

Syllabus for COS 522: Theology in the Contemporary Church
February 3-4; March 3-4, 2017
Hiwassee College, Madisonville, Tennessee
Instructor: Robert A. Ratcliff
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Course Goals:

- To prepare students for the life-long task of seeing all of life through the lens of their faith.
- To equip students to serve as theological teachers and guides within their congregations.
- To introduce students to the most important contemporary theological movements and schools of thought.

Required Reading:

[Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, Third Edition \(Eerdmans, 2014\)](#)

[Howard Stone and James Duke, *How to Think Theologically*, Third Edition \(Fortress, 2013\)](#)

Information on the assignments and final exam:

Failure to turn in any of the assignments or the final exam will result, not only in a “0” for that assignment or exam, but a “0” for the entire course.

Pre-Course Assignment (The written assignment is due by Tuesday, Jan 31. Please submit as a Microsoft Word document, and send it to the e-mail address listed above):

1. Read Stone and Duke, all chapters; read Migliore, beginning through chapter 4

2. Using Stone and Duke’s “Great Hymnal Controversy” as a guide, describe an event or decision in the life of your church in which significant disagreement about what the church should do took place. Briefly present all sides of the controversy in such a way that the reader will not know what your own position on the matter was. Then at more length identify the specifically *theological* issues or concerns that underlay both or all sides of the argument. **Please note:** It is natural to frame one’s own position in theological terms, while describing the position with which you disagreed in other terms (for example, “he just thinks everything should be done his way.”) Yet those with whom you disagreed would tell you that they were trying to serve the interests of the church and the Kingdom, just as you were. *What are the specifically theological issues at stake in their position?* Failure to recognize the specifically theological issues on *both* sides will result in a lower grade. If you are uncertain how to proceed, e-mail or call me. Write up your description and reflection in a paper of no less than 1200 and no more than 1500 words. Come to class prepared to discuss this incident in the life of your church, and the theological issues it raises.

Mid-Course Assignment (the written assignment is due by Tuesday, February 28. Please submit as a Microsoft Word document, and send it to the e-mail address listed above):

1. Read Migliore, chapter 5 through the end.
2. Choose one (1) doctrine from the following list:

Sin/the human condition

Christology

The Trinity

Soteriology

Pneumatology/The Holy Spirit

Ecclesiology

Eschatology/last things

For this doctrine, briefly describe what Stone and Duke call the *embedded* theology of the members of your congregation. Then outline something you would do—preach a series of sermons, teach a class, or the like—that would move the members of your church toward what Stone and Duke call a more *deliberative* theology on this doctrine. Do so in a paper of no less than 1200 and no more than 1500 words.

Final Examination

The final will be take home, and will be due to me no later than 9:00 p.m. CST on Friday, March 10. I will distribute the final at the end of class on March 4.

Grading:

Pre-course assignment: 30%

Mid-course assignment: 30%

Final Exam: 20%

Class participation: 20%

Tardiness in attendance and/or assignments, without prior approval by the instructor, will result in a reduced grade.

Additional Resources:

[Donald K. McKim, editor, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* Second Edition \(Westminster John Knox Press, 2014\)](#)

Class Schedule

Friday, February 3 2017	
6:00-7:40 p.m.	Introduction to theological study Thinking theologically in ministry Discussion of pre-course assignment
7:40-7:50 p.m.	Break
7:50-9:30 p.m.	Discussion of pre-course assignment (cont.)
Saturday, February 4 2017	
8:00-9:55 a.m.	God as Trinity
9:55-10:05 a.m.	Break
10:05 a.m.-12:00 p.m.	Providence and the Will of God Creation
12:00-12:45 p.m.	Lunch
12:45-2:25 p.m.	The human predicament Incarnation
2:25-2:35 p.m.	Break
2:35-4:00 p.m.	Atonement Grace

Friday, March 3 2017	
6:00-7:40 p.m.	The Holy Spirit The Christian Life
7:40-7:50 p.m.	Break
7:50-9:30 p.m.	The Church Proclamation and Sacraments
Saturday, March 4 2017	
8:00-9:55 a.m.	Christian faith and other religions Christian hope and last things
9:55-10:05 a.m.	Break
10:05 a.m.-12:00 p.m.	Protestant Liberalism Neo-orthodoxy
12:00-12:45 p.m.	Lunch
12:45-2:30 p.m.	Evangelical theology Postliberal theology Liberation Black Theology
2:30-3:00 p.m.	Communion service
3:00-4:00 p.m.	Feminism Womanism U.S. Latino/a theology

Course Web Site:

This syllabus, as well as lecture outlines for each of the class sessions, are available at my web site: <http://tinyurl.com/jojchtj>