



CHTH111

Doing Theology

Distance Course Outline 2020

SEMESTER 1 2020

Course Coordinator:

Revd Associate Professor Christopher Holmes
christopher.holmes@otago.ac.nz
03 479 5394
4th fl Burns Building (Arts), 95 Albany St, 456

Course Instructor/Deliver:

Mr Camo Coombe (PhD cand.)
cameron.coombe@gmail.com

Welcome to **CHTH 111: Doing Theology**, an 18-point, core paper in Christian Thought and History that forms an essential part of studies in theology. The course introduces you to the essential themes of Christian theology. It should help you to think wisely, faithfully, and constructively about God and all things as they relate to God.

LECTURER'S INTRODUCTION

Your lecturer for this paper is Associate Professor Christopher Holmes, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Head of the Theology Programme at the University of Otago. Chris is the author of many book chapters and scholarly articles on various Christian doctrines and theologians, as well as the author of four books. His most recent book is *The Lord is Good: Seeking the God of the Psalter*, published by IVP Academic.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. A sound grasp of the main themes of Christian theology, notably Jesus Christ, the Trinity, salvation, creation, and the last things;
2. Recognition of the difference Christian faith makes for all aspects of life;
3. Appreciation of the moral and spiritual dimension of theological study.

How will these Learning Outcomes be achieved?

1. By exploring a “big picture” view of Holy Scripture and the Christian tradition in dialogue with Alister McGrath’s text *Theology: The Basics* (4th ed.);
2. By contemplating the shape of a good life;
3. By participating in discussions in the videoconferences, three online discussion windows, and by writing responses to challenging questions in the essay and in the final examination.

COURSE STRUCTURE

The course consists of **six modules** as follows:

1. **MODULE 1, What is Theology?** (VC #1, Reading: McGrath, *Theology: The Basics* (4th ed.), xviii-xxviii & ch. 1, pp. 1–18, & ch. 2, pp. 19–38)
 - 1.1 What is theology?
 - 1.2 ‘God-talk’ and Revelation
 - 1.3 Faith Thinking
 - 1.4 Natural and Revealed Knowledge: What is the Difference?
2. **MODULE 2, Who is Jesus?** (VC #2, Reading: McGrath, *Theology: The Basics*, ch. 4, pp. 61–81 & Calvin, “Christ Assumed the True Substance of Human Flesh” and “How the Two Natures of the Mediator Make One Person” in *Calvin’s Institutes: Abridged Edition*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), pp. 52–55. **You will find this reading from Calvin in eReserve on Blackboard.**)
 - 2.1 Jesus in the New Testament
 - 2.2 Fully Human
 - 2.3 Fully Divine
 - 2.4 One Person
3. **MODULE 3, The Trinity** (VC #3, Reading: McGrath, *Theology: The Basics*, ch. 6, pp. 105–126 & ch. 7, pp. 127–149 & John Calvin, “In Scripture, From the Creation Onward, We are Taught One Essence of God, Which Contains Three Persons,” in *Calvin’s Institutes: Abridged Edition*, ed. Donald McKim (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), pp. 16–21. **You will find this reading from Calvin in eReserve via Blackboard.**)
 - 3.1 Who is the Holy Spirit?
 - 3.2 The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life
 - 3.3 Rethinking God: the Trinity
 - 3.4 4th Century Trinitarian Theology

4. **MODULE 4, Salvation and the Church** (VC #4, Reading: McGrath, *Theology: The Basics*, ch. 5, pp. 82–104 & ch. 8, pp. 150–169 & ch. 9, pp. 170–190)
 - 4.1 Salvation and Jesus Christ
 - 4.2 Images of Salvation
 - 4.3 Salvation and the Christian Church
 - 4.4 Salvation and the Sacraments

5. **MODULE 5, Creation** (VC #5, Reading: McGrath, *Theology: The Basics*, ch. 3, pp. 39–60)
 - 5.1 God the Creator
 - 5.2 Humanity as Created
 - 5.3 Humanity and Sin
 - 5.4 The Doctrine of Providence

6. **MODULE 6, Last Things** (VC #6, Reading: McGrath, *Theology: The Basics*, ch. 10, pp. 191–209)
 - 6.1 Salvation in the End
 - 6.2 The Hope of Heaven

TEACHING

- Six Modules taught over six videoconferences

ASSESSMENT

- One written assignment (35%), online discussion (15%), and a 3-hour final examination (50%)

RESOURCES

- Blackboard, the University's online learning tool;
- This Course Outline and the Study Guide;
- eReserve, a resource for electronic readings, which you can access via Blackboard; all the readings for this course are found on eReserve
- The Programme's "Style Guide" which recommends students use the 16th edition of the *Chicago Style Guide* when writing essays. It is available online at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>

- The handbook *Distance Learning Information and Support 2020*, providing advice on administrative matters not covered in this Course Outline and on the Distance Library Service. (You may download the PDF from the 'Essential Information' web page).

THIS IS IMPORTANT!

Please Note: You **must have access to Blackboard and your University email address** in order to complete this paper. You will receive access once your enrolment is complete. Communications from your lecturer regarding teaching matters will be provided only through Blackboard and your University email address, as outlined in the University's Student Communications Policy, so you must check these emails regularly. eVision will also send important messages through your University email. If you have any concerns about your access to Blackboard or to other course resources, please contact the lecturer or administrative staff immediately so that these can be resolved.

You will find there is a lot of helpful information and resources on the Theology Programme website. In particular, we require you to read the section called "Essential Student Information." You will find it here:

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>

This page provides a number of useful resources such as the Style Guide and the Plagiarism Declaration Form you must attach to your assignments. It supplies detailed information on assessment and student support. In particular, it contains guidance on the topics of plagiarism and deadlines, both of which can incur penalties if not heeded. This also is where you will find instructions for making online discussion posts and submitting assignments electronically. So it is very important you make yourself familiar with this material. Our assumption is that you have read it.

We will make reference to information on the website in the following pages, so do take the time to follow the links and absorb the material. It will save you from making costly mistakes and help to make the practical experience of distance study a straightforward one.

VIDEOCONFERENCES

Distance study requires students to accept a high level of responsibility for their own study. Success is most easily achieved by students who are self-motivated, who engage readily in self-directed study, and who prepare well for the videoconferences. The videoconferences will not cover all the material in each module. Instead, they will focus on some of the key themes and provide opportunity for interaction between students and the course teacher. Much of the learning will take place as you work through the Study Guide modules and readings on your own.

Accessing the Videoconferences

Please see the 'Zoom Information' link on Blackboard and the 'Essential Information' web page for instructions on how to access Zoom and join in the videoconference sessions. The URL you need to join the sessions is posted under 'Zoom Information.'

Schedule of Videoconferences

Videoconference sessions will be held on Mondays as below:

SESSION	DATE & MODULE	TIME
1	24-Feb/Module #1	18:10-19:00
2	9-Mar/Module #2	18:10-19:30
3	23-Mark/Module #3	18:10-19:30
4	6-Apr/ Module #4	18:10-19:30
5	4-May/Module #5	18:10-19:30
6	18-May/Module #6	18:10-19:30

Attendance at the Videoconferences

Attending videoconferences is a requirement of taking this course. If you are obliged by circumstances beyond your control to miss one, you may find a recording of the proceedings of the Videoconference on Blackboard under the Zoom Videoconferences Link.

Online Activities (in three 'windows')

For all of these online activities you will use the discussion board function on Blackboard, but as you will see not all of these activities are simple discussions. In each of the three 'windows' you will choose one of two activities, and in that activity you will make two substantive posts that will be assessed. (Note you must choose only one option.)

Even though you will be assessed individually, do think of yourselves as working as a group to create something that is worthwhile and effective. You might think of this as a virtual tutorial in which you discuss the issues at hand with your classmates.

A post of around 150 words is perfectly acceptable; please don't go over 300 words. Each window will be marked out of 5. Here is a guide to how your posts will be marked; it will indicate what I am looking for...

Mark	Description
5	This is exceptionally good. I can tell that you have done some excellent reading and thinking. There is nothing discordant. Your post is relevant, creative, intelligent and accurate.
4	This is a solid post. It doesn't have quite the flair or the intuition of a 5, but it is still good. It is accurate and knowledgeable, with no errors or misunderstandings.
3	This is certainly passable. You have shown good effort but the post may contain an error or misunderstanding, something that suggests you haven't fully grasped the subject.
2	Your post is either too brief to do justice to the subject or it is badly wrong in at least one aspect. It is not convincing. It does not convey much in the way of independent reading or critical thinking.
1	I'm sorry to say that this is substandard. It is severely off-track, or inadequate in its content, or fundamentally mistaken. It conveys that you haven't understood the subject very well at all.

Once each round of posts has been assessed you will find your mark in the 'Grade Centre' section of Blackboard.

As you construct your posts, please observe the following guidelines, and refer if need be to the 'Essential Information' web page for guidance with the online discussion tasks:

1. Keep your posts relevant, focused and to the point. You don't have to write everything you know about a topic. The purpose is to engage with your fellow students to build a fruitful conversation together. Try not to dominate the discussion; give others space.
2. Electronic discussion is prone to misunderstanding, and it is reasonably easy to cause offence without intending to. So, choose your words carefully and precisely, giving thought to how they might be received. Feel free to use emoticons – they are an important way of conveying tone. And don't take offence too quickly – perceived slights may not be real or intended. If you don't understand what someone has said online, ask them to clarify it. If that doesn't resolve the matter, contact me directly.
3. I welcome and encourage humour, but please make it in good taste. Your posts can be informal in their tone, creative and fun.

In each 'window' there are two activities to choose from. You might think of these studies as an exercise in creative writing. Even though it is not academic prose, it still conveys to me

whether or not you have understood the doctrine and the focus of the activity. Let me clearly signal, then, that I will reward creative writing. What I want to see is that you have engaged with the issues and understood them, so you have lots of room to move around in and be creative.

You will find the technical instructions you need for making your posts in the next section: Course Administration. Meanwhile, here are the online activities...

WINDOW 1 (Module #1): THE QUESTION OF AUTHORITY IN THEOLOGY? (5%)

6:00am Monday March 2nd to 11pm Sunday March 8th

Choose ONE of the two options:

Option #1

Consider the following question and post a response to the question (maximum 300 words) on Blackboard. Furthermore, write a reply to a post written by someone else (maximum 300 words).

Question: Is Scripture all you need for doing theology, or do tradition (e.g. Creeds), the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit, and reason also play a role?

Essentially you are contemplating the question of **authority** in Theology. Xxvi–xxviii and ch. 1 of McGrath's *Theology: The Basics* (4th ed.) are essential to your being an informed participant in this discussion. I would strongly encourage you to refer to McGrath in your post(s).

Option #2

Consider the following question and post a response to the question (maximum 300 words) on Blackboard. Furthermore, write a reply to a post written by someone else (maximum 300 words).

Question: In Matthew 22:37–39, Jesus says, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” How does theological study help us to fulfil these two commandments?

I would strongly encourage you to refer to Module #1 of the Studyguide in your post.

WINDOW 2 (MODULE #4): SALVATION (5%)

6am Monday 20 April to 11pm Sunday 26 April

Choose ONE of the following two options:

Option #1

Consider the following question and post a response to the question (maximum 300 words) on Blackboard. Furthermore, write a reply to a post written by someone else (maximum 300 words).

Question: From what are we saved and for what purposes?

Essentially you are contemplating the doctrine of salvation. Ch. 5 of McGrath's *Theology: The Basics* (4th ed.) as well as Module #4 of the Studyguide are essential to your being an informed participant in this discussion. I would strongly encourage you to refer to them in your post(s).

Option #2

Consider the following question and post a response to the question (maximum 300 words) on Blackboard. Furthermore, write a reply to a post written by someone else (maximum 300 words).

Question: Is it possible to live a faithful Christian life apart from the Christian community?

Let Module #4.3 of the Studyguide and chs. 8 & 9 of McGrath's *Christian Theology: The Basics* (4th ed.) inform your discussion. Indeed, I would strongly encourage you to refer to them in your post(s).

WINDOW 3 (MODULE #6): CREATION AND THE LAST THINGS (5%)

6am Monday 18 May to 11pm Sunday 24 May

Choose ONE of the following two options:

Option #1

Consider the following question and post a response to the question (maximum 300 words) on Blackboard. Furthermore, write a reply to a post written by someone else (maximum 300 words).

Question: In what sense(s), if any, is sin original to us?

I would strongly encourage you to refer to Module #5 of the Studyguide and ch. 3 of McGrath's *Theology: The Basics* (4th ed.). Let those readings inform your response.

Option #2

Consider the following question and post a response to the question (maximum 300 words) on Blackboard. Furthermore, write a reply to a post written by someone else (maximum 300 words).

Question: A good theologian (Donald Bloesch) once wrote, “We may perhaps allow for the possibility of universal restoration of the lost, but we must also equally admit the possibility of the fall of unbelieving humanity into nothingness.” Discuss.

I would strongly encourage you to refer to Module #6 of the Studyguide and ch. 10 of McGrath’s *Theology: The Basics* (4th ed.), allowing those readings to inform your response.

ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS

Essay (35%)

Length: 1500 words

Due date: Thursday, April 2, midnight

Submission process: via Blackboard

Write an essay, responding to ONE of the following bullet points:

- John Calvin writes in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 1.2.2, “To begin with, the pious mind does not dream up for itself any god it pleases, but contemplates the one and only true God. And it does not attach to him whatever it pleases, but is content to hold him to be as he manifests himself.” Working with this quote, module 1 of the Studyguide, and with xxvi–xli as well as ch. 1 of McGrath’s *Theology: The Basics* (4th ed), discuss the importance of Calvin’s statement for understanding the nature of theology, theology’s authorities, and the role of faith in theology. Also, discuss how these readings challenge your understanding of theology’s importance.
- In Reading #4 (see eReserve), Calvin writes, “We ought not to understand the statement that ‘the Word was made flesh’ [John 1:14] in the sense that the Word was turned into flesh or confusedly mingled with flesh. . . . For we affirm his divinity so joined and united with his humanity that each retains its distinctive nature unimpaired, and yet these two natures constitute one Christ.” Working with this reading, module 2 of the Studyguide, and ch. 4 of McGrath’s *Theology: The Basics* (4th ed.), discuss the scriptural and creedal mystery of the one person of Christ as both truly human and truly divine. Also, discuss how these readings challenge your understanding of Jesus Christ.
- In Reading #6 (see eReserve), Calvin writes, “When we profess to believe in one God, under the name of God is understood a single, simple essence, in which we comprehend three persons. . . . For in each hypostasis [i.e. person] the whole divine essence and nature is understood, with this qualification—that to each belongs his

own peculiar quality.” Working with this reading, module 3 of the Studyguide, and chs. 6 & 7 of McGrath’s *Theology: The Basics* (4th ed.) discuss the scriptural mystery of the oneness and threeness of the triune God. Also, discuss why the doctrine of the Trinity is meaningful for Christian life.

Marking Criteria:

Engagement with the topic (Approximately 40%)

The essay should maintain a clear focus on the topic throughout. Begin by introducing the topic; identify the key issues to be considered; develop your discussion of them in a clear and coherent way and draw appropriate conclusions.

Quality of Argument (Approximately 40%)

Ensure that your argument makes sense and is developed in a clear and logical way; ensure that you provide appropriate evidence for your claims and engage intelligently with the study guide and the required readings.

Presentation (Approximately 20%)

Sentence structure and grammar matter. They create an impression of care and intelligence, and will put your marker in a happy and generous mood. Moreover, a good essay will acknowledge and reference the sources appropriately.

REFERENCING SYSTEM

For writing essays, the Theology Programme requires that you use the 16th edition of the *Chicago Style Guide*, which is the norm for many academic journals in the Humanities and is often recommended for theses in the humanities. The Programme has prepared a Style Guide, which outlines the Chicago Style and offers other advice on essay presentation. You may find it via the Theology Programme’s “Student Resources and Information” page:

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>

SUBMITTING WRITTEN WORK

All assignments shall be submitted **electronically** via the “Assignment” feature on Blackboard by **midnight** on the due dates notified. Please do not submit paper copies. For full instructions about how to submit assignments electronically via Blackboard as well as other important information on plagiarism, grading, and deadlines, please see the “Essential Information” web page.

All Assignments submitted in the Theology Programme must be prefaced with a student Plagiarism Declaration Form. They will not be deemed to have been submitted unless and until the Plagiarism Declaration Form has been submitted. It can be downloaded from

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/> It is also on the Blackboard site for this course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity means being honest in your studying and assessments. It is the basis for ethical decision-making and behaviour in an academic context. Academic integrity is informed by the values of honesty, trust, responsibility, fairness, respect and courage. Students are expected to be aware of, and act in accordance with, the University's Academic Integrity Policy.

Academic Misconduct, such as plagiarism or cheating, is a breach of Academic Integrity and is taken very seriously by the University. Types of misconduct include plagiarism, copying, unauthorised collaboration, taking unauthorised material into a test or exam, impersonation, and assisting someone else's misconduct. A more extensive list of the types of academic misconduct and associated processes and penalties is available in the University's Student Academic Misconduct Procedures.

It is your responsibility to be aware of and use acceptable academic practices when completing your assessments. To access the information in the Academic Integrity Policy and learn more, please visit the University's Academic Integrity website at www.otago.ac.nz/study/academicintegrity or ask at the Student Learning Centre or Library. If you have any questions, ask your lecturer.

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago116838.html>

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago116850.html>

STUDENT SUPPORT

The "**Essential Information**" web page provides helpful information on how to access the University Library's resources, as well as a guide to the support services available to students at the University of Otago, including the Student Learning Centre and Disability Support.

For all **administrative** enquiries, please contact the Theology Administrator:

Email: theology@otago.ac.nz Phone: 03 479 8639

We recommend that you contact the Programme as soon as possible if you have any problems participating in the course or accessing resources. Please remember to check your University email account regularly for updates and announcements.

THEOLOGY PROGRAMME

University of Otago, PO Box 56, Dunedin 9054, New Zealand
www.otago.ac.nz/theology