T101 Introduction to Theology

3 credits. Prerequisites: None

Mississauga Campus | Livestream | Video on Demand

January 11 – April 16, 2027
Winter Semester
Tuesdays, 10 am – 1 pm (ET)
9 am – 12 pm (SK)*
*Time changes to 8 am – 11 am (SK) mid-semester

Rev. Cheryl Ritskes, M.T.S.
cheryl.ritskes@mcs.edu

Course Goals

Course Description

This foundational course introduces students to the study of God, also known as theology. Students will learn the value of theology, survey and understand the biblical basis for traditional Christian beliefs as outlined in the Apostles' Creed and develop basic skills in reading theology.

Relationship to Horizon and MCS's Missions

This course will help students gain a foundational understanding of historic Christian belief as well as its significance for Christian life and ministry.

Core Competencies and Learning Outcomes

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

1) Analyze and interpret first-year-level theological texts.
   - *Assessment*: Reading Theology
2) Identify and define key theological terms.
   - *Assessment*: Theology Tests
3) Explain the historical doctrinal consensus of the Christian Church and its theological basis.
   - *Assessment*: Theology Tests
4) Compare and contrast historic Christian belief with other beliefs in Canadian society, including the major world religions.
   - *Assessment*: Belief Response, Theology Tests

To demonstrate competency in *Spiritual Maturity* students will:

5) Explain the importance of theology for ministry and Christian life.
   - *Assessment*: Value of Theology Reflection
6) Assess how they have matured by studying theology.
   - *Assessment*: Theology Tests

Course Work

Required Readings

Bird, Michael F. *What Christians Ought to Believe: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine Through the Apostles' Creed*. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2026. (ISBN: 9780310165729) DTL

McKim, Donald K. *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. 2nd edition. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014. (ISBN: 9780664238353). DTL

**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

1. *Reading Theology: Orientating Analysis and Content Analysis – 25%*
Throughout the course you will develop your skills in reading theology as you read through your textbook, *What Christians Ought to Believe*. The professor will provide you with critical questions that will help you analyze the logic and meaning of theological writing. These can be found on Populi. Answers should be submitted in point form. This assignment has two components throughout the semester:

1) Orienting analysis: This will be completed near the beginning of the course.
2) Content analysis: Throughout the course you will analyze the content of chapters 4-14 in your textbook. This analysis will help you become more familiar with the historical doctrinal consensus of the church. It will also help you gain the knowledge you need for the theology tests.

- Be sure to:
  - Answer all questions provided in the assignment templates on Populi.
  - Answers should be submitted in point form and single-spaced.
  - Indicate page numbers (in parenthesis) where evidence is found. No bibliography is necessary.
  - Follow the Horizon & MCS Format Guide.
- Related learning outcome: 1
- **Assignment length:** 1-2 pages for each chapter.
- **Due dates:** Orienting Analysis: Friday, January 15
  - Content Analysis: Monday, January 25 (Ch. 4); Tuesday, February 2 (Ch. 5-9); Tuesday, March 9 (Ch. 10-14) by 8pm ET.

2. *Theology Tests – 50%*

- To prepare for each of the three tests, students will read and analyze the textbook (see assignment 1). In all tests you will explain and justify historic Christian doctrines. In addition, on the *third test* you also will write out or recite the Apostles' Creed, explain or identify key theological terms, compare and contrast the beliefs of major world religions

with Christian belief, and reflect on how you have matured in your theology during this course. The professor will provide you with a study guide in a lesson on Populi.

- Be sure to:
  - Complete the closed-book tests on Populi.
- Related learning outcomes: 2, 3, 4, 6
- **Assignment length:** 2 hours per test.
- **Due dates:** Friday, February 12 (Test 1); Friday, March 12 (Test 2); Friday, April 9 (Test 3) by 8pm ET.

3. *Value of Theology Reflection – 10%*

In this reflection assignment, you will articulate why theology is valuable. To prepare for this assignment you will first interview (in person, phone, or video call [no emails/ no texting]) at least two pastors (who are not part of this course and who are unrelated to yourself), and ask them about why theology is valuable for:

- the health of the church
- their personal life
- their ministry/vocation
- Christian service in and for the world.

There is no specific list of questions. Instead, use the list above to guide your interviews. **After the interviews, you will report on your findings from your interview *during an in-class discussion of the topic on Tuesday March 9.*** In your assignment submission you can draw on your interviews, class discussion, and your own personal experience. For this assignment only, no citations are necessary unless you are quoting something. Your assignment should *not* be a report on or a summary of your interviews. Instead, in your reflection you will describe *at least five reasons that* you *think theology is valuable* and *five examples* that illustrate these reasons. For each reason, briefly indicate how the course helped you to come to these conclusions (e.g., something specific from the class discussion, from the interviews, etc.). You have two options for completing this reflection: either write a 500–700-word reflection paper (about 2 pages) or submit a 5–6-minute video reflection.

- Be sure to:
  - Follow the Horizon & MCS Format Guide.
  - To save space, introduce and conclude your assignment with only a sentence rather than whole paragraphs.
  - Either write a 500–700-word reflection paper (about 2 pages) or submit a 5–6-minute video reflection.
  - For the video option, you will still submit at least one page of notes formatted into an outline that will guide your presentation. Upload your video to OneDrive (instructions here) and then submit the link to your professor on Populi. Do not upload a video file directly on Populi.
  - If written, include a word count after your conclusion.
  - Regardless of which option you choose, on your title page of your paper or notes you will indicate 1) the date of the interviews, 2) the names of the 2+ people interviewed, 3) their designations (job titles), 4) the name of their churches.
- Related learning outcome: 5
- **Assignment length:** 500-700 words or a 5–6-minute video with 1+ page of notes in an outline.

- **Due dates:** Tuesday, March 9 **(In-class interview report. Indicate on Populi that you have completed your pastoral interviews);**
    - Tuesday, March 23 (Reflection due) by 8pm ET.

4. *Belief Response – 15%*

This assignment is meant to help you understand and appreciate how Christian belief differs from other beliefs in Canadian society and how belief affects values, goals, attitudes, and behaviors. Using the survey questions prepared by the professor (found on Populi), you will interview a *minimum of three people* of your choice who do not consider themselves Christians in order to discover what the interviewees believe about matters of ultimate importance and why and how these beliefs affect their daily life. You might make a trip to a local university or college, go to the mall, interviewing non-Christian friends or family, calling a religious place of worship, etc. Take careful notes at, or soon after, each interview.

You have two options for completing this assignment: either write a paper (1200-1500 words = about 4-5 pages), or submit a 10–12-minute video response. For the video option, you will still hand in at least two pages of notes formatted into an outline that will guide your presentation. Regardless of which option you choose, your response has two parts, which should each be half of your response:

1) Summarize your findings and your reactions. What data from the interviews stands out to you and why? Are there common themes that emerge from the responses? Are there exceptions among the responses? Or do the responses contain different answers? Are beliefs worked out in practical ways? If so, how? What surprised you?
2) Compare (points of agreement) and contrast (differences) historic Christian belief with the beliefs that you encountered during your surveys. You should also explain the theological basis for historic Christian belief and how this belief does and should affect your life in practical ways (e.g., What does this mean for how you live? Interact with others? Interact with creation? Make decisions? Spend your money?, etc.).

- Be sure to:
    - Follow the Horizon & MCS Format Guide.
    - Include a statement on the title page affirming that you interviewed at least 3 people who were not Christians and when the interviews occurred.
    - Include 2 parts: The first half summarizes your findings and reactions, and the second half discusses historic Christian belief in relation to your findings.
    - In your paper or notes, draw on and cite (via footnotes) both the textbook and class discussion. Include at least 5 footnotes (total). No bibliography is necessary.
    - If written, include the word count after the conclusion.
    - For the video option, you will still submit at least two page of notes formatted into an outline that will guide your presentation. Upload your video to OneDrive (instructions here) and then submit the link to your professor on Populi. Do not upload a video file directly on Populi.
- Related learning outcome: 4
- **Assignment length:** 1200-1500 words (about 4 pages), or a 10–12-minute video with 2+ pages of notes in an outline that includes footnotes.
    - **Due date:** Monday, April 5 by 8pm ET.

Video-on-Demand (VOD) Student Requirements
As indicated on the course schedule, this class is offered by VOD. Students taking the course through VOD are required to indicate this during their course registration. While VOD recordings are available for any student who may be absent from class, non-VOD students are expected to attend class live following the class attendance policy.

- For this course, VOD students have *one different* assignment due date as in-class students.
    - Reading Theology: Orienting Analysis – *Monday, January 18*
    - Reading Chapter 1-3: January 19
    - Chapter 4 Content Analysis: January 25
    - Chapter 5-9 Content Analysis: February 2
    - Chapter 10-14 Content Analysis: March 9
    - Theology Test 1: February 12
    - Theology Test 2: March 12
    - Theology Test 3: April 9
    - Interview Report: March 9 **(Indicate on Populi that you have completed your pastoral interviews)**
    - Value of Theology Reflection: March 23
    - Belief Response: April 5
- By Saturday at 11:59pm (ET) each week, VOD students are required to watch and engage with all lecture content and in-class activities from the week's class. VOD students will submit a 2–3-minute video report that 1) affirms you have watched the required recording, 2) summarizes one thing you learned that will help you reach the course learning outcomes, and 3) explains at least one question you had after watching the class recording.
    - Week1 Lecture and Padlet Report due – January 16 by 11:59pm
    - Week 2 Lecture and Padlet Report due – January 23 by 11:59pm
    - Week 3 Lecture and Padlet Report due – January 30 by 11:59pm
    - Week 4 Lecture and Padlet Report due – February 6 by 11:59pm
    - Week 5 Lecture and Padlet Report due – February 13 by 11:59pm
    - Week 6 Lecture and Padlet Report due – February 20 by 11:59pm
    - Week 7 Lecture and Padlet Report due – March 13 by 11:59pm
    - Week 8 Lecture and Padlet Report due – March 20 by 11:59pm
    - Week 9 Lecture and Padlet Report due – March 27 by 11:59pm
    - Week 10 Lecture and Padlet Report due – April 3 by 11:59pm
    - Week 11 Lecture and Padlet Report due – April 9 by 11:59pm
      **Video reports for the last week of class are due on Friday, April 9.*
- Students registered to attend by VOD will fulfill the course attendance requirements through their video report submissions. They must submit their VOD reports on time to be registered as present for class.

Estimate of Time Investment (individual time investments may vary)

Assignment	*Time*	*Due Dates*	*Assignment Weighting*
1. Classroom Time	30 hrs	Dates outlined below	N/A
2. Reading (Ch. 1-3)	6 hrs	Jan. 19	N/A

3. Reading Theology: -Orienting Analysis -Content Analysis	30 hrs	 Jan. 15 Jan. 25 (Ch. 4); Feb. 2 (Ch. 5-9); Mar. 9 (Ch. 10-14)	25%
4. Theology Tests	6 hrs	Feb. 12; Mar.12; Apr. 9	50%
5. Value of Theology Reflection	6 hrs	Mar. 9 (in-class interview report) Mar. 23 (reflection due)	10%
6. Belief Response	10 hrs	Apr. 5	15%
TOTAL =	88 hours		

All assignments are due at 8pm ***ET***, unless otherwise indicated.

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

Class & Assignment Schedule

Week of:	**Class Topics:**	**Reading and Assignments Due:**
Tues. Jan. 12	Introduction to the course; Reading Theology Well Part 1	Orienting Analysis (Jan. 15)
Tues. Jan. 19	Reading Theology Well Part 2; Invitation to Theology Part 1	*Ch. 1-3* (Read only)
Tues. Jan. 26	Invitation to Theology Part 2; Review Content Analysis of Ch. 4	*Ch. 4* Content Analysis (Jan. 25)
Tues. Feb. 2	"…In God the Father…Jesus Christ…the Holy Spirit" (Trinity); "God the Father Almighty…"	*Ch. 5-9* Content Analysis (Feb. 2)
Tues. Feb. 9	"Creator of Heaven and Earth"; Test 1 Review	Test 1 (Feb. 12)
Tues. Feb. 16	"In Jesus Christ"; "Crucified, died, and was buried"	
Tues. Feb. 23	***No Class: Reading Week***	
Tues. Mar. 2	***No Class: Module Week***	
Tues. Mar. 9	Pastoral Interview Discussions (Value of Theology); Test 2 Review	Completion of pastoral interviews (Mar. 9) *Ch. 10-14* Content Analysis (Mar. 9) Test 2 (Mar. 12)

Tues. Mar. 16	"He rose again"; "Seated at the right hand of the Father"	
Tues. Mar. 23	"In the Holy Spirit"; "The holy, catholic Church"	Value of Theology Reflection (Mar. 23)
Tues. Mar. 30	"The forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting"; Test 3 Review	
Tues. Apr. 6	Christianity Compared to Other World Religions; Course Evaluation	Belief Response (Apr. 5) Test 3 (Apr. 9)

- **No Classes: Reading Week + Module Week** (Monday, February 22 – Friday, March 5)
- **Revision Week:** Monday, April 12 – Friday, April 16. Students are encouraged to submit revisions soon after they receive their marked assignments.
- No assignments will be accepted after April 16, 2027.

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. A late penalty will be assessed for all overdue assignments: 1-3 calendar days late, penalty of 10%; 4-6 calendar days late, penalty of 20%; after 6 calendar days late, an assignment receives a grade of 0 and no opportunity for revision. Any late penalty incurred on a first submission will be applied regardless of if the student chooses to continue learning through the revision process.

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.

Competency Assignment Revisions
After each assignment has been marked, students have the opportunity to continue learning in response to feedback they receive on assignments. Students can submit one revision 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 demonstrating competency. Revised assignments may be submitted up to the course end date, although students are encouraged to submit them soon after they receive their marked assignments. Assignments submitted later than one week before the course end date are ineligible for revisions.

Horizon and MCS's College Assessment of Student Work
The goal of courses is to help students develop their competency, rather than solely 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. Once a student's assignment has met all assignment completion requirements, the professor will assign a grade for that assignment. The opportunity for revisions exists according to the "Assignment Revisions" policy.

Horizon and MCS Competency 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
		Student demonstrated **excellent** achievement of the learning outcomes.	A	4.0	85-89
			A-	3.7	80-84
M	Meeting expectations	Student demonstrated **good** achievement of the learning outcomes.	B+	3.3	77-79
			B	3.0	73-76
			B-	2.7	70-72
BTM	Beginning to meet expectations	Student demonstrated **satisfactory** progress in achieving the learning outcomes.	C+	2.3	67-69
			C	2.0	63-66
			C-	1.7	60-62
		Student demonstrated **minimal progress** in achieving the learning outcomes.	D+	1.3	57-59
			D	1.0	53-56
			D-	0.7	50-52
NYM	Not yet meeting expectations	Student made **insufficient progress** toward meeting learning outcomes.	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. Students with documented accommodations on file pertaining to accessing course readings in alternate formats are encouraged to contact the librarian for assistance with as much advanced notice as possible.

Class Attendance

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. Students registered to attend on-campus or via livestream must be present for the full duration of a class period to be marked as present for the class. Students registered to attend by VOD must submit their VOD reports on time to be marked as present for class. In the case of illness or other unforeseen circumstances, students may miss up to twenty percent of the total class time (e.g., one day of a module course, two 3-hour classes, etc.) 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.

Library Support and Research Assistance
Library staff are available to meet with students (online or in person) who need assistance with

- citing sources and identifying credible resources;
- developing research and information literacy skills;
- searching DTL and other library resources.

Bibliography

Barth, Karl. *Dogmatics in Outline*. trans. G. T. Thomson. London: SCM, 1949.

Bloesch, Donald. *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*. 2 vols. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978.

Catechism of the Catholic Church. Revised edition. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1999.

Elwell, Walter A., ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001. [full text of 1st ed, published 1996]

Erickson, Millard J. *Introducing Christian Doctrine*. Edited by L. Arnold Hustad. 3rd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015.

Grenz, Stanley J., and Roger E. Olson. *Who Needs Theology? An Invitation to the Study of God*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996.

Grenz, Stanley, J., and Jay T. Smith. *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living*. 3rd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.

Gunton, Colin E. *The Christian Faith: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.

Horton, Stanley, ed. *Systematic Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective*. Revised edition. Springfield, MS: Logion, 1995.

Jinkins, Michael. *Invitation to Theology: A Guide to Study, Conversation and Practice*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2001.

Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Creed: What Christians Believe and Why It Matters*. New York, NY: Doubleday, 2003.

Jones, Beth Felker. *Practicing Christian Doctrine: An Introduction to Thinking and Living Theologically*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015.

Land, Tony. *Exploring Christian Doctrine: A Guide to What Christians Believe*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014.

Luck, Donald G. *Why Study Theology?* St. Louis: Chalice, 1999.

Marks, Darren C. *Bringing Theology to Life: Key Doctrines for Christian Faith and Mission*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009.

McGrath, Alister E. *Theology: The Basics*. 3rd edition. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

_____. *Understanding Doctrine: What it is—and Why it Matters*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.

McKim, Donald K. *A "Down and Dirty" Guide to Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011.

Olson, Roger E. *The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity*. 2nd Edition. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2016.

Packer, J. I., and Tomas C. Oden, ed. *One Faith: The Evangelical Consensus*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004.

Richardson, Alan, and John Bowden, ed. *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983.

Shepherd, Victor. *Our Evangelical Faith*. Toronto: Clements, 2006.

Tyra, Gary. *A Missional Orthodoxy: Theology and Ministry in a Post-Christian Context.* Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013.

Vondey, Wolfgang. *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Fullness of the Gospel*. London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2017.

Warrington, Keith. *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter*. London: T & T Clark, 2008.

Wilson, Jonathan R. *A Primer for Christian Doctrine.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.