

Religious Studies 332

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Spring 2011: Tuesday and Thursday, 2:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.

Professor James S. Cutsinger

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Every religion provides its followers with two things, a doctrine and a method. The doctrine is like a map; it describes the landscape of Reality, explaining the way things truly are. The method is a set of practical instructions that concern what a person must do in order to travel to the places the map sets out; it involves the application and verification of doctrine in the believer's own experience. Theology includes the study of both doctrine and method, both metaphysical principles and spiritual practice. It is the science of God and of deification.

This course is an introduction to the theology of the Christian religion, especially its doctrinal dimension. Our aim is to understand the Christian Map of Reality by examining basic Christian teachings concerning the origin, nature, and structure of man and the universe in relationship both to each other and to God. This approach is sometimes referred to as "systematic" theology, for the goal is to understand the essential doctrines of this religion as organically related parts of a single spiritual system. The chief interest is not the historical origin or development of religious institutions nor the social or psychological context of religious belief, but the underlying meaning and internal consistency of the Christian worldview as a whole.

We shall focus on the Christian understanding of God, Creation, the Fall, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Resurrection and life after death. Special attention will be devoted to the person of Christ and the doctrine of the Incarnation. In each case, the teachings of Christianity will be approached not as abstract propositions simply demanding *assent* but as spiritual supports for an *ascent* toward union with God.

Readings

Three texts are required: James S. Cutsinger, *That Man Might Become God*, the instructor's lectures for the course, which are available on his website under "Teaching" (see Syllabi, then RELG 332); *The Orthodox Way*, by Kallistos Ware, which can be purchased at the South Carolina Bookstore (801 Main Street); and *A Reader in Christian Theology*, a collection of writings selected and edited by Professor Cutsinger, which is posted on the course Blackboard site.

Requirements

1. *Reading.* Reading and thoughtful reflection are essential. The assigned materials will demand study and not just skimming. Students are expected to read these materials very closely and carefully.

2. *Attendance*, both prompt and regular. A sign-up sheet will be circulated at the start of each class to record daily attendance; two unexcused absences are permitted, but a penalty of one letter grade is imposed for each additional unexcused absence. When quizzes (see below) are given, they will be administered immediately at the start of class, so that tardiness can take a further toll on one's grade; it is in any case a discourtesy to one's fellow students to be late, so please come on time or do not come at all.

Please note! Absences are always excused—and “make-ups” for missed quizzes or examinations are always given—for medical or other essential reasons *but only if one promptly presents a written excuse from a doctor or other responsible authority as soon as one returns to class*. Waiting until the end of the semester to get serious about attendance is suicidal.

3. *Participation*. Students should be active participants; questions and comments are strongly encouraged. During the first part of each class, the instructor will highlight certain points in the assigned readings for the day and introduce additional material, but there will always be plenty of time for discussion. Although there is no grade as such for class participation, constructive contributions on a regular basis can help to raise a student's final course grade by as much as a full letter.

4. *Quizzes and examinations*. There will be six short, unannounced quizzes based on the day's assigned lecture in *That Man Might Become God* (together these constitute 30% of the final course grade) and two essay examinations: a midterm (30%) and a comprehensive final (40%), both of which are designed to test (among other things) one's knowledge of *The Orthodox Way* and *A Reader in Christian Theology*.

Schedule

I. *Orthodox Way*, “Prologue: Signposts on the Way”; *Reader*, 1, 2

Jan. 11, No assignment; Jan. 13, *Lecture 1*; Jan. 18, *Lecture 2*; Jan. 20, *Lecture 3*

II. *Orthodox Way*, Chapter 1, “God as Mystery”; *Reader*, 3, 4

Jan. 25, *Lecture 4*; Jan. 27, *Lecture 5*

III. *Orthodox Way*, Chapter 2, “God as Trinity”; *Reader*, 5, 6

Feb. 1, *Lecture 6*; Feb. 3, *Lecture 7*; Feb. 8, *Lecture 8*

IV. *Orthodox Way*, Chapter 3, “God as Creator”; *Reader*, 7, 8

Feb. 10, *Lecture 9*; Feb. 15, *Lecture 10*; Feb. 17, *No Class*; Feb. 22, *Lecture 11*

V. *Orthodox Way*, Chapter 4, “God as Man”; *Reader*, 9, 10, 11, Appendix

Feb. 24, *Lecture 12*

Mar. 1, Open Discussion

Mar. 3, **Midterm Examination**

Mar. 8, 10, Spring Break

Mar. 15, *Lecture 13*; Mar. 17, *Lecture 14*

VI. *Orthodox Way*, Chapter 5, “God as Spirit”; *Reader*, 12, 13

Mar. 22, *Lecture 15*; Mar. 24, *Lecture 16*; Mar. 29, *Lecture 17*

VII. *Orthodox Way*, Chapter 6, “God as Prayer”; *Reader*, 14, 15

Mar. 31, *Lecture 18*; Apr. 5, *Lecture 19*; Apr. 7, *Lecture 20*

VIII. *Orthodox Way*, “Epilogue: God as Eternity”; *Reader*, 16, 17

Apr. 12, *Lecture 21*; Apr. 14, *Lecture 22*; Apr. 19, *Lecture 23*

Apr. 21, Open Discussion

Apr. 27, **Final Examination** (9:00 a.m.)

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30 – 10:30 A.M.; or by appointment.