T491 Current Issues in Theology

3 credits | Prerequisites: T320 Theology I and T321 Theology II.

March 8 - 12, 2021   E. Janet Warren, MD, PhD
Module D   ejanetwarren@gmail.com
Monday – Friday, Times TBA

Please note: This course requires reading before the module.

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.

Focus topics for this term include open and relational theology, climate change and creation care, disability studies, the prosperity Gospel, LGTBQ issues, and gender issues.

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. Engage in theological reflection that is "biblical," "evangelical," and "spiritual."
   - *Assessment*: Content Test, Position Paper

2. Assess the use of the Bible and theological presuppositions in theological texts.
   - *Assessment*: Book Review
3. Develop and articulate their 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. Accurately describe and evaluate issues in evangelical theology, and Christian theology more broadly, of significant concern to the Church both within Canada and globally.
   - *Assessment*: Content Test, Book Review

Course Work

Required Readings

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.

BEFORE THE MODULE

1. Pre-Module Reading.
Students will read Bevans, Walsh, Warren, Ackerman, Clifton, and Yarhouse (only *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*) from the Course Pack before the module begins. It is recommended that the student read the entire course pack before the course begins, but only the above items are required.
   - **Due date:** Mar 8, 2021 at 9am.

AFTER THE MODULE

2. Content Test.
A short-answer, open book online test covering course content in lectures, videos, and required reading. You should finish the required reading before you take the test.
   - Related learning outcome(s): # 1, # 4.
   - **Assignment Length:** 15-20 questions with point form or brief paragraph length responses. **Due date:** Mar 25, 2021.

3. *Position Paper on one of the course focus topics.*
This essay, as if for one's denomination, is not an argumentative or research essay, but a statement of one's theological position. Introduce the issue and explain why a position paper is necessary. Consider what biblical texts are important for this issue and how evangelical theological themes relate to it. Consider what contemporary culture and contemporary Christianity say about this issue and articulate what your position is. The paper may be written in point form, and it is helpful to engage with two to four sources, including other position papers. It will be evaluated on the basis of content - biblical texts and theological themes used to support the position, as well as contemporary culture, and approach – consideration of biblical, evangelical, and spiritual issues.
- Related learning outcome(s): # 1, # 3
- **Assignment Length:** 1000 words. **Due date:** April 1, 2021.

4. *Book Review.*
A critical review of a book related to any of the course topics – but must be a different topic from that of the position paper. It may be chosen from the bibliography or self-selected with prior approval from instructor. Identify the book's main argument(s) or position(s) and summarize its content (approximately one-third of the review). Consider how the author uses (or fails to use) the Bible, identify the theological presuppositions present in the author's arguments, whether implicit or explicit, and comment on whether the author's position is evangelical or not and why. Explain how the book's topic is relevant for contemporary Christian engagement with culture. Finally, offer an appreciative and/or critical assessment and a recommendation for whether this book will help or hinder your audience's proper biblical evaluation of the topic. This assignment will be evaluated on the basis of clarity, thoughtful evaluation, theological reflection, and awareness of contextual issues in contemporary Christianity.
- Related learning outcome(s): # 2, #4.
- **Assignment Length:** 1500 words. **Due date:** April 12, 2021.

Estimate of Time Investment (individual time investments may vary)

Readings	23 hrs	N/A
Classroom time	30 hrs	N/A
1. Pre-Module Reading	5 hrs	Mar 8 at 9am
2. Content Test	4 hrs	Mar 25
3. Position Paper	8 hrs	April 1
4. Book Review	30 hrs	April 12
Total =	100 hrs	

Assessment Rubrics
Rubrics will be available at the beginning of class on Populi under the lesson "T491 Assessment Rubrics."

Course Outline / Class Schedule (tentative)

Monday March 8
AM: **Overview/Background/Context**

- Course overview
- Issues in contemporary theology, approaches to Christianity and culture, approaches to the Bible, worldviews, contextual theology
- Lecture, class discussion

PM: **Open and Relational Theologies**

- Key issues, review and discussion of biblical texts, pastoral/practical implications
- Lecture, video, class discussion, meeting with seminary students

Tuesday March 9
AM: **The Science-Faith Dialogue**

- Varying approaches, key issues
- Lecture, in-class readings

PM: **Climate Change/Creation Care/Ecotheology**

- Key issues, facts and figures, definitions, position statements
- Lecture, video, mock debate

Wednesday March 10
AM: **Prosperity Theology**

- Key issues, examples, concerns
- Lecture, video

PM: **Disability Theology**

- Key issues, definitions, pastoral responses
- Lecture, video, role plays

Thursday March 11
AM: **Overview of Gender/Sexuality**

- Key issues, definitions, biblical anthropology
- Lecture, seminary student presentations

PM: **LGBTQ Issues in Christianity**

- Homosexuality, varying views, transgender, position statements
- Lecture, video, role plays, seminary student presentations

Friday March 12
AM: **Gender issues**

- Gender roles, relevant biblical texts, Christian feminism, sexual abuse in church
- Lecture, seminary student presentations

PM: Q&A, library presentation, individual meetings with students

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

Date	Revisions Due
Monday, April 19, 2021	Resubmissions of *Content Test* (as necessary)
Tuesday, April 20, 2021	Resubmissions of *Position Paper* (as necessary)
Wednesday, April 21, 2021	Resubmissions of *Book Review* (as necessary)
Thursday, April 22, 2021	Secondary resubmissions (as necessary)

- No resubmission of assignments will be accepted after **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.

Select Bibliography (*indicates suitable for book review)

Overviews

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Smith, David L. *Theologies of the 21st Century: Trends in Contemporary Theology*. Wipf and Stock, 2014.

Contextual Theology/Worldview

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Walsh, Brian and Middleton, Richard. *The Transforming Vision*. IVP, 1984.

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Barbour, Ian G. *Religion and Science.* Harper, 1997.

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*Johnson, Elizabeth A. *Creation and the Cross: The Mercy of God for a Planet in Peril*. Orbis, 2018.

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Prosperity Theology

*Attanasi, K., Yong, A. (eds) *Pentecostalism and Prosperity: The Socio-Economics of the Global Charismatic Movement*: Springer, 2012.

*Bowler, Kate. *Blessed, A History of the American Prosperity Gospel*; Oxford University Press, 2013.

*Fortner, Michael D. *The Prosperity Gospel Exposed: And Other False Doctrines*. Create Space Publishing, 2011.

*Hill, Edward. *Prosperous Christians: 10 Commandments of Godly Prosperity*. Best Seller Publishing, 2019.

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LGTBQ Issues

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