointment only.

## Course Description

This course is an introduction to Christian belief and practice through analysis and reflection upon various expressions of Christian theological views. The aim of this course is to explore, not just the what, but the *why* of Christian faith and how Christian *spirituality* forms and informs Christian practice. This course aims to explore how the compassion based spiritual practices of Jesus gave shape to various theological beliefs that we call systematic theology. Additionally, this course aims to facilitate the integration of systematic theology and MTSO's commitment to sustainable justice.

*CT549 is a required course for most degrees at MTSO.*

## Specific Degree Outcomes

Demonstrate capacity for informed, critical, and creative engagement with historical theology and contemporary sources of Christian tradition. Develop a praxis-oriented theology that sustains personal and communal thriving.

## Aspects of the MTSO mission and/or MTSO's general theological curriculum

CT549 introduces concepts and questions for developing theological imagination and vision in pursuit of positive social change and cultivating learning for a just and sustainable world.

## Connections the course has to other MTSO courses

CT549 is a prerequisite to upper-level CT courses. It is interconnected with "Introduction to Ethics," "Survey of Global Christian History," "Introduction to the Hebrew Bible," and "Introduction to the New Testament," as they inform theological constructions and vice-versa.

## Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a critical understanding of Christian traditions at a graduate level.
2. Demonstrate a critical understanding of theory and method in Christian theology.
3. Critically reflect on multiple interpretations of theological categories (e.g. Creation, Sin, Christology, Atonement, etc.)
4. Apply knowledge from the course to articulate their own spiritual and/or theological beliefs and assumptions.

### Assessment strategies:

- SLO #1 will be assessed by the exams and final exam
- SLO #2 will be assessed by the exams and final exam
- SLO #3 will be assessed by the religious autobiography and exams
- SLO #4 will be assessed by the final exam or final paper.

### Required Course Texts

- Alister McGrath, *Theology: The Basics*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (available online via the USD library; [https://sallypro.sandiego.edu/iii/encore/record/C\\_Rb4707023](https://sallypro.sandiego.edu/iii/encore/record/C_Rb4707023))
- Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (available online via the USD library; [https://sallypro.sandiego.edu/iii/encore/record/C\\_Rb4100182](https://sallypro.sandiego.edu/iii/encore/record/C_Rb4100182))
- Frank Rogers, *Compassion in Practice: The Way of Jesus*
- Howard Thurman, *Jesus & The Disinherited*

### Land Acknowledgement

I want to acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional and unceded territory of the Kumeyaay Nation. I want to pay respect to the citizens of the Kumeyaay Nation, both past and present, and their continuing relationship to their ancestral lands.

### Course Policies

#### Regular Attendance

Given the active-learning and discussion-oriented nature of this course, regular attendance is expected. I expect that you will be present at every class unless religious observance, illness, or other emergency prevents you from attending. I understand that situations such as the aforementioned circumstances can make regular attendance difficult, but excessive absences (i.e., more than two or three) will adversely affect your ability to learn from and contribute to the learning process. **You are allowed two unexcused absences for this class. Any additional unexcused absences will result in a 5% reduction in points awarded per absence.**

#### Make up policy and late assignments

Papers will be graded down one level (i.e. A to A-, A- to B+, etc.) for every day they are late. Illness, death in the family, or other traumatic events are unfortunately a part of life. In these instances, papers can be turned in without penalty if I am contacted within 24 hours and you provide proper documentation. Students have a maximum of two weeks to turn in late assignments, after such time no points will be awarded for the assignment.

If missing a test, students are responsible for scheduling a make-up test date that is within two weeks of the original test date and during the professor's office hours or during normal class hours. Students who turn in tests late without an excused absence will only be eligible to receive a maximum of 85% of the total points for that assignment.

#### Academic Honesty and Citations (complete policy at end of syllabus)

All students are expected to adhere to basic standards of academic honesty and integrity. All work submitted is expected to be the student's own thought and expression unless another source is acknowledged and appropriately noted. Students should cite their sources by using footnotes (notes-bibliography style) and should consult the Chicago Manual of Style as needed to ensure the accuracy of their citations. Parenthetical references (i.e. Author last name and date of publication) may be used in reading responses. Violation of academic honesty is regarded as an extremely serious offense. Discovery of such a violation may result in an "F" grade for the course. In addition, faculty members are obligated to report all apparent violations of academic honesty to the Dean.

Plagiarism is literary theft, or offering the words or ideas of another as if they were one's own, with no acknowledgment of the source. Whenever the ideas or words used are taken from a source, this source must be given credit (i.e. cited). This applies not only to direct quotations, but also to indirect quotations (in which the original statement is paraphrased). Sources that must be given credit include not only published books, journals, magazines, newspapers, etc., but also other types of media, such as electronic resources, film, television, radio, and cassette recordings, as well as lectures and the work of other students. This is often a matter of judgment, but my advice is that when you are in doubt, you should err on the side of giving too many citations, rather than too few.

### Disability Accommodations

If you are a student with a learning disability or limitation, and would like to discuss special academic accommodations, please contact me during my office hours, by phone or e-mail, or before or after class. You will need to provide paperwork from Disability Services (x4655, Serra 300). Please do this as early in the semester as possible so that your learning experience can be the best it can possibly be! More information is also available on the USD website. Please refer to [www.sandiego.edu/disability/](http://www.sandiego.edu/disability/) for more details on our services/support.

### Active Participation and Classroom Civility

Most likely there are a variety of reasons you enrolled in this course: some might be "just curious" about the topic, others might be fulfilling degree program requirements, and still others might primarily be seeking to engage in serious conversation regarding how one "practices" their faith. Students will also come to this course with diverse pre-existing religious commitments and identities (Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Atheist, Catholic, Protestant, etc.), and everyone will be located at different points of any religious or theological spectrum. In the midst of our undeniable diversity, it is my hope that we will create together a civil space for conversation and dialogue, so that all will feel comfortable in participating. I welcome the use of your analytical and critical skills when assessing the arguments of the texts under consideration as well as those of your fellow interlocutors, though please maintain respect for your peers at all times.

Do come to class on time, having read, reviewed, and completed all assignments prior to its start. **Please keep your cell phones put away so that you are able to devote your full**

**attention to the course material and prepare yourself to participate actively in discussion.** I say this because I have found that active participation is the best way to engage you in learning the material and I believe that it makes the lectures more fun (or at least more interesting!). Again, I welcome your thoughts, comments, and questions and I hope that you take an active role in classroom discussions.

## Course Requirements

### Classroom participation

Students should be sufficiently acquainted with the readings to contribute to class discussions regularly. While your physical presence is great, your intellectual participation is crucial to your overall learning – simply showing up to class does not count as participation. To properly participate you will need to have a copy of the day's reading and, in many cases, the previous classes reading with you; failure to do so can significantly reduce your participation grade. Your participation grade will be given at the end of the semester as follows:

- 20 points      Students who (a) participate thoughtfully in approximately 80% plus of class discussions and (b) regularly contribute when the rest of the class is hesitant or otherwise distinguish themselves by contributing substantially to a strong learning environment. A score of 20 indicates exceptional class contributions will only be given to students who earn it!
- 16-19 points   Students who thoughtfully participate in most class discussions, offer comments that demonstrate evidence of having read and reflected on course readings, and help contribute regularly to a strong learning environment.
- 10-15 points   Students who participated thoughtfully on a regular basis and often helped create a positive learning environment. This is the average grade for most students.**
- 7-9 points      Students occasionally made contributions to class.
- 1-6 points      Students rarely made contributions to class.
- 0 points        No contributions to class discussion.

I recognize that some students are not as comfortable speaking up in class or may need additional time to reflect on the class discussion and readings before offering their reflections. As such, this course is designed such that if you have excellent attendance (no more than two absences), and speak to your peers during our Think/Pair/Share, you will likely score between 20-24 even if you don't frequently raise your hand in class. However, I want to do all that I can to encourage you to speak because I want to learn from you and the class will benefit from hearing your opinion!

### Asynchronous lecture comments

There will be one lecture uploaded each week to Populi. Students are required to watch the lecture, leave a comment that references the lecture and/or the reading, and comment on another student's post. Please note that the comments should make a substantive intellectual contribution to the online conversation.

### Compassion Practice Case Study – case study to be provided

This assignment presents you with a case study where you observe the interactions between a woman and her children at the grocery store. It is a take home assignment that you will have 24 hours to complete and upload to Populi as a .docx or .pdf file.

### Religious (or non-religious) autobiography – grading rubric will be provided

In order to engage in the critical study of religion we should be aware of the role our personal history might play in shaping our feelings and attitudes towards the course material. The purpose of the religious autobiography is, among other things, to enable us to bring awareness to what influences how we may interact with the course material.

This paper is composed of two parts. The purpose of the first part is to begin researching your religious identity through your ancestors. You are required to interview an older member of your family (the generation older than your parents i.e. grandparents, is preferred) to learn more about how their religious identity was formed. You should ask them questions such as: what significant changes or trends they have observed with regard to religion over their life, what cultural influences shaped their religion/beliefs, did they change traditions, how have their beliefs changed over their lifetime?

The second part of the paper should describe what role religion/spirituality has played in your life and how your beliefs and experiences have shaped you. You should connect your ancestor's spiritual development to your own. How has their spiritual thinking/being influenced your own (or your families) religious/spiritual identity? How has your community influenced your religious/spiritual identity? How have key axis-of-difference (i.e. socio-economic class, race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, nationality) given shape to your religious/spiritual identity? How do you fit into your family's spiritual/religious history?

### Exams

There will be two exams given throughout the semester on the dates stated below. The exams may include any or all of the following: true/false, multiple choice, short answer, and essay. **All tests will be given through Populi and will require an in-person proctor.** For those of you who are taking the exam on campus, a proctor will be assigned to the room. For those of you who are not on campus, you must secure a proctor prior to your text.

### Book Review – Directions provided

Students will write a 5-7 page book review (not including footnotes) on *The Spirit of Soul Food*. Directions on the structure of the review will be provided.

### Final Paper

Each student will submit a **7-10 page paper (min. 2100 words not including footnotes) that is typed, double-spaced, 12 point font, and properly noted.** This essay is intended to integrate various theological areas we have covered throughout the semester and is your opportunity to reflect on what you have learned! In this paper you will answer two questions that ask you to reflect on the entirety of the course, what you have learned, and how you have changed in light of it. I will go over the assigned questions for this paper on the last day of class.

This essay must refer to the course readings. This final paper is therefore be grounded in research, not merely anecdotal reflection, although your experiences will certainly inform your beliefs. **If biblical citations are used, they should be incorporated into the paper with proper explanation and analysis.** Please upload a digital copy in Word or PDF format to Populi.

### Grading [280 points]

Assignment	Due Date	Points	% of Final Grade
Asynchronous lecture comments	12/13	20	7%
Compassion Practice case study	9/22	20	7%
Autobiography	10/6	30	11%
Exam #1	10/11	40	14%
Exam #2	11/15	40	14%
Book Review	12/15	40	14%
Final Paper		70	25%
Classroom Participation	12/13	20	7%

### Schedule of topics and readings

***All readings outside of the required texts will be posted on Blackboard***

Week 1	<b>Introduction &amp; Spiritual Formation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8/30: <i>Compassion in Practice</i>, The Invitation</li> </ul>
Week 2	<b>Spiritual Formation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9/4: <i>Compassion in Practice</i>, chapter 1 (Asynchronous – no class - recorded video lecture uploaded on Populi)</li> <li>9/6: <i>Compassion in Practice</i>, chapter 2</li> </ul>
Week 3	<b>Spiritual Formation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9/11: <i>Compassion in Practice</i>, chapter 3 (Asynchronous – no class - recorded video lecture uploaded on Populi)</li> <li>9/13: <i>Compassion in Practice</i>, chapter 4</li> </ul>

Week 4	<p><b>Spiritual Formation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9/18: <i>Compassion in Practice</i>, chapter 5 &amp; The Hope (Asynchronous – no class - recorded video lecture uploaded on Populi)</li> </ul> <p><b>Theological Method - The Task of Theology:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9/20: <i>Faith Seeking Understanding</i>, chapter 1</li> </ul> <p><b>Assignment to complete by Friday 9/22:</b> Compassion Practice Case Study due Friday 9/22 by 11:59pm</p>
Week 5	<p><b>Theological Method – Scripture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9/25: <i>The Bible: A Historical &amp; Literary Introduction</i>; Introduction, chapters 1-2 (Asynchronous – no class - recorded video lecture uploaded on Populi)</li> <li>9/27: Please read Genesis 16:1-16, Genesis 21:9-21, <i>Sisters in the Wilderness</i> Chapter 1 “Hagar’s Story: A Route to Black Women’s Issues”</li> </ul>
Week 6	<p><b>Theological Method – Scripture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10/2: <i>Faith Seeking Understanding</i>, Chapter 3 “The Authority of Scripture.” (Asynchronous – no class - recorded video lecture uploaded on Populi)</li> </ul> <p><b>Theology – Trinitarian God:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10/4: <i>Faith Seeking Understanding</i>, Chapter 4 “The Triune God”; <i>The Divine Dance: The Trinity &amp; Your Transformation</i>, selections will be uploaded to Populi</li> </ul> <p><b>Assignment to complete by Friday 10/6: Religious Autobiography.</b></p>
Week 7	<p><b>Theology – Trinitarian God:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10/9: <i>Faith Seeking Understanding</i>, Chapter 9 “Confessing Christ in Context.” (Asynchronous – no class - recorded video lecture uploaded on Populi)</li> <li><b>10/11: Exam over readings &amp; lectures for classes weeks 1-7</b></li> </ul>
Week 8	<p><b>Fall Break!</b></p>
Week 9	<p><b>Theology – Ecclesiology &amp; The Reality of Suffering:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10/23: <i>Faith Seeking Understanding</i>, Chapter 12 “The New Community.” (asynchronous – no class - recorded video lecture uploaded on Populi)</li> <li>10/25: <i>Faith Seeking Understanding</i>, Chapter 6 “The Providence of God &amp; The Mystery of Evil.”</li> </ul>

Week 10	<p><b>Theology – Theological Anthropology:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10/30: <i>Faith Seeking Understanding</i>, Chapter 9 “Humanity as Creature, Sinner, and New Being in Christ.” (Asynchronous – no class - recorded video lecture uploaded on Populi)</li> <li>11/1: <i>Jesus &amp; Virtue Ethics</i>, Chapter 7 “Sin as Failure to Love.”</li> </ul>
Week 11	<p><b>Theology – Salvation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11/6: <i>Faith Seeking Understanding</i> chapter 8 “The Person &amp; Work of Christ.” (Asynchronous – no class - recorded video lecture uploaded on Populi)</li> <li>11/8: <i>Sisters in the Wilderness</i>, please read the “Preface,” and pages 143-148 in chapter 6, “Doctrine: Surrogacy and Redemption”</li> </ul>
Week 12	<p><b>Theology – Creation &amp; Ecology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11/13: <i>Faith Seeking Understanding</i>, Chapter 5 “The Good Creation” and Chapter 10 “Christ &amp; Cosmos.” (Asynchronous – no class - recorded video lecture uploaded on Populi)</li> <li>11/15: <b>Exam #2 over readings &amp; lectures for classes weeks 9-12</b></li> </ul>
Week 13	<b>Thanksgiving Break!</b>
Week 14	<p><b>Christian Faith &amp; Ecological Praxis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11/27: <i>The Spirit of Soul Food</i>, Preface and Introduction (asynchronous – no class - recorded video lecture uploaded on Populi)</li> <li>11/29: <i>The Spirit of Soul Food</i>, Chapter 1</li> </ul>
Week 15	<p><b>Christian Faith &amp; Ecological Praxis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12/4: <i>The Spirit of Soul Food</i>, Chapter 2 (asynchronous – no class - recorded video lecture uploaded on Populi)</li> <li>12/6: <i>The Spirit of Soul Food</i>, Chapter 3</li> </ul>
Week 16	<p><b>Christian Faith &amp; Ecological Praxis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12/11: <i>The Spirit of Soul Food</i>, Chapter 4 &amp; Conclusion (asynchronous – no class - recorded video lecture uploaded on Populi)</li> <li>12/13: Final Class</li> </ul> <p><b>Book Review Due by Friday 12/15</b></p>
Final Paper	<b>Due ....</b>



### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY**

The Methodist Theological School of Ohio is an academic institution, an instrument of learning. As such, MTSO is predicated on the principles of scholastic honesty. It is an academic community all of whose members are expected to abide by ethical standards both in their conduct and in their exercise of responsibility towards other members of the community. Academic dishonesty is an affront to the integrity of scholarship at MTSO and a threat to the quality of learning. To maintain its credibility and uphold its reputation, MTSO has procedures to deal with academic dishonesty which are uniform and which should be understood by all. An act of academic dishonesty may be either a serious violation or an infraction. The instructor or supervisor of an academic exercise will have responsibility for determining that an act is an infraction or [whether it] may be a serious violation.

#### **Serious violations are the following acts:**

- A. Examination Behavior. Any intentional giving or use of external assistance during an examination shall be considered a serious violation if knowingly done without express permission of the instructor giving the examination.
- B. Fabrication. Any intentional falsification or invention of data, citation, or other authority in an academic exercise shall be considered a serious violation, unless the fact of falsification or invention is disclosed at the time and place it is made.
- C. Unauthorized Collaboration. If the supervisor of an academic exercise has stated that collaboration is not permitted, intentional collaboration between one engaged in the exercise and another shall be considered a serious violation by the one engaged in the exercise, and the other if the other knows of the rule against collaboration.
- D. Plagiarism. Any intentional passing off of another's ideas, words, or work as one's own shall be considered a serious violation.
- E. Misappropriation of Resource Materials. Any intentional and unauthorized taking or concealment of course or library materials shall be considered a serious violation if the purpose of the taking or concealment is to obtain exclusive use, or deprive others of such use, of such materials.
- F. Unauthorized Access. Any unauthorized access of an instructor's files or computer account shall be considered a serious violation.
- G. Serious Violations Defined by the Instructor. Any other intentional violation of rules or policies established in writing by a course instructor or supervisor of an academic exercise as a serious violation in that course or exercise.

#### **Infractions are the following acts:**

- A. Any unintentional act is an infraction that, if it were intentional, would be a serious violation.
  - B. Any violation of the rules or policies established for a course or academic exercise is an infraction in that course or exercise if such a violation would not constitute a serious violation.
- Acts of dishonesty can lead to penalties in a course such as: reduction of grade; withdrawal from the course; a requirement that all or part of a course be retaken; and a requirement that additional work be undertaken in connection with the course. Because of the seriousness of academic dishonesty, further penalties at the level of the MTSO community may be applied; such penalties include probation, a letter of censure, suspension, or expulsion.

**YOUR ONGOING ENROLLMENT IN THIS CLASS IS TAKEN AS AGREEMENT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SYLLABUS**