

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
84845: Contemporary Issues in Evangelical Theological Formulation

Fall Semester, 2006
Tuesday: 1:00-3:45 p.m.: NRT 201
Instructor: Stephen J. Wellum, PhD
Credit: 4 hours

Course Syllabus

I. Seminar Description

An investigation of contemporary issues confronting the formulation of evangelical systematic theology with an analysis and evaluation of current evangelical responses to these issues. Four hours.

II. Seminar Objectives

- To become acquainted with the issues and challenges facing the doing of evangelical theology in our contemporary, postmodern, and pluralistic context.
- To discover the conceptual problems of relating biblical theology and systematic theology by surveying the history of the discussion.
- To study major contemporary attempts to bridge the gap between biblical and systematic theology in order better to understand the nature of doing evangelical theology.
- To understand and evaluate various evangelical proposals of how to do systematic theology in our present context.
- To construct a model for doing systematic theology that will address the issues of our present context while firmly rooted and grounded in Scripture.
- To research and write a paper that will understand and advance contemporary evangelical understanding of systematic theological formulation.
- To promote critical thinking and discussion about theological formulation.

III. Seminar Reading List

- Alexander, T. Desmond; Brian S. Rosner; D. A. Carson, Graeme Goldsworthy, eds. *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000.
- Baker, David L. *Two Testaments, One Bible*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991.
- Bartholomew, Craig; Colin Greene; Karl Möller, eds. *After Pentecost: Language & Biblical Interpretation – Scripture and Hermeneutics Series*, vol. 2. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.

- Erickson, M. J.; Paul K. Helseth; Justin Taylor, eds. *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004.
- Grenz, Stanley and John Franke. *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.
- Horton, Michael S. *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Ingraffia, Brian. *Postmodern Theory and Biblical Theology: Vanquishing God's Shadow*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Lints, Richard. *The Fabric of Theology: Toward an Evangelical Prolegomenon*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.
- Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.

IV. Seminar Requirements

- Attendance at all seminar sessions is mandatory. You may be excused for illness or circumstances such as would warrant a last minute excuse from a preaching assignment.
- The seminar participant is expected to read all assigned materials, according to the course schedule, and whatever further background materials may be necessary for full participation in the seminar process. The assigned readings will be discussed in a seminar format and participants will prepare a one-page analysis of each of the assigned readings. This paper is due at the start of each seminar session. Each participant is expected to contribute productively to class discussions.
- Students will prepare a major research paper on a subject of their choosing as it directly relates to the subject matter of the seminar. Proposed topics must be submitted in writing to the instructor and must receive his approval. Papers should be 20-25 pages in length and should conform to *The Southern Seminary Manual of Style* guidelines, available in the Lifeway Bookstore. Papers will be graded on content, depth of analysis, and overall quality of research. Here are some *sample* research topics:
 - Compare, contrast, and critique two recent works in evangelical theology in terms of how they are doing theology. For example, the kinds of questions that need to be addressed are of this nature: How are they interacting with current issues? How are they using Scripture to warrant their conclusions? Have they legitimately moved from biblical text to theological formulation? How have they incorporated and appealed to extra-biblical material?
 - Is evangelical theology committed to foundationalism? If so, why? If not, why not? What implications does an answer to this question have on the doing of evangelical theology?
 - What does it mean to be “biblical” in one’s theology? Evangelicals, as well as non-evangelicals appeal to Scripture to warrant their theological proposals. Is it merely enough to appeal to Scripture? How does one decide whether a theological proposal is more “biblical” than another? What criteria should one use?
 - Describe and evaluate the debate over univocal and analogical language. What is this debate about? How does this debate affect our doing of evangelical theology? Apply

- this debate to the issue of open theism (or other theologies within evangelicalism) over the biblical language of repentance (or other kinds of biblical language).
- Postmodernism raises the whole question of truth-claims in theology. How has evangelical theology responded to this challenge? What resources should we utilize?
 - An essay on the resources of biblical theology for the doing of systematic theology. What is biblical theology? Is it possible to do? What role should it play in the doing of systematic theology? Does the use of biblical theology in systematics mean we should write systematic theology differently?
 - “All truth is God’s truth.” How should this slogan be incorporated into the doing of systematic theology? How should one incorporate the insights of extra-biblical disciplines into the doing of theology?
- Students will present their research paper in a formal session as scheduled. Each paper must be completed, copied for each class member, and distributed in class no later than one week prior to a student’s class discussion period.
 - Every seminar participant must read each paper carefully and come to class prepared to interact substantively with them. Furthermore, each student will be responsible to prepare a brief (3-4 pages) response to one of their colleague’s papers, assigned by the instructor. These responses will not be presented in class, but copies of them will be distributed to the instructor and to the student whose paper is critiqued. In addition to writing this brief response, each student will also be responsible for leading and directing the initial questioning during the class session devoted to the paper he or she has critiqued.

Note: Classes devoted to discussion of research papers will occur during the final weeks of the semester depending on class size.

V. Seminar Grade

- Reading of seminar materials (including student papers) and seminar participation (30%)
- One page summaries of class reading (10%)
- Research paper (50%)
- Response paper and discussion leadership (10%)
- Grades below B are not sufficient for crediting a seminar in the Ph.D. or Th.M. academic program.

VI. Seminar Schedule

Date	Class Focus	Reading Required
Aug 15	Introduction to the Seminar	
Aug 22	Challenge of Postmodernism	Ingraffia, <i>Postmodern Theory</i> **Supplemental Resources (see below)

Aug 29	Challenge of Postmodernism	**Supplemental Resources (see below)
Sept 5	Evangelical Responses	Grenz/Franke, <i>Beyond Foundationalism</i> Erickson/Helseth/Taylor, <i>Reclaiming the Center</i> , 33-55, 137-219, 223-250, 281-304 **Supplemental Resource (see below)
Sept 12	Evangelical Responses	Horton, <i>Covenant and Eschatology</i> **Supplemental Resources (see below)
Sept 19	Evangelical Responses	Lints, <i>The Fabric of Theology</i>
Sept 26	Evangelical Responses	Vanhoozer, <i>Drama of Doctrine</i>
Oct 3	Fall Break (=No Class)	
Oct 10	Doing Evangelical Theology	<i>New Dictionary of BT</i> Baker, <i>Two Testaments, One Bible</i>
Oct 17	Doing Evangelical Theology	Bartholomew, et al. <i>After Pentecost</i>
Oct 24	Doing Evangelical Theology	
Oct 31	Student Papers	
Nov 7	Student Papers	
Nov 14	ETS Week (No Class)	
Nov 21	Thanksgiving Break (=No Class)	
Nov 28	Student Papers (=if necessary)	

**Supplemental Resources on Postmodernism (August 22, 29)

- Dockery, David, ed. *The Challenge of Postmodernism*. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001
- Erickson, Millard. *Truth or Consequences*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001
- Grenz, Stanley. *A Primer on Postmodernism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.
- Lundin, Roger. *The Culture of Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.
- Murphy, Nancey. *Anglo-American Postmodernity*. Oxford: Westview Press, 1997.
- Smith, James K. A. *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.
- Vanhoozer, Kevin. *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*
- _____ and J. Andrew Kirk, eds. *To Stake a Claim: Mission and the Western Crisis of Knowledge*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999.
- Wells, David F. *Above All Earthly Pow'rs*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.

**Supplemental Resource on Evangelical Responses to Postmodernism (September 5)

- Penner, Myron B., ed. *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005.

**Supplemental Resources vis-à-vis Michael Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology* (September 12)

- Henry, Carl F. H. *God Revelation, and Authority*. 3:272-481. Waco: Word, 1979.
- _____ . *God, Revelation, and Authority*. 4:103-128. Waco: Word, 1979.
- Vanhoozer, Kevin. “The Semantics of Biblical Literature,” in D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, eds. *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986.

Special Needs:

In order to ensure full class participation, any student with a disabling condition requiring special accommodations (e.g., tape recorders, special adaptive equipment, special note-taking or test-taking needs) is strongly encouraged to contact the professor at the beginning of the course.

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Selected Bibliography

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Balla, Peter. *Challenges to New Testament Theology: An Attempt to Justify the Enterprise*. WUNT 2:95. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997.

Barr, James, *The Concept of Biblical Theology*. London: SCM, 1999.

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Bartholomew, Craig; Colin Greene; Karl Möller, eds. *After Pentecost: Language & Biblical Interpretation – Scripture and Hermeneutics Series*, vol. 2. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.

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Bloesch, Donald G. *A Theology of Word and Spirit*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992.

Bray, G. *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

Carson, D. A. and John D. Woodbridge, eds. *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986.

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Conn, Harvie M. ed., *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988.

Dockery, David, ed. *New Dimensions in Evangelical Thought: Essays in Honor of Millard Erickson*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998.

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Dunn, J. D. G. *Christology in the Making*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

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Fackre, Gabriel. *The Doctrine of Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

Feinberg, John S. *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2001.

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- Green, Joel B. and Max Turner, eds. *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
- Grenz, Stanley J. and John R. Franke. *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.
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- Hans Urs von Balthasar. *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 1, *Prolegomena*, trans. Graham Harrison. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988.
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