



Advancing God's Kingdom by Preparing Competent Christian Leaders for
Spirit-Empowered Life and Ministry

T491 DE Current Issues in Theology

3 credits | Prerequisites: T220 & T221

January 18-April 22, 2021
Winter Semester

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Course Content and Goals

Course Description

An introduction to and evaluation of trends in contextual theologies and other pressing issues in contemporary theology and church life. Students evaluate these issues from a biblical and evangelical Christian perspective and develop their own theologically-informed responses to these trends. The key topics of discussion will vary.

Relationship to Horizon's Mission

Pressing theological issues affect our lives and ministry in many contexts. As part of Horizon's mission to prepare competent Christian leaders, this course equips students to understand these issues and articulate a Christian response to them based on biblical and theological considerations. It thus aids them in the following [core competencies](#):

- *Biblical and Theological Literacy* is demonstrated by skilled interpretation of scripture and evaluation of theological issues in order to articulate how to think, live, and minister in light of who God is, who God's people are, and God's purposes for the world.
- *Contextual Awareness* is demonstrated by a maturing orthodox Christian worldview, a healthy self-understanding, and engagement of people and cultures with wisdom and discernment.

Core Competencies and Learning Outcomes

To demonstrate competency in *Biblical and Theological Literacy*, students will:

1. Articulate what it means for theology to be "biblical," "evangelical," and "spiritual," and to practice such a theology.
 - *Assessment*: Position Paper.
2. Assess the use of the Bible and theological presuppositions in texts and other media.
 - *Assessment*: Comparison Tests, Book Review.
3. Develop and articulate one's own biblical-theological position on a pressing topic in contemporary theology and/or the life of the Church.
 - *Assessment*: Position Paper.

To demonstrate competency in *Contextual Awareness*, students will:

4. Describe and evaluate issues in evangelical theology, and Christian theology more broadly, of significant concern to the Church both within Canada and globally.
 - *Assessment*: Comparison Tests, Book Review.

Course Work

Textbooks and Readings

Wolters, Albert M. *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. (ISBN 978-0-8028-2969-6)

Course Pack. Available on Populi.

**While students have the benefit of accessing their textbooks online through the Digital Theological Library, they will not have access to the Digital Theological Library upon graduation. Therefore, we encourage students to purchase select textbooks to build their personal library. For your convenience, Horizon has partnered with Kennedy's Parable to provide textbooks.

Course Assignments and Activities

Portfolio Components. *Position Paper.* This assignment must be edited and submitted to the Biblical and Theological Literacy *e-Project* in your Portfolio on *Portfolium*. See the [Portfolio Guide](#): "What Goes in My Portfolio" for further information.

1. *Theology Discussion.*

At the beginning of this course, we will discuss what theology is and what kind of theology we ought to be doing. This can be described as biblical, evangelical, spiritual theology. (This will hopefully be review from Theology I & II.) To aid our discussion, students will read all of Al Wolters' *Creation Regained* (chapters 1-5 and the postscript) and participate in discussion as indicated in the instructions on Populi. The focus of this assignment is on articulating what it means for theology to be "biblical," "evangelical," and "spiritual," and practicing such a theology in relation to current issues (see Learning Outcome #1). This discussion is meant as practice, and therefore will be assessed as complete/incomplete only (though the professor may also respond to points in the discussion).

- Related learning outcome(s): #1.
- **Due date:** Friday, Jan. 29

2. *Lesson Discussions.*

After our discussion of theology in general, we will explore four pressing current issues in more depth: a Christian theological ethics of sexual orientation and gender identity; Christianity and the environment / ecotheology; the Church and indigenous peoples in Canada; and Christianity and Islam. These discussions provide practice assessing the use of the Bible and theological presuppositions in texts and other media (see Learning Outcome #2).

- Related learning outcome(s): #2.
- **Due dates:** N/A. While there are no strict due dates for these discussions, they must be completed *before* one is able to write the corresponding Comparison Test.

3. *Comparison Tests on the Readings.*

For each of the four issues discussed in the course, there are four readings to be completed. These are all found in the Course Pack lesson. The topics with their readings are as follows:

Sexual orientation and gender identity

- Mark A. Yarhouse, *Homosexuality and the Christian*, ch. 1
- Mary Ann Tolbert, “Marriage and Friendship in the NT: Ancient Resources for Contemporary Same-Sex Unions”
- Assemblies of God, “Transgenderism, Transsexuality, and Gender Identity”
- Cheng, *Radical Love*, ch. 4

Due date: Friday, February 12.

Christianity and the environment/ecotheology

- Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis”
- Howard A. Snyder, *Salvation Means Creation Healed*, ch. 4
- Brunner, Butler and Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology*, ch. 6
- Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Theology*, ch. 9

Due date: Friday, February 26.

The Church and indigenous peoples

- Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report* (selection)
- Cheryl Bear-Barnetson, *Introduction to First Nations Ministry*, ch. 2
- George Tinker, “Spirituality, Native American Personhood, Sovereignty and Solidarity”
- Bishop Mark MacDonald, “The Surprising and Improbable Mission of God among the Indigenous Peoples of Canada”

Due date: Friday, March 19.

Christianity and Islam

- Colin Chapman, *Cross and Crescent*, chs. 25, 29
- Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad of Jordan et al., “A Common Word Between Us and You”
- World Evangelical Alliance response to “A Common Word”
- Phil Parshall, *Muslim Evangelism*, ch. 7

Due date: Friday, April 2.

For each set of readings, students will write a short Comparison Test. Each test will contain five (5) long answer questions related to understanding, evaluating, and comparing the four readings under each topic. Students will have two (2) hours to complete each test; therefore, they should have done the readings prior to writing the test, but may refer to them during the test (i.e., open book). These tests will evaluate students’ ability to accurately describe and evaluate the issue at

hand (see Learning Outcome #4), as well as to assess the use of the Bible and theological presuppositions in the readings (see Learning Outcome #2).

- Related learning outcome(s): #2 and #4.
- **Due dates:** Fridays, Feb 12, 26; Mar 19; Apr 2.

4. *Book Review.*

As a Christian leader, you will need to be able to carefully summarize and evaluate influential books related to burning issues in the Church and broader culture. For this assignment, you will *either* write a lengthy blog review of a book *or* record a YouTube-style video reviewing a book. Students may choose one of the following books to review:

Sexual orientation and gender identity

- Wesley Hill, *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality*
- Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships*
- Mark Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture*
- Austen Hartke, *Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians*

Christianity and the environment/ecotheology

- Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of The Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care*
- Pope Francis, *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*
- Matthew Fox, *Creation Spirituality: Liberating Gifts for the Peoples of the Earth*
- Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Creation and the Cross: The Mercy of God for a Planet in Peril*

The Church and indigenous peoples

- Clare Sue Kidwell, ed., *A Native American Theology*
- Achiel Peelman, *Christ is a Native American*
- Richard Twiss, *Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys: A Native American Expression of the Jesus Way*
- Randy Woodley, *Shalom and the Community of Creation*

Christianity and Islam

- Nabeel Qureshi, *No God But One: Allah or Jesus?*
- Miroslav Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response*
- Nabeel Jabbour, *The Crescent through the Eyes of the Cross: Insights from an Arab Christian*

Students are required to choose one of these books for review by March 26 – the day the position paper idea is due (see assignment description below) – in consultation with the professor. They are encouraged to choose a book related to the same issue on which they wish to develop a position paper! This will help their process as they move from description and evaluation toward articulating their own position on a topic.

If the student chooses to write a blog-style book review, it should be six (6) pages in length. If a video, it should be about eight (8) minutes in length. (The emphasis for the video option is not on

the technology, but on the content of the review.) In either case, while less formal than a usual written book review, the student should still refer to specific chapters, pages, and statements of the author(s), and include the following elements. Whether a written blog or YouTube-style video, the book review should:

- a. identify the book's main argument(s) and/or purpose(s);
- b. summarize its contents;
- c. examine how the book makes use of, and/or fails to make use of, the Bible;
- d. identify the theological presuppositions present in the author's arguments, whether implicit or explicit; and,
- e. offer an appreciative and/or critical assessment based on (c) and (d)

As a Christian leader reviewing a book for the sake of their blog or YouTube audience, make sure to end with a recommendation for whether this book will help or hinder your audience's proper biblical evaluation of the topic.

This assignment focuses on the ability of students to assess the use of Scripture and theological judgments in a text at much greater length than the comparison tests (see Learning Outcome #2), and to accurately describe and evaluate issues of significant concern in church and academy (see Learning Outcome #4).

- Related learning outcome(s): #2 and #4.
- **Assignment Length:** 6 pages or 8 minutes. **Due date:** Friday, Apr 9.

5. *Position Paper.*

Denominations often develop position papers on various controversial or important topics to recommend their stance to their member churches. Students will draft and prepare a position paper on one of the issues covered in the course, as if for his or her denomination. This is not an argumentative or research essay, but a statement of one's theological position on a certain topic. Thus, it is not required that they will refer to sources other than the Bible, though reading other sources will, of course, help students in formulating their own thoughts. Where students merely summarize or quote other sources, however, they must be acknowledged; to do otherwise is plagiarism.

By March 26, students will be expected to prepare a short draft of, or notes for, their paper. (This is also the date a choice of book for the Book Review assignment is due.) The professor will comment on this in order to provide guidance. There is no required length for the draft, but the more extensive the more helpful it will be to the student. In preparing, students should consider the following:

- a. What biblical texts are important for this issue?
- b. How do certain theological themes relate to this issue (e.g., creation, fall, redemption)?
- c. What is being said about this issue today? ****You may discuss this explicitly in your position paper, but it is not required.****
- d. What do I want to say, based on the Bible?

Following the draft and professor's comments, students will have time to revise and develop their draft into a full position paper. It will not be due until after their Comparison Tests and

Book Review, so students are encouraged to make use of these assignments to help with the final submission. The final paper will be about 4 pages (~1000 words) in length.

The position paper will be evaluated in two areas. First, on theological method: have students approached the issue in a biblical, evangelical, spiritual way (see Learning Outcome 1)? Second, on the content of their statement: what biblical texts and theological themes do they make use of (see Learning Outcome 3)?

- Related learning outcome(s): #1 and #3.
- **Assignment Length:** 4 pages. **Due date:** Thursday, Apr 15.

Time Investment

	<i>Time (approx.)</i>	<i>Due Date(s)</i>
Theology Discussion	10 hours	Jan 29
Lessons & Discussions	18 hours	N/A* (see assignment description)
Comparison Tests	32 hours	Feb 12, 26; Mar 19; April 2
Book Review	30 hours	Apr 9
Position Paper	8 hours	Apr 15
Total	98 hours	

Assessment Rubrics

Rubrics for the assignments will be available on Populi under the Lesson called “T491 DE Assessment Rubrics.”

Tentative Class Schedule

Week of	Lesson & Reading	Assignments Due
Jan 18	Introduction: Biblical, Evangelical Theology Wolters, <i>Creation Regained</i> , ch. 1-5 & Postscript	
Jan 25	Trends in Contemporary Theology	Theology Discussion (<i>Jan 29</i>)
Feb 1	Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity	Lesson Discussion
Feb 8		Comparison Test 1 (<i>Feb 12</i>)
Feb 15	The Environment / Ecotheology	Lesson Discussion
Feb 22		Comparison Test 2 (<i>Feb 26</i>)
Mar 1	* Break *	
Mar 8	Indigenous Peoples in Canada	Lesson Discussion
Mar 15		Comparison Test 3 (<i>Mar 19</i>)
Mar 22	Islam	Lesson Discussion Book review choice & Position paper draft (<i>Mar 26</i>)
Mar 29		Comparison Test 4 (<i>Apr 2</i>)
Apr 5		Book review (<i>Apr 9</i>)

Apr 12	Position paper (<i>Apr 15</i>)
Apr 19	<i>Revision Week</i>

Assignment Schedule

Fri Jan 29	Theology Discussion
Fri Feb 12	Comparison Test 1 (Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity readings)
Fri Feb 26	Comparison Test 2 (Environment / Ecotheology readings)
Fri Mar 19	Comparison Test 3 (Indigenous Peoples in Canada readings)
Fri Apr 2	Comparison Test 4 (Islam readings)
Fri Apr 9	Book Review
Thu Apr 15	Position Paper & Course Evaluation

- First submissions of assignments will not be accepted after Friday, April 16, 2021.

Revision Week (Apr 19-22)

Mon Apr 19	Resubmission of Comparison Tests (as necessary)
Tues Apr 20	Resubmission of Book Review (as necessary)
Wed Apr 21	Resubmission of Position Paper (as necessary)
Thu Apr 22	Final resubmissions (as necessary)

- No resubmission of assignments will be accepted after Thursday, April 22, 2021.

Academic Policies

General Assignment Guidelines

Please see the Horizon [Format Guide](#) for assignment submission, grammar, and formatting guidelines.

Late Assignments and Extensions

Students are expected to submit work by the assigned due dates, as part of their development of the Leadership and Administration competency. To submit extension requests, students must submit the [Assignment Extension Request Form online](#) and *before the due date*. Professors may grant extensions in the case of extenuating circumstances, such as significant illness or a family emergency. Furthermore, no extensions will be granted beyond the final day of a term or semester.

A late assignment will not be assessed until the student first meets with the professor or the Adjunct Faculty Advisor to discuss whether the student's reasons for the late submission are acceptable. Unexcused late submissions will be tracked across each student's program. If one assignment is submitted more than five days late or if a student incurs multiple instances of unexcused late submissions, it will result in academic discipline, such as required tutoring, academic probation, failure of the course, or failure to qualify for graduation. Similar to standard human resource employment practices, students will receive warnings and conditions with increasing severity of academic discipline.

Resubmission of Assignments

Students have until the last day of revision week to submit revisions, and students can only submit up to two revisions for each assignment. Students should follow the revision schedule outlined above.

Horizon College Assessment of Student Work

The goal of courses is to help students develop the stated competencies, not earn letter grades. Assignments are the means by which instructors evaluate development of those competencies. Consequently, students do not earn overall “grades” on individual assignments. Instead, assessment focuses on measuring students’ competency as outlined in the syllabus and assignment rubric. For purposes of transferability to other institutions, the final competency designations will be translated to a comparable letter grade on a traditional transcript. The tables below explain Horizon’s approach:

Horizon CBE Scale		Descriptor	Letter Grade	Grade Point	U of S Equivalency
E	Exceeding	Student exceeded competency requirements for some learning outcomes and met requirements for all remaining learning outcomes.	A+	4.0	90-100
			A	4.0	85-89
			A-	3.7	80-84
M	Meeting	Student met competency requirements for all learning outcomes and may have exceeded in one.	B+	3.3	77-79
			B	3.0	73-76
			B-	2.7	70-72

Students pass a course only after they have demonstrated that they have *met or exceeded all* competency requirements for a course. If the student chooses not to meet all course competency requirements, the course will not be sufficient to fulfill their program requirements at Horizon. Nevertheless, for transferability purposes, the student will receive a letter grade of C+ or below on a traditional transcript.

BTM	Beginning to meet	Student was beginning to meet competency requirements for any one or more learning outcomes, and met or exceeded competency requirements for all other outcomes.	C+	2.3	67-69
			C	2.0	63-66
			C-	1.7	60-62
NYM	Not yet meeting	Student was not yet meeting competency requirements for one or more learning outcomes.	D+	1.3	57-59
			D	1.0	53-56
			D-	0.7	50-52
			F	0.0	0-49

Academic Honesty

Horizon uses the University of Saskatchewan definition of plagiarism described as “the presentation of the work or idea of another in such a way as to give others the impression that it is the work or idea of the presenter. Adequate attribution is required. What is essential is that another person have no doubt which words or research results are the student’s and which are drawn from other sources” (Office of the University Secretary, 2012). Students are expected to give due recognition to sources from which all substantial phrases, sentences or even ideas are

drawn. Note also that you may not submit work done in one course to satisfy the requirements of another course (unless both instructors agree beforehand to accept such work). See [here](#) for examples of plagiarism and further guidelines in the [Student Handbook](#).

Disability Services Information

If you would benefit from learning accommodations due to pre-existing physical or mental health conditions or learning disabilities, contact the Academic or Student Life departments at the beginning of the course. Horizon will work to meet your learning and/or physical needs where possible. If any conditions arise during the course that you wish to disclose, please contact us as soon as possible. In all cases you will need to provide current [documentation](#) of the disability or condition you wish to disclose. Horizon takes appropriate care to ensure confidentiality about any such disclosures. For more information, contact Bob Williamson, Dean of Students, at bwilliamson@horizon.edu; Heather Wood, Associate Dean of Students, at hwood@horizon.edu; or Leanne Bellamy, Academic Coach, at lbellamy@horizon.edu.

Class Attendance

Students should attend all classes in order to facilitate competency development. In the case of illness or other unforeseen circumstances, students may miss one day of a module course or three days of class in a term or semester course without academic penalty. A student must be present for the full duration of a class period in order to be registered as present for the class. Students who are absent for more than the number of classes stated above will automatically fail the course. Students wishing to be exempted from this policy due to extenuating circumstances may make an academic appeal, where they will need to document and verify those circumstances. Students who miss a class are responsible to get missed notes or handouts from another student, rather than from the professor.

Campus Health Policy

While on campus, please maintain 2 metres of physical distance between yourself and others. Do not come on campus if you are experiencing symptoms (even if they are mild) of fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, chills, runny nose, or a loss of your sense of taste or smell. If you have any of these symptoms, do not return to campus until advised by Public Health. You should self-isolate and contact HealthLine 811 for advice on whether you should be tested for COVID-19. This will help keep others safe and possibly spare them from self-isolation and testing. While you are in self-isolation, you may attend class online. The link to access your class is posted on the course page on Populi, under the Syllabus tab, under Links on the right side of the page.

Live-Streaming Etiquette

If attending class online via live-stream, keep your camera on and stay present and attentive throughout the class session. Access your class with a computer (preferably) or tablet, not a cell phone. Arrive to class on time, and dress as you would if you were attending class on campus. Join the class from a quiet space with minimal background noise, and mute your microphone until you wish to speak to the class.

Use of Technology

Horizon encourages the use of electronic devices in the classroom to enhance learning. Careful consideration must be given to privacy issues, copyrighted materials, and the general care and concern for others. Please respect the following classroom policies:

- Please use online access for course learning only. This is a matter of respect for the instructor's teaching, your own learning, and fellow students who may be distracted by other uses.
- Students should secure permission from the instructor to record any teaching material. This includes PowerPoint slides, white board illustrations, notes, and any form of audio or video.
- Student feedback is a valuable input for course improvements. Please resolve any classroom grievance about the instructor or course with the instructor personally, through the Horizon College and Seminary grievance procedures, or the Populi-based course evaluations. It is inappropriate to air classroom grievances on a social media platform.
- When instructors use recording mechanisms in the classroom, recorded materials will be used for the sole purpose of instruction and cannot be released to any social media outlet without the written consent of the students whose images have been recorded.
- In general, it is not acceptable to share photographs or videos of students in the classroom setting without permission from those whose images appear in such media.