

**Course Syllabus**  
**Course Code – The Doctrine of Providence**  
**Wycliffe College**  
**Toronto School of Theology**  
**Summer 2020**

***Instructor Information***

---

Instructor: Mark W. Elliott, PhD,  
E-mail: melliott@wycliffe.utoronto.ca  
Office Hours: by appointment

***Course Identification***

---

Course Number: WYT3/6511H  
Course Format: *In-class*  
Course Name: The Doctrine of Providence  
Class Times: Intensive format (Eight 3hr Zoom sessions)  
Prerequisites: None

***Course Description***

---

This course will explore the Doctrine of Providence with readings across three genres: scriptural primary texts, commentaries on those from the tradition, treatises by ancient and modern authors. The goal is to arrive at an understanding of the explanatory power of Providence in terms of how it runs like an implicit element in and through the biblical canon, as well as the limits of its discourse. There will be eight 3-hour sessions: the scripture texts are those where the emphasis is as much on 'this life' under God as it is on the glorious goal of the people of God: Genesis 37-50; Numbers 11-14; Job 38-42; Eccles 11-12; Ps 104; Wisdom 2-5; John 9; Acts 5:33-42; 17:16-32.

***Course Resources***

---

**Required Course Texts/Bibliography**

David A. Fergusson, *Providence: A Polyphonic Account* (Cambridge: CUP, 2018)

William Abraham, *Divine Agency and Divine Action, Volume I: Exploring and Evaluating the Debate; Volume II: Soundings in the Christian Tradition; Volume III: Systematic theology*. Oxford-New York: OUP, 2017-2019 Online resource. Chapters to be specified.

Mark W. Elliott. *Providence Perceived* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015); *Providence: a biblical historical and theological account*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020.)

Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment?* Oxford: Blackwell, 1988.

Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*. Oxford: OUP, 1999.

Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/3.

Zwingli, *On Providence and Other Essays*, Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1999.

Simon J. G. Burton, 'Disputing Providence in Seventeenth-Century Scottish Universities: The Conflict between Samuel Rutherford and the Aberdeen Doctors and its Repercussions', in Mordechai Feingold and Alexander Broadie (ed.), *History of Universities: Volume XXIX / 2* (Oxford: OUP, 2017)

Charles M. Wood, 'Providence' in John Webster (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, Oxford: OUP, 2007.

Christopher Green, *Doxological Theology Karl Barth on Divine Providence, Evil, and the Angels*, London: Bloomsbury, 2011.

David Burrell, *Faith and Freedom: An Interfaith Perspective*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.

Wolf Krötke Review of Reinhold Bernhardt, "Was heisst 'Handeln Gottes'?" *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 125 (2000): 1190–3.

J.M. Lochman, 'Reconsidering the Doctrine of Providence'. In Wallace M. Alston, Jr. and Michael Welker (eds.), *Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003, 281–93.

Francesca Aran Murphy and Philip G. Ziegler (eds.), *The Providence of God*. Oxford: OUP, 2009.

John Webster, 'Providence', in Kelly M. Kapic and Bruce L. McCormack (eds.), *Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction* (Michigan: Baker Publishing Group, 2012)

John Webster, 'On the theology of Providence' = Chapter 9 of *God without measure: Essays in Christian Doctrine* (New York: Continuum, 2015)

Timothy Gorringer, *God's Theatre: A Theology of Providence*. London: SCM, 1991.

Sung-Sup Kim, 'Barth on Providence' in G. Hunsinger, K. Johnson (ed.), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Karl Barth: Barth in Dialogue*, New Malden, 2019.

Averil Cameron, 'Divine Providence in Late Antiquity', in Leo Howe and Alan Wain (eds.), *Predicting the Future*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 118–43.

Franz Mali, Gregor Emmenegger, Mante Lenkaiytė Ostermann, Pronoia. The Providence of God. Die Vorsehung Gottes, Studientagung Warschau, 30. August - 4. September 2017, "Pronoia - The Providence of God in East and West" = Pro Oriente 42. Wiener Patristische Tagungen VIII (Innsbruck, Wien 2019).

### Course Website(s)

- Quercus: <https://q.utoronto.ca/>

This course uses Quercus for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT Quercus login page at <https://q.utoronto.ca/> and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to Quercus using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you'll find the link to the website for all your Quercus-based courses. (Your course registration with ACORN gives you access to the course website in Quercus.) Information for students about using Quercus can be found at: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701> . Students who have trouble accessing Quercus should ask the assistant registrar (jhocking@wycliffe.utoronto.ca) for further help.

## Course Learning Objectives/Outcomes

---

### College

#### BD Level

Students successfully completing this course will be able to demonstrate the following learning outcomes:

**(A) IN RESPECT OF GENERAL ACADEMIC SKILLS**

In course discussion and the composition of a research paper, students will practice the transferrable skills of comprehension, evaluating opposing views with a goal of resolution, and summarizing and arguing a case about theologies of Providence with a goal to employing said skills when discussing and evaluating theologies of providence in their congregations.

**(B) IN RESPECT OF THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONTENT OF ONE OR MORE THEOLOGICAL DISCIPLINES**

Through course discussion and writing assignments, students will identify how Providence relates to the doctrines of creation, God, Christ, and salvation in order to conclude what providence might mean from theological, biblical, philosophical and pastoral viewpoints.

**(C) IN RESPECT OF PERSONAL AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

Through course readings, students will appraise their own conception of providence through engagement with the tradition.

**(D) IN RESPECT OF MINISTERIAL AND PUBLIC LEADERSHIP**

Students will be able to formulate an articulate yet nuanced position on the subject of Providence.

#### Graduate Level

Each graduate program has detailed statements of “degree level expectations” (goals and outcomes) found in the respective program Handbooks. The harmonized course goals and outcomes (below) describe the level of knowledge and skill that will be characteristic of a typical graduate of the program. Instructors are required to develop a statement of learning outcomes for each course. These outcomes will provide benchmarks for course evaluation/grading and program assessment. Doctoral students are typically required to demonstrate higher levels of ability or expertise.

GRADUATE “DEGREE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS”	CORRESPONDING COURSE GOALS AND OUTCOMES	CORRESPONDING COURSE ELEMENTS / ASSIGNMENTS
<b>EXPECTATIONS:</b> <i>In this course students are expected to demonstrate the following:</i>		
<b>1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge</b> is defined as a set of increasing levels of understanding within a student’s area of specialization, methodologies, primary & secondary sources, historical developments and inter-disciplinarity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>interpret the bible as a resource for speaking about providence, and examine how that is to be both distinguished from and linked to themes of Creation and Salvation. With guidance from course</li> </ul>	Lectures, discussion of readings and the theme. Research paper

GRADUATE “DEGREE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS”	CORRESPONDING COURSE GOALS AND OUTCOMES	CORRESPONDING COURSE ELEMENTS / ASSIGNMENTS
	<p>leader(s), will evaluate how an ancient collection of texts can speak to later centuries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• examine and compare modern theological treatments on the subject.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2. Research and Scholarship</b> is defined as the ability to identify a new or unresolved question, to locate that question within a corpus of scholarly research &amp; assess critically the relevant literature, to adopt a methodology(-ies), and to then formulate a thesis and reasoned argument(s) on the basis of the evidence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze the theology of providence from a biblical perspective utilizing appropriate research skills.</li> </ul>	<p>Initial and final bibliography</p> <p>Research paper</p>
<p><b>3. Level of Application of Knowledge</b> is defined as the ability to engage in self-directed or assisted research, and the ability to produce innovative or original analysis within the context of graduate seminars and courses. In some cases this includes the application of a research language.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• compose arguments on their chosen special themes through discussion and collaboration with each other so as to formulate a wide ranging grasp of the topic and develop their own expertise.</li> </ul>	<p>Seminar participation. Reflective reading of texts.</p>
<p><b>4. Professional Capacity or Autonomy</b> is defined as the ability to translate the knowledge gained in other research or professional settings, e.g., to undertake further studies in their area of concentration; or to enter or return to other professional vocations for which an advanced understanding of Theological Studies is necessary or beneficial.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evaluate what can be positive and also less salutary interpretations of the scriptural and traditional sources.</li> <li>• use historical empathy and theological generosity to analyse and express and thus consolidate knowledge through simplification, rephrasing and exposition.</li> </ul>	<p>Taking their turn to lead the seminar and to be chief “Inquisitor” of the speaker.</p>

GRADUATE “DEGREE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS”	CORRESPONDING COURSE GOALS AND OUTCOMES	CORRESPONDING COURSE ELEMENTS / ASSIGNMENTS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>practice the hermeneutical task as well as the exegetical one and assess how these two can combine effectively.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5. Level of Communication Skills</b> is defined as clear and effective communication in both oral and written forms; the construction of logical arguments; the making of informed judgments on complex issues; and facility with standard conventions of style for scholarly writing. Cohort formation is a component of all graduate programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>formulate clarifying statements of the varieties of discourse. This will move from explanation to interpret, judge and shape their arguments and defend their theses and challenge others.</li> <li>engage in conversation with scholarly literature upon the course’s conclusion.</li> </ul>	<p>Research paper Contribution to seminar</p>
<p><b>6. Awareness of the Limits of Knowledge</b> is defined as the recognition that Theological Studies is a complex discipline, comprising: a broad array of subject areas; methods and sources; various ecclesiastical traditions and social contexts; and, insights from other disciplines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>evaluate strengths and weaknesses in their knowledge and experience of methods.</li> <li>examine unfamiliar approaches, while also evaluating their knowledge of their own traditions in order to deepen their understandings of them.</li> </ul>	<p>In-class discussion at beginning and end of sessions.</p>

## Evaluation

---

### Requirements

The final grade for the course will be based on evaluations in [three] areas:

(1) Participation (10%) – In addition to participating in the regular activity of the class, including the reading of the required texts, students are expected to offer questions on texts and to each other. There will be a rota for speakers/leaders and also first respondents ('inquisitors').

(2) Seminar papers (50%) – a book review of a recent work (25%), and a 'commentary' (25%) on a primary text.

(3) Final paper (40%) – A substantial scholarly paper (25 pages or so for AD, 15 pages for BD)...this will take an aspect of the theme of Providence and use sources of bible, tradition and contemporary reflection to offer an interpretation of what can be declared today.

### Grading System - Basic Degree Students

1000, 2000 and 3000 level courses use the following numerical grading scale (see section 11.2 of the BD Handbook):

90-100 (A+)	Exceptional
85-89 (A)	Outstanding
80-84 (A-)	Excellent
77-79 (B+)	Very Good
73-76 (B)	Good
70-72 (B-)	Acceptable
0-69 (FZ)	Failure

### Grading System - Graduate Degree Students

5000, 6000 and 7000 level courses use the following alpha grading scale;

A+	(90-100)	Profound & creative
A	(85-89)	Outstanding
A-	(80-84)	Excellent
B+	(77-79)	Very Good
B	(73-76)	Good
B-	(70-72)	Satisfactory at a post-baccalaureate level
FZ	(0-69)	Failure

Please see the appropriate handbook for more details about the grading scale and non-numerical grades (e.g. SDF, INC, etc).

**Late work (BD).** Basic Degree students are expected to hand in assignments by the date given in the course outline. Under exceptional circumstances a student may request a short extension to be negotiated with the instructor. Instructors are not obliged to accept assignments that are late. If the instructor chooses to accept an assignment, where an extension has not been requested and approved before the due date, then **one percentage point per day will be deducted**. The absolute deadline for the submission of assignments is the examination day scheduled for the course or the last day of exam week for the semester in which the course is taught, whichever is sooner.

Students with documented medical or compassionate difficulties or exceptional reasons (e.g., a death in the family or a serious illness) who are unable to submit their work by the end of the term are requested to consult with their instructor and request an SDF. The form is available on our website at this link <https://www.wycliffecollege.ca/sites/default/files/Basic%20Degree%20Request%20For%20Extension.pdf> or can be collected from the registrar's office. An SDF request must be submitted, with instructor approval and with an agreed deadline, to the registrar's office no later than the last day of the exam week or the last day of class in which the course is taken. The SDF, when approved, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond one year. If a student has not completed work and has not been granted an SDF, a final mark will be calculated that reckons a grade of zero for that component of work that was not submitted.

**Late work (Graduate).** The prima facie deadline for the completion of work in a course is the last day of the examination week for the trimester in which the course is taken. Students are expected to meet the course deadlines of the instructor offering the course and are advised to plan their research projects accordingly. Students who find themselves unable to meet deadlines for completing coursework can, under certain conditions, receive extensions for completing the work after the dates set by the college in which the course is offered.

The authority to grant an extension for the completion of work in a course beyond the original TST or college deadline (whichever is earlier) for that course rests with the student's college Graduate Director, not the instructor of the course. Nevertheless, the instructor's signature is required for course extension requests to be processed. Students will petition their college Graduate Director for extensions, using a standard form provided by TST on its website. See Section 7.11 of the Conjoint Graduate Degree Handbook.

**Course grades.** Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor's college before being posted to ACORN. Grades are not official until they are posted to ACORN. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy found at <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/grading-practices-policy-university-assessment-and-january-26-2012>, policies found in the TST conjoint program handbooks, or college grading policy.

## **Policies**

---

**Accessibility.** Students with a disability or health consideration, whether temporary or permanent, are entitled to accommodation. Students in conjoint degree programs must register at the University of Toronto's Accessibility Services offices; information is available at <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>. The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

**Plagiarism.** Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to his or her head of college or delegate according to the TST *Basic Degree Handbook* and the Graduate program Handbooks linked from <http://www.tst.edu/academic/resources-forms/handbooks> and the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code->

[behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019](#). A student who plagiarizes in this course will be assumed to have read the document “Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing” published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges [https://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/library\\_archives/theological\\_resources/theological\\_guides/avoiding\\_plagiarism.html](https://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/library_archives/theological_resources/theological_guides/avoiding_plagiarism.html)

**Other academic offences.** TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019> .

**Back-up copies.** Please make back-up copies of essays before handing them in.

**Obligation to check email.** At times, the course instructor may decide to send out important course information by email. To that end, all students in conjoint programs are required to have a valid utoronto email address. Students must have set up their utoronto email address which is entered in the ACORN system. Information is available at [www.utorid.utoronto.ca](http://www.utorid.utoronto.ca). The course instructor will not be able to help you with this. 416-978-HELP and the Help Desk at the Information Commons can answer questions you may have about your UTORid and password. Students should check utoronto email regularly for messages about the course. **Forwarding** your utoronto.ca email to a Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Hotmail, Gmail or Yahoo accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that emails from your course instructor may end up in your spam or junk mail folder. Students in non-conjoint programs should contact the Registrar of their college of registration.

**Email communication with the course instructor.** The instructor aims to respond to email communications from students in a timely manner. *All email communications from students in conjoint programs must be sent from a utoronto email address.* Email communications from other email addresses are not secure, and also the instructor cannot readily identify them as being legitimate emails from students. The instructor is not obliged to respond to email from non-utoronto addresses for students in conjoint programs. Students in non-conjoint programs should only use the email address they have provided to their college of registration.

## **Course Schedule**

---

**This course will be taught remotely Pre-recorded Lecture posted 24 hours in advance; real time Zoom sessions for 1.5 hours. (30 minutes before the sessions for Students to work together to formulate questions on the lecture and the reading.)**

### **Session 1**

*Day, Date* Course introduction: ‘Providence’ since WW2. Lecture to be uploaded a week in advance by zoom, with a ‘handout (= 1 hour). The two hours of the Zoom meeting will be taken up with introductions, and answers and discussion of 4 questions on the handout.

### **Session 2**

*Day, Date* Topic: Family and political life  
Reading Genesis 37-50: Luther’s commentary. Please read the ‘Joseph’ story in tandem with Luther’s commentary. Students to work together for half hour to formulate what the key insights are.



Pre-recorded Lecture giving an evaluation of recent biblical theological work on this text, , and the third hour and a half will be an interactive discussion of the theme by Zoom.

### **Session 3**

*Day, Date*

Topic: Ways in the Wilderness

Reading Numbers 11-14: please read this along with Dennis Olsen's Commentary (Interpretation) and find things which relate to the topic of 'Providence in the midst of confusion'. Students to work together for half hour to formulate what the key insights are.

Pre-recorded Lecture lecture on the theme of God's Guidance and Providence in the Pentateuch, and the third hour and a half will be an interactive discussion of the theme by Zoom

### **Session 4**

*Day, Date*

Topic: Otherness of God and creation

Reading Job 38-42: Please read this in tandem with Clines' commentary on Job 38-42. Students to work together for half hour to formulate what the key insights are.

Pre-recorded lecture on the biblical-theological theme of God's Otherness and ongoing involvement in creation, and the third hour and a half will be an interactive discussion of the theme by Zoom.

### **Session 5**

*Day, Date*

Topic: Limits of life

Reading Eccles 1-12, esp. 11-12: Please read this in tandem with Commentary by Gregory of Nyssa ( *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on Ecclesiastes : an English Version with Supporting Studies*, ed. SG Hall, De Gruyter, 1993.) Students to work together for half hour to formulate what the key insights are.. Also, Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*

Pre-recorded Lecture will offer an evaluation of recent historical theological work in the reception of Ecclesiastes, and the third hour and a half will be an interactive discussion of the theme by Zoom.

### **Session 6**

*Day, Date*

Topic: God's sustaining creation

Reading: Gen1-2 with Augustine's Literal Commentary on Genesis 1-2 and Ps 104 with Calvin's Psalms Commentary. Students to work together for half hour to formulate what the key insights are.

Pre-recorded Lecture will offer an evaluation of recent theological approaches to Genesis creation narrative and the third hour and a half will be an interactive discussion of the theme by Zoom.

## **Session 7**

*Day, Date*

Topic: The question of 'fate' and sickness

Reading: John 9: J Louis Martyn, . *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* Louisville, 2003. Students to work together for half hour to formulate what the key insights are.

Lecture will offer an evaluation of recent systematic and pastoral work on these challenges, and the third hour and a half will be an interactive discussion of the theme by Zoom.

## **Session 8**

*Day, Date*

Topic: God's way with the world

Reading: Acts 5:33-42; 17:16-32, along with Chrysostom's Commentary on Acts

Evaluation of recent systematic work. Round-up. Other doctrines affected.

Lecture will offer an evaluation of recent systematic and pastoral work on these challenges, and the third hour and a half will be an interactive discussion of the theme by Zoom.