

Syllabus for COS 522: Theology in the Contemporary Church  
taught via recorded lectures,  
In-person instruction at Franklin First United Methodist Church (Sept. 6-7, 2024)  
and Zoom videoconferencing (Sept. 27-28, 2024)  
Instructor: Dr. 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.

### Course web site:

Lecture outlines for the course can be found by [clicking here for the course web site](#). **I strongly recommend that you read through the lecture outlines before coming to class, as this will help familiarize you with key names and terms.** Students often find it helpful to print out these outlines and bring them to class.

### Required Reading:

[Daniel Migliore, \*Faith Seeking Understanding\*, Third Edition \(Eerdmans, 2014\)](#)  
[Howard Stone and James Duke, \*How to Think Theologically\*, Third Edition \(Fortress, 2013\)](#)

### Additional Resources

[McKim, Donald K. \(editor\). \*The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms\*. Second Edition. Westminster John Know Press, 2014. ISBN: 978-0664238353](#)  
[Enns, Peter, \*How the Bible Actually Works: In Which I Explain How An Ancient, Ambiguous, and Diverse Book Leads Us to Wisdom Rather Than Answers—and Why That's Great News\*. HarperOne, 2020. ISBN: 9780062686756](#)

### Course Zoom link:

The Zoom sessions on Sept. 27-28 will use the following Zoom link:  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84764899194?pwd=Sk1QWE1PaFRRYm00MDBLT0x3VTBSUT09>  
Meeting ID: 847 6489 9194  
Passcode: 217788

### 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 Friday, August 30. 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 (approx. 4-5 double-spaced pages). 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 Friday, September 20. 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 your congregation. Describe something you would do—preach a series of sermons, teach a class, etc.—that would move the members of your church toward what the book calls a more *deliberative* theology on this doctrine. Do so in a paper of 1200-1500 words.

**Honor Code:**

The honor code of the ALPS/Western Kentucky-Tennessee/Holston CoS [can be found by clicking here.](#)

Please be certain to print, fill out, sign, and attach the cover sheet to each assignment. When turning in an assignment via e-mail attachment, you can fulfill this requirement by including the following statement in the body of the e-mail: "I have read the plagiarism definition on the ALPS/Tennessee-Western Kentucky/Holston Course of Study Honor Code, and I affirm that the attached assignment represents my own work, except where credit is given." **I will not accept your paper if you have not included the cover sheet or included the statement above in your e-mail.**

Plagiarism is theft of another person's work and lying by claiming to have written something that you didn't write. If I discover that a student has plagiarized, they will have two choices:

- I will offer the student an opportunity to rewrite the paper, and will deduct 20 points from the grade of the rewritten paper for plagiarism on the original.
- If the student does not wish to rewrite the paper, I will assign it a grade of 0.

For a good explanation of plagiarism and ways to avoid it, see the following web page:  
<https://www.plagiarism.org/article/what-is-plagiarism>

### **Final Examination**

The final will be take home, and will be due to me no later than 9:00 p.m. CST on Friday, October 5. I will e-mail the final after the end of class on September 28. While you may use the textbook and other sources in preparing to answer the questions, *do not quote from them directly*. I want to know what *you* know about the subject, not someone else. The final will have 20 questions. 2-5 sentences will be optimal for most questions.

### **Grading:**

Pre-course assignment:	35%
Mid-course assignment:	35%
Final Exam:	30%

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

### **Class Schedule**

#### **Friday, September 6 2024, 4:30-8:30 p.m. Central time**

In-person class at Franklin First United Methodist Church: Participation mandatory

[Session 1: Introduction to Theological Study](#)

[Session 2: Thinking Theologically in Ministry](#)

[Session 3: Creation and Providence](#)

[Session 4: The Human Predicament](#)

[Session 5 - The Trinity](#)

#### **Saturday, September 7 2024, 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Central time**

In-person class at Franklin First United Methodist Church: Participation mandatory

[Session 6 - The Incarnation: The Person of Christ](#)

[Session 7 - The Atonement: The Work of Christ](#)

[Session 8 - Grace](#)

[Session 9 - The Holy Spirit](#)

[Session 10 - Sanctification](#)

#### **Friday, September 27 2024, 4:30-8:30 p.m. Central time**

Class Videoconference via Zoom; Participation mandatory

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84764899194?pwd=Sk1QWE1PaFRRYm00MDBLT0x3VTBSUT09>

Meeting ID: 847 6489 9194

Passcode: 217788

[Session 11 - The Church](#)

[Session 12 - The Sacraments](#)

[Session 13 - Christianity and Other Religions](#)

**Saturday, September 28 2024, 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Central time**

Class Videoconference via Zoom; Participation mandatory

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84764899194?pwd=Sk1QWE1PaFRRYm00MDBLT0x3VTBSUT09>

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[Session 14 - Last Things](#)

[Session 15 - The Story of Contemporary Theology, Part 1](#)

[Session 16 - The Story of Contemporary Theology, Part 2](#)

[Session 17 - The Story of Contemporary Theology, Part 3](#)