



The Doctrine of the Trinity

Programmed Syllabus

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Course Description

To know God and to make Him known is our highest calling. By studying the historic, classic, and orthodox doctrine of the Holy Trinity, learners discover how and why the doctrine emerged in the fourth century, as well as the various and progressive ways this doctrine has been understood throughout history. Throughout the course, Dr. Toon demonstrates that a right understanding of the Trinity is essential to a right understanding of God's relation to man and man's relation to God.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course the student should be able to:

1. Consider that Yahweh-Elohim (The Lord our God who is one Lord) is ONE God in whom is a unity in plurality.
2. Recognize the dynamics of the New Testament presentation of the Father, who is God, of the only Son of the Father, who is God, and of the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father (and the Son), and is also God.
3. Appreciate the reasons why the early church had to state the biblical doctrine of the Trinity in ontological, essentialist terms.
4. Understand the teaching of the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds and to know why "homoousios" is of critical importance for Christian orthodoxy.
5. Know the difference between the Eastern and Western expositions of the Unity in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, and to recognize the dangers of Tritheism, Binitarianism, Unitarianism and Modalism.
6. Note that the Protestant Reformers followed the classic dogma of the Holy Trinity, as their Confessions of Faith indicate.
7. Understand why Liberal Protestantism had little interest in the doctrine of the Trinity in the nineteenth century.
8. Be aware of the resurgence of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity since Karl Barth made his formulation of the doctrine the center of his Dogmatics.
9. Know the difference between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity as these expressions are used in theology today.
10. Understand the absolute centrality of the doctrine of the Trinity for the Christianity and for its worship, prayer, spirituality, ethics, mission, preaching, teaching and evangelism.
11. Learn by heart both the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and the Athanasian Creed, so that one's mindset is Trinitarian.



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Course Texts

Required Texts: Choose at least **one** of the following texts, which are listed in the order of the intellectual demands made on the reader:

Bray, G.L. *The Doctrine of God*. Downers' Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press. 1993.

Erickson, Millard J. *God in Three Persons*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.

Hill, William J. *The Three-Personed God*. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press. 1982.

Reference Books (for Consultation in the Library): The student should also have access to the following works through a library:

Creeds of the Churches. edited John Leith. 1982.

Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils. edited Norman F. Tanner. 1990.

Liturgies of the Western Church. edited Bard Thompson. 1961.

Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth Century. edited Arthur Cochrane, 1982.

Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Apostolic Church. 1983.

Recommended Collateral Reading (see "Collateral Reading" below):

1. Biblical:

Bavinck, Hermann. *The Doctrine of God*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. 1977.

Wainwright, Arthur W. *The Trinity in the New Testament*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001.

Warfield, Benjamin B. "The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity" in *Biblical and Theological Studies*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co. 1968.

2. Patristic:

Kelly, J.N.D. *Early Christian Doctrine*. fifth edition. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Christian Tradition*. 5 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971-1990.



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Torrance, T.F. *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Church*. Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 1993.

Rusch, William G. *The Trinitarian Controversy*. Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1980.

Leo, Donald Davis. *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990.

3. Modern:

One of the “required texts” above not selected

Lacugna, Catherine Mowry. *God for Us. The Trinity and the Christian Life*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1993.

Welch, Claude. *In This Name. The Doctrine of the Trinity in Contemporary Theology*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005.

Rahner, Karl. *The Trinity*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1997.

Kasper, Walter. *The God of Jesus Christ*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1986.





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Course Requirements

I. General Requirements

In order to receive three semester (or four quarter) hours of credit, the student must complete the course within a one-year period unless the particular institution requires the completion of all the work within the framework of the semester or quarter. During this time, the student is expected to devote a minimum of 120 hours to the completion of the course requirements.

II. Specific Requirements

- A. Lectures: The student must listen carefully to all of the twenty-four (24) recorded lectures by Dr. Peter Toon.
- B. Lecture Assignments: The student must complete all of the required readings, reflection, note-taking, investigating and memorizing as described in the Lecture Assignments, pp. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**ff. NOTE: Some aspects of these assignments should be completed either before or after the lectures. Follow the directions carefully.
- C. Required/Collateral Reading and Reading Report: The student must read **one** of the “Required Texts” listed above, all the readings listed in the “Lecture Assignments” and an additional **1000 pages** of collateral reading. It is recommended that the student choose one book from each of the sections under “Recommended Collateral Reading” (p. 3 above), but he/she may also choose from the Bibliography at the end of the Study Guide.

The student shall document this reading in an **8-10 page Reading Report**, which should name *all* the books and articles read during the course and comment on the benefits or difficulties of each. This shall be handed in at the end of the course.

- D. Reflective Notebook: The student should keep a notebook to record his/her reflections after listening to each lecture. This should consist of **3-5 double-spaced pages of reflection per lecture** (this can be an average). It should be up-to-date and available to be shown to the proctor/grader at any time and shall be handed in at the end of the course.

First/Last Page: The **first** page of this Reflective Notebook should be a statement (written *before* beginning the course) in **250 words** of what the student believes to be the Doctrine of the Trinity. The last page of the Notebook should be a further statement (written *after* taking the course) in **250 words** of what the student believes



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to be the Doctrine of the Trinity noting any developments or changes in the student's thinking as a result of the course.

NOTE: The evaluation of his notebook shall be on the basis of the student's having done the assignments and made the effort to keep up with the work, and not on the quality of the content in terms of theological accuracy.

- E. Memorization of Two Creeds: The student will be required to memorize the *Creed of the Council of Constantinople* (the "Nicene Creed") and the *Athanasian Creed* (Part ONE only). These Creeds are printed on pp. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**f of this Syllabus for the student's convenience. *This will be requested during the Final Examination.*

- E. ITS Online Interactivity Forum

Participate with other students worldwide in an ongoing asynchronous threaded discussion of two major course topics. Go to www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/ to register for and enter the ITS Online Interactivity Forum. In order to get the fullest benefit from the Forum, complete the assignment *after* you have listened to *all* the lectures. Be sure to return to the forum after finishing the course to see how others respond. Follow these steps to complete the assignment:

- ◆ Post an original answer to each question for your course (75 word min.).
- ◆ Post your response to any previous answer given to each question (75 word min.).
- ◆ Submit a document to your proctor that contains the original questions, your postings, and the postings to which you responded.

NOTE: Please read the "Assignment Instructions" in the Forum for details.

Objective: to develop critical thinking skills through personal interaction with the content of the course and the responses of others within a diverse community of learners.

- F. Spiritual Formation Project

RATIONALE: Ministry preparation and the Christian life require more than academic exercises. Learners also need personal, spiritual formation, which involves theological reflection and critical thinking on their current practices and assumptions. This process occurs as learners engage in self-reflection and interaction in a community of learning. **With this in mind**, ITS includes in all courses a capstone project addressing these issues and facilitating interaction beyond the formal learning environment (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 4.1.1; 10.3.3.3).



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Write a **five-to-six page reflective essay** and **interview a mentor**, discussing the spiritual impact of this course on your life. *Identify your mentor early in the course*, and submit the essay to your grader when you take the final exam. This last project should not be a summary of course content, but an application of course principles. Complete the following:

1. **Personal Reflection and Evaluation: *Reflect on the course*** – To integrate your academic studies with your walk of faith, reflect on the content of the course and evaluate your life in light of what you learned.
 - a. Follow these steps in your reflection:
 - Step 1: What **one** theme, principle, or concept in the course is the most significant to you personally? Why is it significant?
 - Step 2: What portion(s) of the course brought this theme/principle/concept to light?
 - Step 3: Think about your past. Why is it vital now for you to deal with and apply this theme/principle/concept?
 - Step 4: How should this affect your thoughts and actions, and what *specific steps* should you take to *concretely* apply what you have learned?
 - b. Write your answers to the above questions in full paragraph form. (Recommended length for this reflection: **approximately three pages**)
 - c. Give a copy of this reflection to your mentor (see #2).
2. **Community Reflection and Interaction: *Interview a mentor*** – Since the Holy Spirit uses the input of others to guide and form His people, interview a mentor according to the following guidelines:
 - a. Who should you interview? (1-3 are required; 4-6 are recommended)
 1. Someone with whom you have a reasonably close relationship.
 2. Someone who is a mature Christian ministry leader (i.e. a pastor).
 3. Someone who is **not** your grader or a family member.
 4. Someone who values the spiritual formation process.
 5. Someone who is familiar with and values the subject of the course.
 6. Someone who has experience using the content of the course in ministry.

NOTE: ***Identify your mentor early in the course***, and give him/her the page entitled “Guidelines for Mentors.”



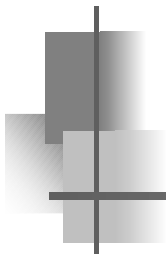
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- b. Focus of the interview – Your interview should focus on the issues and questions you raise in your essay. For example:
- ♦ What feedback can your mentor give in response to your essay?
 - ♦ In light of the course content, are the conclusions you made appropriate? Why or why not?
 - ♦ What additional advice, deeper insights or broader applications might he/she suggest from his/her own life and ministry?

NOTE: Conduct this interview either in person (preferred) or over the phone. Do **not** use electronic communication (i.e. email, instant messenger, etc). Suggested length: 45 minutes.

3. **Synthesis and Application: *Draw your final conclusions*** – Having reflected on the course and the discussion with your mentor, synthesize what you have learned in these three sections:
- a. Section 1: Begin your essay with the personal reflection from #1 above. This should be exactly what you gave your mentor for the interview.
- b. Section 2: Comment on your interview, explaining what you discussed and the insights you gained from your mentor. Include the following:
- ♦ What were the mentor’s comments regarding your essay?
 - ♦ What advice did he/she give?
 - ♦ How did his/her comments expand or correct your application of the course?
 - ♦ Include the person’s name, occupation, and the length of the interview.
- c. Section 3: Conclude with a synthesis of what you have learned. Answer the following:
- ♦ If your mentor corrected any thoughts in your “Personal Reflection and Evaluation”, how do you feel about these corrections? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
 - ♦ Synthesizing your thoughts from section one and your mentor’s insight in section two, what final conclusions have you reached? How is this different from section one?
 - ♦ In light of the interview and further reflection, what additional, *specific* changes need to occur in your life and what *concrete* steps will you take to implement them?

NOTE TO STUDENTS: Your effort in this assignment will determine its benefit. If by the end of this course you have not yet reflected critically on your life in light of what you have studied, allow this assignment to guide you in that process. The instructor for this course will not score your essay based on the amount of spiritual fruit you describe; so do not



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exaggerate (or trivialize) what you have learned. **The primary grading criteria is that you have thoughtfully considered the principles of the course and realistically sought to apply them to your life.** If you have done this and met the minimal requirements (as noted above), you will earn the full points for this assignment.

Note on confidentiality: Perhaps the Holy Spirit is dealing with you in some very personal areas of your life. Because of this, your grader will keep your essay entirely confidential and either return or discard it.

Objective: to stimulate reflection and interaction on course principles in order to enhance personal spiritual formation.

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- G. Examinations: The student shall take two essay exams, a Mid-term and Final.

Course Grading

The grade for the course shall be determined by the following:

Reading Report.....	10%
Reflective Notebook.....	30%
Memorization of Two Creeds	10%
ITS Online Interactivity Forum.....	5%
Spiritual Formation Project	10%
Mid-Term Examination	15%
Final Examination.....	20%
	100%

Bibliography

The Bibliography for this course is located at the end of the Study Guide provided by ITS.



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Notes Regarding This Downloaded Syllabus

This downloadable syllabus is not exhaustive. It is designed to provide learners with a picture of the course, not a full outline of the course. Grader Guidelines, Appendixes, Bibliographies, Lecture Outlines, and Review Questions have been removed. The complete course syllabus is included with purchase of the course in either a digital or hard-copy format.

Likewise, individuals taking the class for credit are responsible for the syllabus requirements of the specific institution through which the course is offered. Each individual institution has reserved the right to alter or change the syllabus as deemed necessary.