



T410 DE Doctrine of God

3 credits. Prerequisites: Theology I



January 12-April 17, 2026

Winter 2026 Semester

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Course Goals

Course Description

A reflection upon the doctrine of the divine attributes as understood in Christian history and especially contemporary theology. Consideration is also given to the implications our understanding of God has for our understanding of godliness and for Christian ministry and Christian living in general.

Relationship to Horizon & MCS's Mission

As part of Horizon's mission to prepare competent Christian leaders, this course provides students with historical knowledge and research skills that will help them grow in the following core competency:

- *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.

Core Competencies and Learning Outcomes



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

1. Explain the different approaches theologians take when constructing their doctrines of God.
 - *Assessment:* Approaches Paper
2. Explain areas of consensus and key areas of debate regarding the attributes of God by comparing and contrasting the views of theologians on the doctrine of God.
 - *Assessment:* Attributes Reports
3. Explain numerous practical implications of the doctrine of God, including how the doctrine of God motivates your love for, worship of, and faith in God.
 - *Assessment:* Attributes Reports
4. Articulate and defend your own understanding of the divine attributes.
 - *Assessment:* Attributes Reports

5. Construct a sustained and in-depth theological argument regarding one of the divine attributes.
 - *Assessment:* Research Paper

Course Work

Required Readings

Gabriel, Andrew K. (=AG1) *The Lord is the Spirit: The Holy Spirit and the Divine Attributes*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011. (ISBN: 978-1608998890)
 DTL: <https://thedtl.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1088350663>.

Gabriel, Andrew K. (=AG2) “Pneumatological Insights for the Attributes of the Divine Loving.” In *Third Article Theology: A Pneumatological Dogmatics*, edited by Myk Habets, 39-53. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016. *Available [online here](#) and on Populi, under the course Syllabus tab.

Highfield, Ron. (=RH) *Great is the Lord: Theology for the Praise of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008. (ISBN: 978-0802833006)
 DTL: <https://thedtl.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1235278826>.

Pinnock, Clark H. (=CP) *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2019 [originally published by Baker Academic in 2001]. (ISBN: 9781532688614)
 DTL: <https://thedtl.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1124366898>.

**While students have the benefit of accessing many of 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.

Course Assignments and Activities

*** Assignment Completion Note ***

-You should be thinking about assignment 2 at the same time as assignment 3, while the content is still fresh in your mind.

1. Check-In with Professor

You will meet three times with your professor (likely via Zoom). Ideally, these meetings will occur with your classmates as well, as schedules permit. At each meeting you will discuss the reading for the coming Attributes Report assignment. You should prepare notes and questions for your meeting, but you do not need to hand these in. The aim of the meeting is to discuss some of your questions and to help you be confident in writing your attributes reports. Your professor will contact you to confirm the meeting dates. This assignment will be regarded as complete or incomplete based on your participation in the three meetings.

- **Due dates:** TBD.

2. *Approaches Paper* – 20%

You will begin preparing for this assignment at the beginning of this course, although you won't write the paper until later. Hence, you should take good notes from your reading. In addition to preparing you for this assignment, the reading for this assignment will serve as a general orientation to the doctrine of God and to the various approaches that theologians take to this doctrine. This background information will prepare you for reading each theologian's discussion of the attributes of God and for the attributes reports assignments. For this approaches paper assignment you will read:

- *AG1*, 1-12, 15-28, 37-44, 51-57, 65-74, 81-96, 100-112, 121-122 (76)
- *RH*, xvi-xviii, 153-163, 416-421 (18)
- *CP*, 1-18 (18)

After you complete the reading, you will **submit a statement of reading completion**. You should also write the first page of this paper. Later in the course, when it comes time to complete the paper, plan a time to **discuss with another student** in the course (via Zoom, phone, or in person) the *overall approaches to the doctrine of God* that each of the authors take. Then write a 4 page paper (max 5 pages) and compare and contrast the *overall approaches to the doctrine of God* that each of the authors take. This paper has *four parts*.

- 1) Note who you discussed with (one sentence)
- 2) Begin your paper by summarizing the heart of Gabriel's argument (about 1 page).
- 3) Compare and contrast the overall approaches that the three books take in developing their doctrines of God (about 2 pages). As a part of this, you should note any tendencies you see in each of the authors (that is, is there anything that seems to be a recurring theme in how each author argues in favor of their conclusions?).
- 4) Evaluate to what extent Highfield and Pinnock are examples of the concerns that Gabriel raises in his book (about 1 page). Your paper should give specific examples to support your general observations.

- To complete this assignment, students will follow these guidelines:
 - Follow the Horizon & MCS Format Guide.
 - Submit a statement of reading completion.
 - Note at the beginning of the paper who the student discussed the assignment with.
- Related learning outcome: 1.
- **Assignment length:** 1400 words.
- **Due dates:** Statement of reading completion due Jan 23, Paper due Mar 20.

3. *Attributes Reports* – 50%

You will submit three reports. This assignment will give you the opportunity to demonstrate your ability to assess the textbooks, to articulate your own understanding of the divine attributes, and to reflect on the practical significance of the doctrine. For this assignment, citations may be in brackets (e.g., RH 106). Please do not include an introduction or conclusion for these assignments. Each report will be a total of 4-4.5 pages and should include the following parts.

- a) 2-2.5 pages each report= Compare and contrast *the specific conclusions that each author makes regarding each of the attributes of God*. Note areas where the theologians agreed (consensus) and areas of disagreement (diversity) and *why* they disagree. You will focus on Highfields's and Pinnock's books, although when relevant you should also take into account Gabriel's writing. For those attributes that only Highfield discusses, you can simply give a brief description of each attribute.

- b) Up to 1 page each report= An *explanation and defense of your own position* regarding each of the attributes covered in the report.
- c) Up to 1 page each report= Reflect on the *practical implications* of the attributes covered in the report. Reflections might include points regarding how you live (and your understanding of godliness), minister, how you relate to God, etc. You should take into account many insights that the textbooks make, but you should also **discuss this with other people in your circle of relationships** to get additional ideas (at your church, on Facebook, family, etc.). Ask yourself, (for example) what difference does or should it make in my life that I believe that God is omniscient (depending on how one defines that)? What practical applications would a person make if they were preaching a sermon on that attribute of God?

Here is the list of readings for each report:

- 1) Attributes Report 1 (125 pages of reading)
 - Freedom and Love, *RH* 164-176, 222-236; *CP* 81-83; *AG2* 45 (30)
 - Omnipotence, *RH* 332-357; *AG1* 183-195, 203-204; *CP* 92-96, 126-131, 163-167 (51)
 - Immutability, *RH* 358-375; *AG1* 152-162, 166-171, 174-182; *CP* 85-88, 138-140 (45)
- 2) Attributes Report 2 (101 pages of reading)
 - Impassibility, *RH* 375-389; *AG1* 123-133, 146-151; *CP* 55-64, 88-92 (42)
 - Eternity, *RH* 292-311; *CP* 96-99 (22)
 - Omniscience, *RH* 312-332; *CP* 47-53, 99-102, 104-111, 137-138 (37)
- 3) Attributes Report 3 (73 pages of reading)
 - Omnipresence, *RH* 275-292 (17)
 - Holiness and Righteousness, *RH* 177-191; *AG2* 47, 49-50 (16)
 - Grace and Mercy, *RH* 192-206; *AG2* 45-46, 48-49 (16)
 - Patience and Wisdom, *RH* 206-221; *CP* 102-104; *AG2* 50-52 (19)
 - Glory, *RH* 389-398, *AG1* 205-207 (11)
- To complete this assignment, students will follow these guidelines:
 - Follow the Horizon & MCS Format Guide. Citations may be in brackets (e.g., RH 106).
- Related learning outcomes: 2, 3, 4.
- **Assignment length:** 1300 words each.
- **Due dates:** Feb 11, 27; Mar 13

4. Research Paper – 30%

You may write a paper on any topic regarding the doctrine of God as long as it is related to the content covered in this class. This assignment should be characterized by critical theological reflection and not just a matter of reporting what others have said. Hence, in your thesis statement you must take a position regarding the topic that you are researching. As you write your paper:

- Aim for **2500 words** (a minimum of 2250 words and no more than 2750 words = approx. 8 pages), not including your **footnotes and bibliography** (include both of these with your paper). Please record the **word count** for your papers after your conclusions.

- Use a **minimum of 8 scholarly¹ sources**, including at least two **journal** articles² (dictionary definitions do not count as sources).
- Record the **word count** for your papers after your conclusions.
- To complete this assignment, students will follow these guidelines:
 - Follow the Horizon & MCS Format Guide.
 - Select a topic the relates to the divine attributes.
 - Include a word count following conclusion (footnotes and bibliography are not included in this).
 - Include a bibliography.
- Related learning outcome: 5.
- **Assignment length:** 2500 words.
- **Due date:** Apr 8.

Estimate of Time Investment (individual time investments may vary)

			Assignment Weighting
Check-in with Professor	2 hours	TBD	
Approaches Paper	18 hours	Jan 23; Mar 20	20%
Attributes Reports (3)	51 hours	Feb 11, 27; Mar 13	50%
Research Paper	24 hours	Apr 8	30%
TOTAL	95 hours		

All assignments are due at 11:59pm **SK time**, unless otherwise indicated.

Assessment Rubrics

Assignment rubrics can be found on Populi under each assignment. Click on the name of the assignment to access each rubric.

Course Outline / Class Schedule

Any required revisions will take place throughout the course since there is generally no “revision week” for Directed Study courses.

Week 1-2 Reading for the approaches paper. Write the first page of the approaches paper.

- *AG1*, 1-12, 15-28, 37-44, 51-57, 65-74, 81-96, 100-112, 121-122 (76)
- *RH*, xvi-xviii, 153-163, 416-421 (18)
- *CP*, 1-18 (18)

Due Jan 23 Statement of reading completion for the Approaches Paper

¹ “Scholarly” sources generally include articles published in academic journals and academic books (a book is often not ‘academic’ if it does not have footnotes or endnotes). You are welcome to use magazine articles and [web pages](#), but these will often not count as scholarly sources.

² There are a number of excellent databases available on the [Digital Theological Library](#) (DTL) for searching the contents of many journals at one time. An internet search can help you as well (although this would not be as helpful).

Week 3-5 Working on Attributes Report 1

- Freedom and Love, *RH* 164-176, 222-236; *CP* 81-83; *AG2* 45 (30)
- Omnipotence, *RH* 332-357; *AG1* 183-195, 203-204; *CP* 92-96, 126-131, 163-167 (51)
- Immutability, *RH* 358-375; *AG1* 152-162, 166-171, 174-182; *CP* 85-88, 138-140 (45)

Due TBD Check-in with Professor 1**Due Feb 11 Attributes Report 1**

Week 5-7 Working on Attributes Report 2

- Impassibility, *RH* 375-389; *AG1* 123-133, 146-151; *CP* 55-64, 88-92 (42)
- Eternity, *RH* 292-311; *CP* 96-99 (22)
- Omniscience, *RH* 312-332; *CP* 47-53, 99-102, 104-111, 137-138 (37)

Due TBD Check-in with Professor 2**Due Feb 27 Attributes Report 2**

Week 8-9 Working on Attributes Report 3

- Omnipresence, *RH* 275-292 (17)
- Holiness and Righteousness, *RH* 177-191; *AG2* 47, 49-50 (16)
- Grace and Mercy, *RH* 192-206; *AG2* 45-46, 48-49 (16)
- Patience and Wisdom, *RH* 206-221; *CP* 102-104; *AG2* 50-52 (19)
- Glory, *RH* 389-398, *AG1* 205-207 (11)

Due TBD Check-in with Professor 3**Due Mar 13 Attributes Report 3**

Week 10 Finish Approaches Paper

Due Mar 20 Approaches Paper

Weeks 11-13 Research Paper

Due Apr 8 Research Paper

- Since this is a Directed Study course, revisions will be requested throughout the semester. Watch Populi for due dates for revisions.
- No assignments or revisions will be accepted after April 17, 2026.

Academic Policies**General Assignment Guidelines**

Please see the [Horizon](#) & [MCS](#) Format Guide for assignment submission, grammar, and formatting guidelines. The length of papers should fall within +/- 10% of the stated length. Papers that fall outside the length guidelines may not be graded. Assignments should be submitted via Populi under *Submissions* (not *Comments*). The resource at this [link](#) explains how to submit assignments on Populi.

Extensions

To submit extension requests, students must submit the *Request Extension Form* on the [MCS](#) or [Horizon](#) website and *before the due date*. Professors reserve the right to deny extensions.

Generally, the sooner that a student asks for an extension, the more willing faculty tend to be in

granting extensions. Furthermore, no extensions will be granted beyond the final day of a term or semester unless approval is granted by the Associate Academic Dean (MCS) or Assistant Academic Dean (Horizon).

Late Assignments

Students are expected to submit work by the assigned or extended due dates, as part of their development of the Leadership and Administration competency. Late submissions will be tracked across each student's program. Repeated late submissions, including late submissions of revisions, will result in academic discipline, such as warnings, required coaching, or academic probation. Similar to standard human resource employment practices, students will receive warnings and conditions with increasing severity of academic discipline.

If an assignment is submitted more than four calendar days late, the student will receive a failing grade (0%) for that assignment until it is submitted (students must demonstrate competency by submitting and passing all assignments to pass a course). Upon submission, the assignment may not be graded until revision week. In addition, the student will receive the grade for the assignment with minimal feedback (only a brief rationale for the assignment grade) and no opportunity to submit revisions.

Assignment Completion

Professors usually will not accept assignments that have not been completed according to the instructions given in the syllabus. If a professor informs a student that a submitted assignment is incomplete, the student will be given the opportunity to complete and resubmit the assignment quickly. If this is not possible, the assignment will be regarded as submitted late.

Assignment Revisions

Students can generally submit up to two revisions for each assignment, although a professor may accept more revisions if the professor determines the student is addressing all of the professor's instructions and making significant progress toward achieving competency.

Horizon and MCS's College Assessment of Student Work

The goal of courses is to help students develop their competency, not earn letter grades. Assignments are the means by which instructors evaluate development of competency by assessing learning outcomes as outlined in the syllabus and each assignment rubric. Once a student's assignment has met all competency requirements, the professor will assign a grade for that assignment. Assignments that do not meet competency will receive a 0. A final course grade is not calculated until the end of the course. Students pass a course (with a B- or higher) only after they have demonstrated that they have *met or exceeded all competency requirements* for that course and, therefore, only after they have passed all assignments.

Horizon and MCS CBE Scale		Descriptor	Letter Grade	Grade Point	U of S Equivalency
E	Exceeding expectations	Student demonstrated exceptional achievement of the learning outcomes.	A+	4.0	90-100
			A	4.0	85-89

		Student demonstrated excellent achievement of the learning outcomes.	A-	3.7	80-84
M	Meeting expectations	Student demonstrated good achievement of all learning outcomes.	B+	3.3	77-79
			B	3.0	73-76
			B-	2.7	70-72

If the student does not meet all competency requirements in a course and, therefore, does not pass all the assignments in a course, the course will not be sufficient to fulfill their program requirements at Horizon and MCS. Nevertheless, for transferability purposes, the student will receive a letter grade of C+ or below according to the scale below.

BTM	Beginning to meet expectations	Student was beginning to meet one or more learning outcomes.	C+	2.3	67-69
			C	2.0	63-66
			C-	1.7	60-62
NYM	Not yet meeting expectations	Student made insufficient progress toward meeting learning outcomes.	D+	1.3	57-59
			D	1.0	53-56
			D-	0.7	50-52
			F	0.0	0-49

Academic Integrity

Students learn best when practicing academic integrity. A lack of integrity is displayed in acts such as deception, abuse of confidentiality, cheating, inappropriate collaboration, or plagiarism. Plagiarism occurs when a student presents the words or ideas of another person or an artificial intelligence (AI) tool in such a way as to give others the impression that it is their own words or ideas. In academic writing, there should be no doubt which words or ideas are the student's and which are drawn from other sources or AI. Students are expected to submit their own original work and 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.

Horizon and MCS have a subscription to software that ensures the originality of academic writing, verifies the proper citation of all sources, and detects AI-generated content. When you submit an assignment, you will automatically receive a summary on Populi that includes your submitted files along with an originality score (a high originality score is positive).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage

In keeping with the Academic Integrity policy above, students must disclose on the title page of all assignments whether or not they have used AI and how they have used it. If the assignment has no title page, the student must disclose this to the instructor by some other means, such as in a comment on Populi. Students are expected to follow the policy for acceptable use of AI that is published in the [Horizon](#) and [MCS](#) Student Handbooks.

Accessible Learning Services Information

Horizon and MCS are committed to provide safe and inclusive learning environments which equalize the opportunity for students with disabilities to meet the requirements of the institutions, programs, and courses. The application for Academic Accommodations begins with a student disclosing a medical diagnosis or professionally documented learning disability during the application process. Enrolled students may contact Accessibility services personnel (at MCS, the Director of Academic Success, Wendy Holmes at wendy.holmes@mcs.edu; at Horizon, the Academic Accommodations Coordinator, Richelle Bekkattla at rbekkattla@horizon.edu). All Academic Accommodations will adhere to the Guiding Principles listed in the Student Handbooks.

Class Attendance (On Campus or Livestreaming)

Students should attend all classes in order to facilitate competency development. Students are expected to be present through the delivery method that they registered for, either on campus or through livestreaming with their camera on. A student must be present for the full duration of a class period in order to be registered as present for the class. In the case of illness or other unforeseen circumstances, students may miss the equivalent of six hours of class (e.g., one day of a module course or two three-hours classes) without academic penalty. Students who are absent for more than this 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.

Livestreaming Etiquette

Students taking the course through livestreaming are required to indicate this during their course registration. While livestreaming access is available for on-campus students who are unable to attend class due to illness, on-campus students are expected to attend class in person following the class attendance policy.

If attending class online via livestream, in order to be marked present for class, you must keep your camera on and stay present and attentive throughout the class session, extending the gift of engagement. 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 and MCS encourage 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 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.

Bibliography

**Note: Many of the books in the bibliography of your “Theology 1” syllabus will have helpful sections on the Doctrine of God.*

Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologiae*. trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947. [Pt 1, Q. 2-21, 25-43.]

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Clayton, Philip, and Arthur Peacocke, ed. *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God’s Presence in a Scientific World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.

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