

**Faculty:**  
**Amy Plantinga Pauw**  
[amypauw@lpts.edu](mailto:amypauw@lpts.edu); ext. 425  
Office: Gardencourt 215

**Systematic Theology**  
**Tues and Thurs 1:30-2:50**  
**Fall 2021**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Systematic Theology is an introduction to doctrinal thinking in traditional and contemporary theology. It is a foundational course that prepares students for further work, particularly in the framework of Wisdom and Witness.

This course is intended to help students move with agility between the varied faith claims of Christian communities and the demanding needs of our current contexts. Students will learn to identify theological doctrines as they are invoked, manipulated, or relied upon in contemporary life. They will learn how to use doctrine to critique current issues and look for solutions, as well as how to use current issues to critique doctrinal claims. Furthermore, the course encourages students to think self-critically about their own theological commitments.

This course can be taken all online or mostly in-person. There will be some plenary Zoom meetings at the beginning and towards the end of the semester. During most weeks, however, students will attend EITHER an online section on Tuesday OR an in-person section on Thursday. The rest of the work for this class can be done asynchronously. This is to make your schedule more flexible and address special concerns you may be facing this semester around health and housing. You will also notice that the assignments for this class include visual and oral components, in addition to written work. The goal is to let the work for this course play to different strengths you may have and help you connect theology with daily life. I encourage you not to view theology as merely a head game, but to let it speak to the deep places in our lives. I look forward to our semester together!

**GOALS AND OUTCOMES**

Students from a variety of programs enroll in this course. The work of the course has been designed to contribute to the following program-specific Student Learning Outcomes:

**MDIV**

SLO 3: Students will be able to think theologically and ethically in relation to particular traditions and contemporary needs.

SLO 4: Students will demonstrate the ability to reflect critically and self-critically on relationships between Christian faith and various forms of systemic injustice.

**MAR**

SLO3: Students will demonstrate an understanding of multiple theological perspectives, historical and contemporary

SLO4: Students will demonstrate the ability to think theologically, strategically, imaginatively, and contextually about ethical issues

**MAMFT**

SLO 5: Graduating students will be able to use a theologically informed and clinically appropriate framework to integrate religious and spiritual factors in to the practice of Marriage and Family Therapy.

**Antiracism QEP/SLO (all degree programs):**

Students can describe strategies, grounded in their practice, for working toward racial justice appropriate to their particular vocational settings. Students can demonstrate competence with this SLO in many ways including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Defining and using key terms in ways informed by an understanding of systemic racism.
2. Identifying racism in its many manifestations (structural, personal, communal, etc.)
3. Critical reflection on the history and current contexts regarding race, racism, and antiracism
4. Critical reflection on racist and antiracist practices and theologies
5. Developing and implementing antiracist policies, practices, and theologies

## REQUIREMENTS:

1. Regular attendance, keeping up with the reading, and informed participation in class discussions
2. “The gospel in seven words”
3. Creation photograph
4. One page compare and contrast of two Christological hymns, selected and included
5. 180-second piece engaging a doctrine about which your theology has changed
6. Sin and anti-racism reflection
7. Justice and Taboo reflection on sexual morality
8. Visual image engaging doctrine of eschatology with explanatory paragraph
9. Revisiting “the gospel in seven words”
10. Group oral exam

All assignments are to be submitted on Canvas by midnight of the due date.

**All written work for the course will follow the conventions of academic writing. I highly recommend that you take advantage of the services of the Academic Support Center in preparing your written assignments for this course.**

In unusual circumstances, requests for extensions may be made at least 24 hours in advance. Late assignments without extension will not be accepted.

## TEXTS REQUIRED FOR EVERYONE:

1. McGrath, Alister E., *Theology: The Basics*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2018. ISBN: 978-1119158080
2. Farley, Margaret. *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics*. New York, NY: Continuum, 2006. ISBN: 9780826429247.
3. Gutiérrez, Gustavo. *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*, tr. Matthew J. O’Connell. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987. ISBN: 0883445522.
4. Rambo, Shelly. *Resurrecting Wounds: Living in the Afterlife of Trauma*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017. ISBN 9781481306799
5. Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited*, reprint edition. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996. ISBN: 0807010294.

## READINGS ON CANVAS:

1. Melanie L. Harris, *Ecowomanism: African American Women and Earth-Honoring Faiths* (Orbis, 2017), 61-77.
2. Delores Williams, “God-Talk and Black Liberation Theology.” In *Sisters in the Wilderness*.
3. Michael Joseph Brown, “Hearing the Master’s Voice” In *Engaging Biblical Authority*.
4. Shannon Craig-Snell and Christopher Doucot, *No Innocent Bystanders*, 51-66.

**Please have available your own copy of these readings on the day they are discussed in class.**

## **LPTS CLASSROOM POLICIES:**

### **Use of Inclusive Language**

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. For more information see:

<http://lpts.libguides.com/content.php?pid=469569&sid=4083885>

Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God.

### **Academic Honesty**

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues related to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For more information, see The Code of Student Conduct, 6.11; the Student Handbook, p. 19.

### **Citation Policy**

Citations in your papers should follow the Seminary standard, which is based on these guides:

American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 6th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2010.

Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 8th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

*The Chicago Manual of Style*. 16th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

### **Special Accommodations**

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (Beth Herrinton-Hodge, [bherrintonhodge@lpts.edu](mailto:bherrintonhodge@lpts.edu)) during the first two days of class (or, even better, before the class begins) and should speak with the instructors as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructors.

### **Attendance Policy**

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructors of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Six or more absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS

### **Module 1 Introduction to the Course**

Thurs 9/9 Watch: intro video from Amy  
Meet: Zoom plenary

### **Module 2 Faith**

Tues 9/14 Read: McGrath, ch. 1. Pay special attention to the creeds at the front of the book.  
Watch: Video intro to “The Gospel in 7 words” **SCS**  
Write: your own “Gospel in 7 words” (assignment 1)  
Meet: Zoom plenary

### **Module 3 God, Spirit, Trinity**

Thurs 9/16 Read: McGrath, ch. 2  
Watch: Lecture on God **SCS**  
Meet: in-person section

Tues 9/21 Read: McGrath, ch. 6  
Watch: Lecture on Spirit **APP**  
Meet: online section

Thurs 9/23 Read: McGrath, ch. 7  
Watch: Lecture on Trinity **SCS**  
Watch: Hyung Kyung Chung (2 min.)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwFBK1kPbLE&feature=relmfu>  
Create: What is your image of God? (assignment 2)  
Meet: in-person section

### **Module 4 Creation**

Tues 9/28 Read: McGrath, ch. 3  
Watch: Lecture on creation **SCS**  
Watch: Neil De Grasse Tyson, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1-s4tqR8Bc>  
Meet: online section

Thurs 9/30 Read: Melanie Harris, *Ecowomanism*, 61-77 (133-140 optional)

Watch: lecture on creation APP

Create: take an original photograph that speaks to you of creation, along with a two-sentence explanation (assignment 3)

Meet: in-person section

## **Module 5 Jesus**

Tues 10/5 Read: Thurman, Jesus and the Disinherited, 1-35  
Watch: Excerpt, Backs Against the Wall : The Howard Thurman Story, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdjLfORZ7Jo> (9mins)  
Meet: online section

Thurs 10/7 Read: Thurman, Jesus and the Disinherited, 36-88  
Read: Williams, God-Talk  
Watch: Lecture on Thurman APP  
Watch: Lecture on Williams SCS  
Meet: in-person section

Tues 10/12 Read: Thurman, Jesus and the Disinherited, 89-112  
Read: McGrath, ch. 4  
Watch: Lecture on Christology APP  
Meet: online section

Thurs 10/14 Watch: Lecture on Christology/ Atonement theories SCS  
Create: identify two Christological hymns that give different pictures of Jesus. Compare and contrast them, using the frameworks and terminology of the class. (assignment 4)  
Meet: in-person section

OCTOBER 18-23: RESEARCH AND STUDY – NO CLASS

## **Module 6 Sin and Salvation**

Tues 10/26 Read: Gutiérrez, Job, Introduction and Part I, The Wager  
Read: McGrath, ch. 5  
Watch: Lecture on sin APP  
Meet: online section

Thurs 10/28 Read: Gutiérrez, Job, Part II, The Language of Prophecy  
Watch: Lecture on liberation theology SCS  
in-person section

Tues 11/2 Read: Gutiérrez, Job, Part III, The Language of Contemplation  
Watch: Lecture on Gutierrez APP  
Meet: online section

Wed 11/3 Create: 180-second (assignment 5)

Thurs 11/4

Read: Michael Joseph Brown, "Hearing the Master's Voice"

Watch: everyone's 180-second assignment

Meet: in-person section

## **Module 7 Sin and Anti-Racism**

Tues 11/9

Watch: car metaphor video

Watch: Holy Post—Race in America, Phil Vischer

Read: Craig-Snell and Doucot, *No Innocent Bystanders*, 51-66.

Meet: online section

Thurs 11/11 Write: Below are some common views of racism by white American Christians. Choose one and respond to it theologically in 2-3 double-spaced pages, drawing on your readings of Thurman, Harris, Williams, and/or Gutiérrez. In your response 1) show the theological inadequacy of the view you are responding to, and 2) explain your own theological understanding of the sin of racism.

I'm not racist: I treat everyone the same.

I'm not privileged: I've worked hard for everything I have.

Race doesn't matter. We're all part of the same race—the human race.

Slavery ended a long time ago. It's time to move on.

All lives matter.

(assignment 6)

Meet: in-person section

## **Module 8 Theological Anthropology**

Tues 11/16

Read: Farley, xi-108

Read: McGrath, ch. 8

Watch: Intro to Farley lecture APP

Meet: online section

Thurs 11/18

Read: Farley, 109-206

Watch: video on gender and sexual identity, esp. trans

Write: In no more than two pages, explain the difference between morality based on taboos and ethics aimed toward justice. Define terms, compare and contrast outcomes, and state your own position in relation to Farley's. (assignment 7)

Meet: in-person section

Tues 11/23 Read: Farley, 207-311  
Meet: Zoom plenary

Thurs 11/25 No class, Thanksgiving

## **Module 9 Eschatology**

Tues 11/30 Read: Rambo, 1-70  
Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-OzdqHnXNQ>

The speaker is Shelly Rambo. Start watching at 23:59

Meet: online section

Thurs 12/2 Read: Rambo, 71-107  
Read: McGrath, ch. 9-10  
Watch: Lecture on eschatology APP  
Meet: in-person section

Tues 12/7 Read: Rambo, 109-153  
Create: Eschatology is the study of last things. For your final assignment, create a visual image (using photography, drawing, collage, etc.) that depicts (in concrete, abstract, or evocative ways) your understanding of eschatology—of last things. Provide one paragraph explaining what this image means to you, drawing on the frameworks and language used in the course. All images must be original. (assignment 8)  
Meet: online section

Thurs 12/9

Read: Marcus Hong, Prayer (note: this draft is not to be shared with anyone outside of this course)

Write: Look back to your seven-word gospel from the beginning of the semester. In no more than a page, reflect on what you've written, if you see anything new in it when viewed through the lenses of this course, if you might alter anything, and so on. Feel free to write a new seven-word gospel. (assignment 9)

Meet: Zoom plenary

### **Assignments:**

1. Several years ago, the Christian Century asked several theologians to write the gospel in seven words. These brief statements reveal the particular theological emphasis and



perspective of each writer, including which doctrines are central to their theologies. Please write your own “gospel in seven words.” Due 9/14

2. Carefully consider your own image of God—what image was taught to you, what image comes to mind when you first think “God,” what you intellectually would choose for your image of God, and what image or images of God you find most powerful. Write a brief (one page or less) description of your image of God OR record a brief (one-two minute) video describing your image of God. Due 9/23
3. Take a photograph that speaks to you specifically of creation. Describe it in two sentences using the framework and terminology of the class. Due 9/30
4. Identify two hymns from your tradition that convey Christological content. In one page, briefly explain the Christology of each hymn, using the terminology and framework of the course. Note which you prefer and why. The final product should include a copy of each hymn and a page of your own writing. Due 10/14
5. In *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*, Gutierrez narrates how Job’s theology changed in response to his own experiences, his expanded awareness of systemic harm to others, and his experience with God. In this assignment, you have 180 seconds to communicate with the class about a theological position you once held that changed, and why. Be sure to use the frameworks and terminology of the class. This assignment has a time limit rather than a format—this is an invitation to be creative! Due 11/3
- 6.

Below are some common views of racism by white American Christians. Choose one and respond to it theologically in 2-3 double-spaced pages, drawing on your readings of Thurman, Harris, Williams, and/or Gutiérrez. In your response 1) show the theological inadequacy of the view you are responding to, and 2) explain your own theological understanding of the sin of racism.

I’m not racist: I treat everyone the same.

I’m not privileged: I’ve worked hard for everything I have.

Race doesn’t matter. We’re all part of the same race—the human race.

Slavery ended a long time ago. It’s time to move on.

All lives matter.

Due 11/11

7. In no more than two pages, explain the difference between morality based on taboos and ethics aimed toward justice. Define terms, compare and contrast outcomes, and state your own position in relation to Farley’s. Due 11/18
8. Eschatology is the study of last things. For this assignment, create a visual image (using photography, drawing, collage, etc.) that depicts (in concrete, abstract, or evocative ways) your understanding of eschatology—of last things. Provide one paragraph explaining what this image means to you, drawing on the frameworks and language used in the course. All images must be original. Due 12/7

9. Look back to your seven-word gospel from the beginning of the semester. In no more than a page, reflect on what you've written, if you see anything new in it when viewed through the lenses of this course, if you might alter anything, and so on. Feel free to write a new seven-word gospel. Due 12/9
10. The final examination will be in a group oral format. This is an exercise in collaborative theology. The class will be divided into small groups. Each group will be assigned a 45-minute time slot during the days for final exams. All students will be given a list of study questions before the end of classes. During a group's exam session, the students and professor will begin with those questions and discuss the work of the semester. This is a collaborative, not a competitive, exercise. It is an opportunity to learn and work together, to help one another, to communicate in oral rather than written form, and to experience theology as a team sport. Exams will be held on December 15/16 on Zoom.