



**Theology**  
**The Bare Essentials**  
**Where to begin, what to think about, and how to do theology effectively**

*Theology is not only about understanding God and His world: It is also about how he reconciles it to Himself.*  
Archie J. Spencer.

**Instructor:** Professor Archie J. Spencer, ThD

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**Dates:** View seminar recordings and post questions/comments between March 2-16; attend Zoom discussions March 16; 23; and 30 at 8:30am PST; submit final assignments by TBD

**Venue:** Online

**Description**

Although theology can seem overly complicated, jargony, and specialized, there are ways of engaging it that are accessible, clear, and life-changing. Not only that, a reflective look at our theological heritage reveals that the original motives for doing theology, and the ways of doing it, ultimately about who God is, what God is up to, and what both mean for the world and for us.

This eight-part series designed to help people (re)discover the essence of Christian theology, including the basic starting vocabulary, basic sources and resources as well as a brief definition of its main parts including such topics as faith, God, Christ Creation, salvation, church and last things. Whether you are a pastor, a lay-leader, a student, or someone who is curious to learn more about theology and the past, present, and future of the Christian faith, you can expect accessible seminars, practical insights, engaging conversations, and two helpful and doable assignments to help you broaden and deeper your sense and expression of the Christian faith today.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

**Knowledge and Intellectual Formation (Cognitive Domain)**

- Grasp the terminology, essential sources, theological topics, and significance of Christian Theology for today.

**Practical Skills (Practical Domain)**

- Communicate the relevance of the task and essential concepts for the church's ongoing work of theology for today.

## Character Formation (Affective Domain)

- Deepen your understanding, love, and worship of God through study of essential theological methods, vocabulary, sources and resources essential for healthy spiritual formation.

## Required Resources

- McGrath, Alister E., *Theology: The Basics*, (Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

## Suggested Resources

- McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, (Wiley-Blackwell, 2019).
- McGrath, Alister E. *The Christian Theology Reader*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, (Wiley-Blackwell, 2019).

## Assessment Tools

### Live discussion dialogue: 40% of final grade

View seminar recordings and share questions/comments between March 2-16

Attend live discussions March 16; 23; and 30 at 8:30am PST

Curious and constructive dialogue is integral to engaging with people in conversations about theological questions, so meaningful participation in live discussions is an essential part of this micro-credential offering. In terms of 'meaningful participation,' it means showing up to each of our meetings and speaking thoughtfully to the questions we explore with each other. If you can do that, you will receive full marks for this assessment component.

Following engagement with the recorded instruction videos, our micro-course cohort will meet online via Zoom three times (each meeting will be an hour and fifteen minutes), to discuss the content in semi-structured conversations guided by the instructor. Online meetings will generally assume the following format:

- 10-15 minutes: opening remarks, including outline of key themes/questions for discussion, provide by instructor
- 35-45 minutes: guided discussion
- 10-15 minutes: closing remarks, tying up of loose ends, by instructor

### Essay: 40% of final grade

Submit by TBD

Length: 1500 words

This paper is for you to reflect on and interact with the lectures and readings by answering the following questions:

- What is your understanding of the role of theology in the Christian Faith?
- Why is theology important for the spiritual formation of the believer?
- How do past theological creeds help us proclaim the Gospel in the current context?
- How should we engage theologies of the past and are there any dangers to consider when doing so?

- How can churches 'do theology' (encourage people to read, discuss, and be formed by) theology?

### **Reading Review: 20% of final grade**

#### **Submit by TBD**

Give a review of the text and the PDF reading, including an overview the main idea of what the author is trying to communicate, how he attempts to do that, and whether you believe he accomplished this. How did this impact your understanding of theology? **No more than 500 words for each resource.**

### **Recorded Seminars Outline**

#### **Session 1**

- **Method, sources and resources**
  - Basic terms
  - What are theology's sources?
  - What are theology's resources?
- **Where to begin in Theology**
  - The doctrine of revelation
  - How does God speak to us?
  - How can we understand God's speaking?

#### **Session 2**

- **God the Father**
  - Who is God?
  - How does God have his Being?
  - What are God's characteristics?

#### **Session 3**

- **Jesus Christ, God's Son**
  - Who was Jesus?
  - How is he both God and man?
  - What is the meaning of his reconciling work?

#### **Session 4**

- **God, The Holy Spirit**
  - Who is the Holy Spirit?
  - What does the Holy Spirit do?
  - The Age of the Spirit

#### **Session 5**

- **Creation and the Creature**
  - What is Creation?
  - Who is the human creature?
  - What is the human condition?

#### **Session 6**

- **What is Salvation**
  - Faith and justification
  - Faith and sanctification
  - Faith and glorification

## Session 7

- **The Spirit-Driven Church**
  - Who brings the Church into existence?
  - What is the Church?
  - Why Church?
  - What is the Church's ministry?

## Session 8

- **Heaven and Hell?**
  - What is the final judgment?
  - Where in heaven's name is heaven?
  - What is Hell and why is it a necessary doctrine?

## Resulting Academic Credit

This micro course leads to 1 hour of academic credit at Northwest. Usually this will be recognized with a "Letter of Completion" issued to document continuing education work. Completion of 3 Lifelong Learning micro courses in a three-part series (or 3 closely related topics), worth a total of 3 credit hours, may be applied to another Northwest competency-based credential such as the GAP Year, CCF, or possibly a Graduate Certificate.

If you are in or are thinking about enrolling in a CBTE program at Northwest, work you do for this micro course offering may be used for advanced standing in the following competencies:

## Undergraduate

### 201. Discover Revelation

- 201.2: Summarize how the significant thinkers in the major periods of historical and modern theology characterize revelation and engage with revelation on a practical level.
- 201.4: Discuss the validity and usefulness of the ways major periods, schools of thought, and thinkers characterize revelation.

## Graduate

### 507. God

- 507.2: Interpret a range of modern and historical texts that articulate a doctrine of God and describe their relative truth and value for today
- 507.5: Communicate thoughtful and personal convictions about God's character and actions in ways that demonstrate sensitivity to the context and culture of the listener

## What are competencies?

A competency is an “I can...” statement about something to do with knowledge, skill, and/or character.

For example...

If you can say “I can recite Psalm 23 from memory,” that’s a knowledge competency.

If you can say, “I can preach a sermon on Psalm 23 in a way that honours the scriptural text and engages people in a transformative way,” that’s a skill competency.

If you can say, “Psalm 23 has helped transform my understanding of and relationship with God, and this has made me a more faithful follower of Jesus,” that’s a character competency.

And, to help you achieve competencies you cannot currently say “I can...” about, we provide you with resources and assignments to help you get to place where you can say, with confidence, “I can...”.

## How are competencies developed and assessed?

You instructor(s) will provide you with assignments (see above) to help you develop competencies and show how that development has taken place. Those assignments will be assessed using the following rubric (which describes three different levels of competency):

Rubric	Description	Mentor Input
<b>Exemplary</b>	The learner has mastered this competency to the level that their performance is exceptional and could be relied upon to teach and supervise development of this competency in others.	14/14
<b>Accomplished</b>	The learner has invested significant time and effort to develop and demonstrate mastery of this competency to the degree that their skill and proficiency can be used as an aspirational reference point for others.	13/14
<b>Proficient</b>	The learner can be trusted to consistently and reliably demonstrate satisfactory mastery of this competency across diverse situations.	12/14
<b>Insufficient</b>	The learner does not yet meet the criteria for proficiency in this competency.	0/14

If your development of a competency is assessed as insufficient, you have as much time as you need to develop it. Your instructor(s) will give you focused feedback, suggestions, action items, etc. to help you in this development process.