



Course title	HON 202: Introduction to Christian Theology
Semester	Fall 2009
Instructor	Dr. Boyer
Texts	Olson, <i>The Mosaic of Christian Belief</i> Friedmann, <i>The Theology of Anabaptism</i> Athanasius, <i>On the Incarnation</i> Norris, <i>The Christological Controversy</i> Rusch, <i>The Trinitarian Controversy</i> Schmemmann, <i>For the Life of the World</i>
Assignments	1 email notification, 3 short papers, 2 book synopses (with a partner), 2 class presentations, 2 exams
Firm deadlines	Email notification – August 28 Sign up for presentations – August 31 Short papers – August 31, November 5, December 8 Final exam – December 11
Tentative deadlines	Book synopses – TBD Class presentations – TBD Mid-term exam – October 7
Free absences	Four

HON 202: Introduction to Christian Theology
Eastern University – Fall 2009
MWF – 8:00-8:50 a.m. – McInnis 253

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Office Hours:
MWF 9:00 to 10:00 a.m.
Monday, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
Tuesday, 12 noon to 2 p.m.
Or by appointment

Prerequisites: BIB 101 and BIB 102, or equivalent.

Catalogue Description: This course aims to introduce students to the Christian tradition of theological reflection on Christian faith and life, addressing topically the historical formation of basic Christian doctrine concerning Scripture, the Trinity, creation and providence, Christology, grace, salvation, the Church, sacraments and Last Things.

Objectives: The intent of this course is to equip and to encourage students to enter into the multi-faceted Christian tradition of theological reflection. It approaches this goal in two very different ways, and the result is, in a sense, two courses in one. First, the course is a systematic introduction to Christian theology as a unified whole, emphasizing the distinctively Christian vision of reality that arises as isolated pieces of the faith are drawn together with coherence and power. Second, the course is a historical introduction to Christian theology in all its tangible diversity, as represented in classic theological texts or “great books”, where exemplary thinkers have given lastingly influential expression to their very particular visions of life. Thus the course as a whole is *built around* the systematic account of Christianity’s united theological vision, but it is *punctuated* throughout by steadfast attention to classic sources in their particularity. Class readings and assignments are designed to move in both directions, highlighting now the unity and now the diversity of historic Christian theology.

The course satisfies Eastern University’s breadth requirement in Theology, a requirement established in order to ensure that every graduate of the University has at least a rudimentary appreciation of the fundamental truths and practices that ground a Christian life. After completing this course, students should be able to recognize the great doctrinal pillars of a Christian worldview; to explain these central doctrines in an articulate way that exhibits their historic development and their systematic interconnection; to appreciate the thematic diversity of Christian theology throughout history; and to identify and interact critically with a host of classic representatives of the Christian tradition. It is also hoped, more basically, that students will intentionally enter into the dynamic and life-transforming experience of “knowing God”—that is, of learning to love God with all their strength, soul, and mind.

Texts: The following texts are required for this course.

- 1) St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996).
- 2) Robert Friedmann, *The Theology of Anabaptism: An Interpretation* (Wipf & Stock, 1998).
- 3) Richard A. Norris, Jr. (ed.), *The Christological Controversy* (Fortress, 1980).
- 4) Roger E. Olson, *The Mosaic of Christian Belief* (InterVarsity, 2002).
- 5) William G. Rusch (ed.), *The Trinitarian Controversy* (Fortress, 1980).
- 6) Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973).

Requirements: The following requirements must be met in order to complete the course successfully.

- 1) *Email notification* – Each student should send a brief email message to the professor before the second class session on **August 28, 2009** (or, for students absent on the first day of class, before the class session immediately following the first class they attend), in order to affirm that the student has read through the syllabus and related course documents and is familiar with their contents. The syllabus will not be reviewed in any detail in class, but students are nevertheless responsible for all of the information that it contains, and they will be penalized for failure to follow its detailed instructions. This email notification is also an appropriate time to ask questions about the class or to request clarification of items in the syllabus. (The professor would also be grateful to have students point out typographical or grammatical errors or stylistic infelicities in the syllabus or course documents.)

The email notification will not be graded in any substantive sense, but its being submitted on time will contribute (minimally) to the student's final grade in the following way. Submission on time will result in a score of 100 being factored into the final grade. Late submission will reduce that score by 4 points per day, with submission after class time on the due date counting as the first day. Thus, an email message received by the professor after class time (between 8:01 a.m. and midnight) on August 28 will lower the score by 4 points, to 96; a message received after 12:01 a.m. on August 29 will lower the score by 8 points, to 92; etc. In celebration of the Lord's resurrection, Sundays will be counted as days of grace, and no points will be deducted for them.

- 2) *Readings* – Students should read all material as it is assigned. The schedule posted under "Course Schedule" on Blackboard gives an outline of most of the readings, and these should be completed for the dates they are assigned (except for assignments in parentheses, which may be completed at the student's leisure); other materials and assignments may be provided as the course proceeds. The Olson textbook need not be brought to class, although having it on hand might occasionally be helpful. The other texts should be brought to class when they are under discussion, since careful attention to passages from them will often be in order.
- 3) *Attendance* – Attendance in class is mandatory. Roll will be called at the beginning of each class session. Each student is allowed four absences during the course of the semester, after which any absence may result in that student's grade for the semester being dropped as much as one step in the scale of letter grades (e.g., from B+ to B, from B to B-, from B- to C+). Note also that tardy students will already have been marked absent, and it is the responsibility of the student to see the professor immediately after the class session in order

to avoid an absence being recorded. Excessive or persistent tardiness may be translated into absences.

- 4) *Response papers (and revisions)* – Each student will write two short, formal response papers during the course of the semester, offering a critical response to (respectively) pp. 1-48 of Robert Friedmann’s *The Theology of Anabaptism* and Alexander Schmemmann’s *For the Life of the World*. Each of these texts provides a penetrating account of a distinctive theological perspective, the first the very practical “kingdom” theology of historic Anabaptism, the second the deeply sacramental theology of Eastern Orthodoxy. Students should write papers that carefully evaluate each perspective. An excellent paper will reflect well-informed, sympathetic understanding of the theological position under consideration, and it will also show independent critical engagement with that position. A paper might analyze the position in order to strengthen it against possible objections, or it might criticize particular conclusions, or it might reflect upon theological implications either positive or negative—a paper could do all three, so long as it remained within the limitations of space noted below. Papers need not come to definitive conclusions, and they certainly need not come to conclusions like those of the professor. But the attempt to formulate an argument and move toward some reasoned conclusions, however tentative they may be, is indispensable. Each paper should show that its author has comprehended the material, recognized its cogency, and thought carefully about an appropriate critical response.

The papers are intended to foster reflection, not to precipitate research; therefore, no additional research, beyond the close reading of the text, is required or expected (though it certainly is allowed—and, if used, should be appropriately documented). Each paper should be written in standard, college-level English, and should be no fewer than 1000 and no more than 1200 words in length (approximately three to four pages), with a cover page that lists the paper’s title at the top, and the student’s name, the course number and title, and the due date at the bottom (please see the Sample Cover Page posted under “Other Info” on Blackboard for preferred layout and a justification for this layout). The paper should be printed in 12-point Times New Roman or Century Schoolbook font, double-spaced, with ample margins, with page numbers on each page (with the first page of text rather than the cover page counting as page 1, and *without* the student’s name listed as part of the header on each page), and it should include a word count on the last page. Papers will be graded on the basis of clarity of understanding, depth of reflection, and felicity of style.

In addition, most papers, after being marked by the professor, will be returned to students for stylistic, but not usually substantive, revision. The goal of this exercise is to invite students to improve their writing in one of the most effective ways available, namely, re-writing. This process will also allow students to recognize and address weaknesses in their prose, so that later papers may be stylistically superior to earlier ones. Revised papers should be re-submitted with the original paper attached. In some exceptional cases, very thorough or very slovenly revision could result in a change in the paper’s grade.

The first paper (on Friedmann) is due at class time on **August 31 (this coming Monday)**; the second (on Schmemmann) is due at 12:00 noon on **Thursday, November 5**. A late paper (including a paper submitted after the appropriate time on the due date) may be penalized as much as one full letter grade (e.g., from B+ to C+) for each day it is late, Sundays excepted. Submission via email is not advisable unless a student is out of town or otherwise incapacitated when the paper is due. If email must be used, the paper should be

sent as an attachment and in a format compatible with Microsoft Word. Note that it is the student's responsibility to get an uncorrupted paper to the professor on time: submission in the wrong format, or to the wrong email address, or any transmission problem whatsoever will not excuse a late paper.

It is perhaps worth noting, for those who have not taken classes with Dr. Boyer in the past, that he is a careful and critical reader of student papers, and one who takes issues of grammar, syntax, style, and overall clarity very seriously (see the Marking Code posted under "Other Info" on Blackboard for some common stylistic problems). The Eastern University Writing Center is available throughout the semester for students who would like assistance in improving their writing, and many students from Dr. Boyer's classes have found this assistance very valuable. The Writing Center will provide, on request, a memo verifying a student's visit, and thereby confirming the student's commitment to write with ever-increasing excellence. Such a memo should be attached to the student's paper when it is handed in.

- 5) *Culminating paper* – At the end of the semester, each student will write one short, formal paper to respond creatively to the Christian tradition as a whole by developing a critical account of the "center of Christian theology". This paper should reflect careful, integrated attention to both the systematic coherence and the historical diversity of orthodox doctrine, and it should make a case for the decisive centrality of one doctrine or one feature of Christian theology for the cogency of the entire tradition.

Like the response papers described above, this culminating paper emphasizes reflection, not research. It should be 1200 to 1500 words in length (roughly four to five pages) and should conform to the stylistic conventions noted above, including cover page and word count. Papers will be graded on the basis of effectiveness of argument, comprehensiveness of understanding, and felicity of style. The paper is due in the professor's office (McInnis 209) on **Tuesday, December 8, at 12:00 noon**. Late papers will not be accepted.

- 6) *Critical synopses and class presentations* – Each student will be responsible, on two occasions, to read a classic Christian text in addition to the reading required of all students, and then, with a partner, to acquaint the rest of the class with this material. This process of "acquaintance" will begin with the student and partner writing a critical synopsis of the text in order to describe and evaluate it for other students who have not read it, and will culminate in the student and partner presenting position papers and leading one class session devoted to the text. Over the course of the semester, therefore, each student will read two additional texts and will work on two synopses and two class presentations. But note well that students should have different partners for the two texts they will be working on.

Students may sign up for texts and partners by consulting the detailed set of Instructions posted on Blackboard under "Classic Texts". Assignments not taken by **Monday, August 31, at 3:00 p.m.** will be distributed at random to pairs of students chosen by the professor.

- 7) *Exams* – Students will take two examinations during the course of the semester, the second of which will be comprehensive. Each exam will consist of objective questions (multiple choice, etc.) and also of short answer or short essay questions. No make-up examinations

will be allowed except in cases of medical emergency or, with prior notice, in other extraordinary circumstances.

Grades: A student’s final grade for the course will be computed in the following way:

Email assignment	1%
Papers	
Friedmann paper	9%
Schmemann paper	10%
Culminating paper	15%
Classic texts	
Critical synopsis #1	6%
Class presentation #1	6%
Critical synopsis #2	9%
Class presentation #2	9%
Exams	
Midterm exam	15%
Final exam	20%

Letter grades will be assigned according to the following numerical scale:

99-100	A+	81-83	C+
95-98	A	78-80	C
92-94	A-	76-77	C-
89-91	B+	73-75	D+
86-88	B	70-72	D
84-85	B-	68-69	D-
	67 or lower		F

For convenience, the following grading rubric is reproduced from the Eastern University Undergraduate Catalog:

A grade of A represents: 1) Superior understanding of course material and evidence of ability to analyze critically and synthesize creatively; 2) Sound techniques of scholarship in all projects; 3) Creativity, imagination, sound judgment and intellectual curiosity in relating the course material to other areas of intellectual investigation.

A grade of B represents: 1) Understanding of course material and evidence of ability to produce viable generalizations and insightful implications; 2) Understanding of techniques of scholarship in all projects; 3) Sustained interest and the ability to communicate ideas and concepts which are part of the subject matter of the course.

A grade of C represents: 1) Understanding of course material demonstrated by few errors in fact and judgment when discussing the material; 2) competence in techniques of scholarship; 3) Satisfaction of the minimum stated requirements for the course in preparation, outside reading and class participation.

A grade of D represents: 1) A minimal understanding of the course material demonstrated by some errors in fact and judgment when discussing the material; 2) Very little competence in techniques of scholarship;

3) Satisfaction of somewhat less than the minimum standard of requirements for the course in preparation, outside reading and class participation.

A grade of F represents: 1) A lack of understanding of the course material demonstrated by many errors in fact and judgment when discussing the material; 2) An inability to use sound techniques of scholarship; 3) Failure to meet the standards and fulfill the requirements of the course.

Academic Honesty: All students are expected to understand and to abide by the University's policy for academic honesty, which prohibits all forms of plagiarism, deception, and cheating. Such activities compromise education by substituting trickery for learning, and they destroy spiritual life by undermining the student's own character. More damning consequences for a college student or for a Christian are hard to imagine. Students who do not clearly understand the policy, particularly with respect to the definition of plagiarism, should see the professor or their major advisors for clarification.

Special Circumstances: Eastern University goes to great lengths to meet the needs of students with disabilities that affect performance in class or other course requirements. A student with either a physical impediment or a documented learning disability should take two steps as soon as possible: (1) speak to the professor about the relevant disability; and (2) contact the Cushing Center for Counseling and Academic Support in Walton Hall (third floor, x5837) so that official documentation can lead to appropriate accommodation.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR CLASSIC TEXTS

Critical Synopses and Class Presentations

HON 202 – Fall 2009

Dr. Boyer

The assignments: For each classic text that students work on, two different assignments are specified. Each pair of students will (1) compose a critical synopsis of their text for distribution to other members of the class, and (2) lead a class session devoted to their text by presenting two short position papers on a selected issue or issues. The goal of both assignments together is to introduce to us all a body of classic literature that we cannot all read. Each of the texts is a complete book, except where noted below. Their chronology in our schedule varies dramatically, in order to allow the texts to be related to other material being addressed in class whenever possible (though it is *not* always possible—alas).

These assignments regarding classic texts are *over and above* other readings and written assignments. Students writing synopses or making presentations on a given day are still responsible for all other assigned work for that day. PLEASE PLAN AHEAD!

First steps: As soon as possible, each student should seek out two partners (a different partner is required for each text), and then choose texts to work on. A schedule will be posted on the professor's office door (McInnis 209), and each team should sign up for a text. Availability will be on a first-come-first-serve basis. The schedule will be taken down on Monday, August 31, at 3:00 p.m., and remaining texts will be assigned at random.

Note well: Because assignments related to the first text are due quite soon, the first text itself is substantially shorter than the others and has some other inviting features for the intrepid team that is willing to go first (see below).

Guidelines for critical synopses

One synopsis should be submitted by each team of students (*not* one for each student) and should be composed on the assumption that readers have no familiarity at all with the text. The synopsis will be distributed to the entire class prior to the class presentation, and the class's sole advance exposure to the text will come from the synopsis. Therefore, each synopsis should describe the thesis or theses of the text, outline its primary argument(s), highlight any distinctive features, comment on the significance of the text (perhaps in light of its particular thesis, or perhaps as a representative work of this particular author), and offer some critical appraisal. The aim is that students who have read the synopsis should have a very basic acquaintance with the text in order to allow for informed discussion in class—and also to assist students in preparing for the final exam, where material from the classic texts will be included. Note well that the entire class is dependent on each team for their collective knowledge of this classic theological literature.

Writing requirements: Each synopsis should be no fewer than 1200 words and no more than 1500 words in length (roughly four to five pages), and conform to the other conventions noted in the syllabus for writing assignments (spacing, cover page, word count, etc.).

Submission requirements: Synopses should be submitted as email attachments (in a format compatible with Microsoft Word) and should be copied to the entire class. Synopses are due at the time specified on the Course Schedule (generally about a day and a half before the class presentation), so that other students can have time to read them in preparation for the class presentation itself.

Grading: Synopses will be evaluated for their clarity and thoroughness, depth of insight, and felicity of style. Both students on a team will receive the same grade.

Guidelines for class presentations

Class presentations should include two short pro-and-con position papers (one from each student on the team), followed by an informal directed discussion of the issue(s) of the day. The purpose of both position papers together is to formulate an issue, or to create a problem, or to introduce a question. The purpose of the class discussion (in which the professor might also participate) is to address the question productively and to consider related issues. Therefore, each team should initially decide what issue or issues they wish to focus on from their text. Then one student should compose a position paper addressing the issue from the angle represented by the text, while the other composes a paper from another, more critical angle. They should also develop an informal list of questions or prompts that can advance the class discussion if it should happen to slow down or stall.

Writing requirements: Each position paper should be no more than 600 words in length (roughly two pages) and *should be written to be read aloud*. The aim is maximal rhetorical power and explanatory persuasiveness, in conjunction with economy of words. Quotations from the text should be used very sparingly, since the papers are so short. Authors should assume that their synopsis has already been read by the class. No cover page is necessary, but a word count should be included at the end of the paper.

Presentation requirements: On the day of the presentation, presenters should bring copies of their position papers for each student in the class and for the professor. After any necessary introductory remarks, each position paper should be read aloud by its author, word for word. Presenters may then use the remainder of the class session in whatever way they judge to be most productive for the discussion: they might (for instance) invite general comments, or solicit criticisms, or ask questions of their own, or continue the debate that the papers began, or broaden the discussion to include other matters.

Grading: Presenters will be evaluated with respect to position papers (clarity, depth of insight, rhetorical power) and with respect to class discussion (skill in leadership, overall helpfulness). Each student on a team will be evaluated independently, though the performance of each is likely to reflect that of the other.

Presenters: Gordon, Whipple

10. Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033 – 1109) Date of presentation: October 19 (Monday)
Cur Deus Homo? **Presenters: Bartow, Reimers**

11. Philipp Spener (1635 – 1705) Date of presentation: October 21 (Wednesday)
Pia Desideria **Presenters: DeAngulo, Garrett**

12. John Calvin (1509 – 1564) Date of presentation: October 23 (Friday)
Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book II, chapters ix-xvii

Presenters: Holbert, Whipple

Note: Calvin's *Institutes* are arranged into four major sections ("books"), and this selection is the ending of second book.

13. Gregory of Nazianzus (330 – 389) Date of presentation: October 28 (Wednesday)
The Five Theological Orations **Presenters: Wasson, West**

Note: All students in the class will have read the Third Theological Oration in its entirety, as part of the *The Trinitarian Controversy* anthology.

14. Cyril of Alexandria (c. 378 – 444) Date of presentation: November 2 (Monday)
On the Unity of Christ **Presenters: Chia, Emmert**

15. John Wesley (1703 – 1791) Date of presentation: November 9 (Monday)
A Plain Account of Christian Perfection **Presenters: McLaurin, Shogren**

16. Desiderius Erasmus (1466 – 1536) Date of presentation: November 13 (Friday)
AND Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) **Presenters: Bailey, Carson**
The Free Will and The Bondage of the Will

Note: These two short books are almost always bound together by publishers, for Luther's work is an explicit reply to Erasmus's. A single synopsis should address both books.

17. Symeon the New Theologian Date of presentation: November 16 (Monday)
(949 – 1022) **Presenters: Hoagland, Holbert**

Discourses II, IV, V, VI, X, XIV, XVI, XXIII, XXIV, XXIX, XXX, XXXII, XXXIII

Note: The selected discourses constitute Symeon's instructions to his monastic community regarding the Holy Spirit and our experience of life in the Spirit.

18. Richard Baxter (1615 – 1691) Date of presentation: December 2 (Wednesday)
The Saints' Everlasting Rest (abridged) **Presenters: --**

Note: This work in its entirety is very long, but the abridged version in Warner Library is quite manageable. Students might want to consult the unabridged text for a fuller account of some aspects of Baxter's work (for instance, his long and dramatic descriptions of the torments of Hell are not included in the abridgement).