**THEO 103H Introduction to Theology**

Prof. Frank D. Macchia, D.Theol., D.D.

Scot 130

[fmacchia@vanguard.edu](mailto:fmacchia@vanguard.edu)

website: frankdmacchia.com (follow the vanguard link)

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**Vanguard University**

**I. Textbooks:**

**BEAR IN MIND THAT PURCHASING KINDLE OR E-BOOKS CAN MAKE PAGE REFERENCING FOR YOUR PAPER DIFFICULT.**

Frank D. Macchia, *The Trinity, Practically Speaking* (InterVarsity Press, 2010).

James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (eds), *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views* (InterVarsity Press Academic, 2006).

(PS- there are two versions of this book on amazon. I believe they’re both the same. My copy belongs to the series “Spectrum Multiview book,” although I just noticed that there are only 16 left in stock on amazon with more on the way, whatever that means. I’m sure it’s ok to order either version. The two books look identical in content. BTW, the campus bookstore should have the books as well, just in case you will be residing there or otherwise wish to support our campus bookstore).

N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (HarperOne, 2008).

**II. Course Description:**

An introductory study of the subject matter and scope of Christian theology. Examination is made of philosophical presuppositions of theological concepts. Definitions are sought for theological terms, and meaning of theological concepts will be explored. The major topics will be Scripture, Theological Method, God, Christ, Spirit, Salvation, Church and the Kingdom of God.

**III. Course Objectives:**

To understand the biblical foundations and historical development of key theological topics.

To investigate the contexts and presuppositions underlying major doctrines of the Christian faith from their biblical foundations to their contemporary expressions.

Specifically: To especially explore and interact with the key themes of the Trinity, the Atonement, and the nature and mission of the church in the light of the coming kingdom.

**IV. Course Requirements:**

**The course will consist of lectures, discussions, three papers (on three books) and thoroughly written and submitted class notes:**

1. **Three Books and Papers**: Since this is an honors course, we will emphasize readings and evaluative papers. The books have been carefully chosen because of their substantive treatments of their topics as well as the provocative nature of their views. I’ve selected books in the key areas of the Trinity, the Atonement, and the Church. Each book will offer food for thought that will inspire an evaluative response in the form of a six-to-seven-page paper (one book and one paper will be required for each section of the course). **See below under section V for more detailed descriptions and more elaborate guidance concerning the papers**. **The three** **papers are due Sept. 22nd, October 20th, November 24th. Each paper will be posted to canvas by midnight of the due date.**

**NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED!**

1. **Lectures and Class Notes**: The lectures will be brief enough to allow for substantial discussions of the issues. If anything is unclear in the lecture, that will be the time to raise the issue. Students are required to be present on zoom for every lecture. Students will attempt to make their class notes as thorough as possible. After each session, while their memory is still fresh, students should enhance their notes so as to include as much explanation as possible. At the end of the semester, students will submit their notes on canvas. A **maximum** of 100 pts will be awarded for them. Notes that receive 100 pts will:
2. Be well organized, with the date and the major topic of each session clearly displayed above each section.
3. Be thorough in description and explanation. Unexplained bullet points or terse statements will not receive full credit.
4. Be clear and accurate in explanation, revealing a very good grasp of the concepts.
5. Highlight concepts that were especially enlightening or new. Some kind of brief response from the student in such cases will be expected.
6. Include a question now and then in cases where an issue is still unclear to some extent.

These notes will remain a valuable resource for students in the future, a valuable guide to the doctrines of the Christian faith!

**Class notes are due on canvas by midnight, Tuesday, Dec. 8th.**

**No late submission will be accepted!**

**V. Fuller Explanation of the Three Papers (including their Rubric):**

1. **Paper 1 (Due September 22nd): The Trinity**

**Many people wonder if the doctrine of the Trinity is really taught in scripture**. With that issue in mind, thoroughly read the entire book by Professor Macchia, *The Trinity, Practically Speaking*. Highlight the major points that are made as you read through the book for quick reference later. Especially attempt to grasp the overall logic of the book’s argument. Then pretend that your pastor asked you to write an essay for your church’s newspaper reviewing this book. Imagine attempting to explain the book’s contents to your congregation. **Spend about five or six pages carefully summarizing the book’s major points**. Capture the overarching argument of the book and also describe the major subpoints that each chapter makes. To be emphasized: What is the “logic” assumed in scripture that makes the doctrine of the Trinity necessary for the church’s faith and how do the chapters elaborate on the points of this logic? A subordinate issue: What errors (modalism, tritheism, subordinationism) are to be avoided and why are they inadequate to capture what the Bible teaches? There are a lot of issues discussed in the book but keep a narrow focus on the issues that relate directly to the Trinity. After spending five to six pages summarizing the book, **spend a page evaluating the book’s arguments**. Do they seem biblical? Are they convincing? Are there any points that require further elaboration? What questions remain to be answered? **See rubric below**.

1. **Paper 2 (Due Oct. 20th): The Atonement**

**Many people wonder how the death of Jesus provides the foundation for our reconciliation with God** (for our “atonement”). With this issue in mind, read the entire book, *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*. The two editors of the book start by summarizing the issues involved in the atonement and then four authors present their different perspectives on it. As you read the book, highlight the major points of the four authors’ arguments for quick reference later. **Then write about five to six pages summarizing how the four major authors of the book explain the atonement** (how the cross provides the basis for our reconciliation with God) (spending about a page or so per author). **Then spend about a page explaining what attracted you most about your favored view and why** (this should be the view you would emphasize when explaining the cross of Jesus to someone). What are the pros and cons of your favored view (if there are any cons) and why do you find this argument preferable to the others?

1. **Paper 3 (Due November 24th): The Church and It’s Mission**

**Many people think that the church’s future hope is only about going to heaven when they die, but N.T. Wright has a different viewpoint, one that he thinks alters how we view the church’s mission. What is his view of our ultimate hope and how does it make a difference in how we view the church’s mission?** With this question in mind, read the entire book by N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*. As you read it, highlight the major points of his argument. Then write a book review (like you did with the first book assignment on the Trinity). Imagine that your first book review for your church was so fantastic that your pastor asked you to write a second review, this time, on the book, *Surprised by Hope*. **Spend about five or six pages summarizing the major points of Wright’s argument**. **Then spend about a page evaluating his arguments**. What was new to you? What was particularly enlightening? What was unclear or in need of further elaboration? What further questions did the book provoke in your mind?

**Rubric for all three papers**. An “A” paper will have these qualities (maximum 300 pts. per paper):

Clarity and logical flow: 75 pts.

Papers must be clearly written with an introduction defining the major issue of the paper and how the student will go about explaining it. Throughout the paper, there should be one major thought per paragraph and a logical flow of thoughts moving from one paragraph to the next (and so on, through to the end of the paper). It helps to start each paragraph with a transitional sentence that connects the thought of the previous paragraph with the thought of the paragraph following. Then close with a brief but impactful conclusion, where a concluding thought is left to the reader that sums it all up nicely (their “take home” idea that the student doesn’t want them to forget).

Overall accuracy: 75 pts.

The student’s presentation of the authors’ views should accurately represent their expressed arguments. What the student says about these views should be based solidly on what the authors actually say. The attempt should be made to avoid reading implications into an author’s thinking that have no explicit support in their statements.

Substance of the summaries: 100 pts.

This category gets the most points. It’s the most important. **The student’s summaries of the authors’ views should be substantial**, with sufficient detail to grant the reader a fairly thorough grasp of the book’s ideas. **Avoid “fluff!”** “Fluff” fills paragraphs with superficial sentences (e.g., vague opinions or unimportant/ vaguely related information). Save opinions or applications for the evaluation section at the end of the paper! “Fluff” can also be filled with randomly-selected minor points from the book while major points go unnoticed, revealing a hasty and superficial read of the book. Spend enough time with your book to avoid “fluff!” Rather, the summaries of the authors’ ideas should focus on major points and be dense with information drawn from these points. Avoid lengthy quotes; students should favor putting matters in their own words. Shorter quotes are fine though. The summary section concentrates on a fair, accurate, and richly detailed explanation of an authors’ views. Of course, six or seven pages is not much space for summarizing an entire book. So, the student must be concise and selective, only focusing on the most important points that deal directly with the major issue or question of the book (look at how I summarize this major question at the start of each paper description above). But the student should still try to be as substantial as possible within page number limits. If you must go over that limit, you may do so. But not too far beyond.

Probing nature of the evaluations: 50 pts.

Students should spend quality time thinking about the evaluative section at the end of the paper. This is the part that is most neglected by students, but it shouldn’t be. This is where the student’s own voice can be heard on the topic! If the student values their voice, they will not rush this part of the paper. But the student should seek to avoid going off into areas unrelated to the book. It’s allowed to raise issues unaddressed by the book that arguably should have been covered by an author given what they did have to say. But when evaluating, also try to emphasize points raised in the book. Why are they important? How do they apply to the church today? Why were they unclear? What further questions can be raised?

**Also:** All three papers should be double spaced with a no. 12 font. There is no need to use footnotes, since the entire paper is based on only one source. Simply put the page number in parentheses to reference the source of a major idea or a quote. If multiple thoughts or quotes in a single paragraph come from the same page (in succession), the student can simply put “Ibid” in parentheses after the original reference. When starting a new paragraph, however, reference the page number in parenthesis, even if it’s the same as the last reference of the previous paragraph. This will help the reader, because they will not have to look beyond a single paragraph to find out what an “Ibid” means!

**NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED!**

**VI. Class Calendar:**

**A. Section 1: August 25th to September 22nd**

1) Topics:

Scripture (Inspiration, Authority, and Canon).

Theological Method (Nature of Theology; Options for bridging text and context).

God as Trinity

God’s Attributes

God and Suffering

Election

2) Assignments:

**Notes**: Take thorough notes on all lectures and discussions. After class, while your memory is still fresh, elaborate on your notes with more thorough explanations. Type them into a file that can be posted later.

**Paper:** Read Professor Macchia’s book, *Trinity Practically Speaking*, and write the assigned paper on it (see information on this in section V above). **Due September 22nd (posted on canvas by midnight).**

**B. Section 2: September 29th to October 20th:**

1) Topics:

Christology (deity, humanity, work)

Pneumatology (deity, work)

Soteriology and anthropology (justification, regeneration, sanctification,

glorification)

2) Assignments:

**Notes**: Take thorough notes on all lectures and discussions. After class, while your memory is still fresh, elaborate on your notes with more thorough explanations. Type them into a file that can be posted later.

**Paper**: Read the book: *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views* and write the assigned paper on it. See section V above. **Due October 20th (posted on canvas by midnight).**

**C. Section 3: October 27th to November 24th**

1) Topics:

Ecclesiology (Models, Marks, Sacraments, Spiritual Gifts, Mission)

Eschatology (Life after Death, End Time Events, Second Coming, Resurrection).

2) Assignments:

**Notes**: Take thorough notes on all lectures and discussions. From these notes, answer the essay questions given in the study guide for this section. After class, while your memory is still fresh, elaborate on your notes with more thorough explanations. Type them into a file that can be posted later.

**Paper**: Read N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*. Write the assigned paper on the book (see section V above for more information). **Due November 24th (posted on canvas by midnight).**

**CLASS NOTES: The time spent after Thanksgiving holiday will be devoted to preparing class notes for submission on DEC. 8th (SEE SECTION IV, NO.2 ABOVE) and asking questions about issues raised during the semester. More on this later.**

**VI. Final Evaluation:**

**Paper 1** (*Trinity, Practically Speaking*): **300 pts.** Due September 22nd (by midnight on canvas).

**Paper 2** (*The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*): **300 pts.** Due October 20th (by midnight on canvas).

**Paper 3**: (*Surprised by Hope*): **300 pts**. Due November 24th (by midnight on canvas).

**Class notes**: **100 pts.** Due December 8th (by midnight on canvas).

**Total: 1000 pts.**

**Zoom Courtesy:**

Please dress appropriately for the zoom session. Dress as you would coming to class.

Please do not be lying down during the session; use proper decorum.

Please be sure you’re muted during the session so that we do not get your background noise.

Please make sure your video is on so that I can see your face during the session (if you don’t have a computer camera, please email me to let me know so that I know the reason for your dark square on the screen.

Please be logged on before the session is scheduled to begin.