

Course Syllabus
WYT 5601H

What Are We Doing When We “Do Theology”?
The Question of Method As Seen in Select
Modern Christian Thinkers

Wycliffe College
Toronto School of Theology
Fall 2021

Instructor Information

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Course Identification

Course Number: WYT5X19
Course Format: *In-class* or *Online*
Course Name: What Are We Doing When We “Do Theology?” The Question of Method as Seen in Select Christian Thinkers
Course Location: ****
Class Times: Thurs. 10am-12pm
Prerequisites: None

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to representative examples of major approaches to theological study in the contemporary world, engaging the categories of overall systematic outlook, historical change, Scripture, the theological discipline, ecclesial reality, cultural specificity, and mission. We will probe these themes through a careful

reading of select texts by major contemporary theologians, both Protestant and Roman Catholic. Among the issues to be addressed are: how have the Enlightenment and other aspects of modernity exerted pressure on theologians to clarify their method? What is the relation of methodological reflection in theology to the being/character of the triune God? Does every method have its corresponding metaphysics? How shall theology and philosophy be related? What role does Scripture play in the process of theological reasoning, and how does it relate to the doctrines and tradition(s) of the church? By the end of the course students will be able to describe accurately some of the many and complex senses of theological “method”; relate these to matters of substantive Christian teaching; and be better equipped to confidently articulate their own theological visions, which they will do in a preliminary fashion in the final assignment. This course is designed especially for graduate students at the doctoral level, and may be suitable for MA and DMin students who already have a strong background in theology.

Course Resources

Required Course Texts/Bibliography

- Paul Griffiths, *On Being a Catholic Theologian*
- Hans Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*
- Lamén Sanneh, *Translating the Message*
- Course packet

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 Jeffrey Hocking, jhocking@ycliffe.utoronto.ca, for further help.

Course Learning Objectives/Outcomes

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
<p>EXPECTATIONS: <i>In this course students are expected to demonstrate the following:</i></p>		
<p>1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge 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.</p>	<p>Students in this course will read Hans Frei’s <i>Types of Christian Theology</i>, discuss methodology in the seminar and analyze their own methodological commitments in the final paper so that they can identify and compare major methodologies established in Christian theology and begin to formulate their own methodologies.</p>	<p>Course readings, seminar discussion, final paper</p>
<p>2. Research and Scholarship is defined as the ability to identify a new or unresolved question, to locate that question within a corpus of scholarly research & assess critically the relevant literature, to adopt a methodology(-ies), and to then formulate a thesis and</p>	<p>Students will critically compare contemporary theological methodologies according to the assigned examples; they will identify the historical traditions out of which these methods arise; they will analyse the contemporary contexts in</p>	<p>Seminar discussion with peers and instructors.</p>

GRADUATE “DEGREE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS”	CORRESPONDING COURSE GOALS AND OUTCOMES	CORRESPONDING COURSE ELEMENTS / ASSIGNMENTS
<p>reasoned argument(s) on the basis of the evidence.</p>	<p>which they were/are articulated; they will identify criteria for evaluating these methods.</p>	
<p>3. Level of Application of Knowledge 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>	<p>Students will formally express their analysis and critical evaluations in a manner that is subject to informed feedback, and learn to assess and formulate responses to this feedback in the context of common discussion.</p>	<p>Student presentations on readings and reading questions; final paper.</p>
<p>4. Professional Capacity or Autonomy 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</p>	<p>Students will learn how to apply their own methodological presuppositions into critical dialogue with the various methodological outlooks studied in the course, evaluating their own previous and current methodological commitments [alongside/against/in</p>	<p>Seminar discussion and final paper</p>

GRADUATE “DEGREE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS”	CORRESPONDING COURSE GOALS AND OUTCOMES	CORRESPONDING COURSE ELEMENTS / ASSIGNMENTS
Theological Studies is necessary or beneficial.	comparison to?] historical and contextual analysis;	
<p>5. Level of Communication Skills 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>	Students will practice dialoguing with students of diverse methodological orientations in a way that employs the disciplines of logical analysis, genealogical outline and contextual evaluation exemplified in the course comparisons.	Class discussions and cooperative student presentations
<p>6. Awareness of the Limits of Knowledge 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>	Students will apply intellectual tools in order to identify, differentiate and evaluate methodological exemplars within a larger frame of logical and historical patterns, and will employ these tools to outline some of the particular concerns and limits of these traditions.	Discussion, paper

Evaluation

Requirements

The final grade for the course will be based on evaluations in four areas:

- (1) Participation (20%) – In addition to participating in the regular activity of the class, including the reading of the required texts, students are expected to...
- (2) Presentations (30%) – Students are expected to write two one-page, single-spaced papers, each to be presented at an assigned class session, describing and briefly evaluating the text to be discussed that day, and forming the basis for group discussion (15% each).
- (3) Final paper (30%) – A ten-page paper on a topic to be decided on in consultation with the instructors, laying out and defending the student's own methodological commitments in theological research and writing.
- (4) Take-home final exam (20%)

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 (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/research/theology/avoiding-plagiarism-in-theological-writing/>

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. 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

Week 1

Method in Modernity (1)

Louis Dupré, selections from *Passage to Modernity* – Intro, chapters 4, 7-9, conclusion

Week 2

Method in Modernity (2)

Leszek Kolokowski –first section of *God Owes us Nothing*

Week 3

Method and the German Academy

Hans Frei – *Types of Christian Theology*

Week 4

Method and Scripture

Henri de Lubac – from *Scripture in the Tradition*

Week 5

Method and Theological Exegesis

David Yeago on “The Bible,” in James Buckley and David Yeago (eds), “*Knowing the Triune God*”

John Webster – from *Holy Scripture*

Week 6

Method, Dogma, and Speculation

Paul Griffiths, *The Practice of Catholic Theology*

Week 7

Method and Theology’s Context(s)

Stephen Bevans, “Wisdom from the Margins: Systematic Theological and Missiological Imagination,” plus selections from his *Models of Contextual Theology*

Week 8

Method and Desire

Sarah Coakley, from *God, Sexuality and Self* – Online (U of T)

Week 9

Method and Metaphysics: Trinitarian

Robert Jenson, *Theology as Revisionary Metaphysics* – Part I: Story

Week 10

Method and Metaphysics: Compatibilist

Katherine Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology I* – selections

Week 11

Method and the Church

George Lindbeck – selections from *The Church in a Postliberal Age* (“Postliberal theology,” “The Church, “Confession and Community”)

Week 12

Method and Mission

Lamin Sanneh – *Translating the Message* – second half

Bibliography

Assigned readings (in order of assignment):

Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay on the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993)

Leszek Kolokowski, *God Owes Us Nothing A Brief Remark on Pascal's Sad Religion and on the Spirit of Jansenism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995)

Hans Frei, *Types of Christian Theology* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992)

Henri de Lubac, *Scripture in the Tradition* (New York: Crossroad, 2000)

David Yeago “The Bible,” in James Buckley and David Yeago (eds), *Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002)

John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

Paul Griffiths, *The Practice of Catholic Theology: A Modest Proposal* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2016)

Stephen Bevens, “Wisdom from the Margins: Systematic Theological and Missiological Imagination,” *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 56 (2013)

Stephen Bevens, *Models of Contextual Theology*, rev. and exp. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002)

Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and Self: An Essay "On the Trinity"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)

Robert Jenson, *Theology as Revisionary Metaphysics* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014)

Katherine Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology I* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015)

George Lindbeck, *The Church in a Postliberal Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003)

Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, 2nd ed. rev. and exp. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2009)

Optional additional reading:

Paul Allen, *Theological Method: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T & T Clark, 2012)

F. Canale, (2001). "Interdisciplinary method in Christian theology", *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie*, 43 (2001), 366-389.

C. Lacugna, *Theological Methodology of Hans Kung* (New York: Scholars' Press, 1982)

G. Green, *Imagining Theology: Encounters with God in Scripture, Interpretation, and Aesthetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020).

G. Hunsinger, *Reading Barth with Charity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016).

B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* [1972] (Toronto: U. of Toronto Press, 1990)

Anselm Min (ed.), *The Task of Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2014)

G. L. Schaab, "Feminist theological methodology: Toward a kaleidoscopic model". *Theological Studies* 62 (2001), 341-365

Mary M. Veeneman, *Introducing Theological Method: A Survey of Contemporary Theologians and Approaches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017)

J. C. Weber, "Feuerbach, Barth, and theological methodology", *The Journal of Religion* 46 (1966), 24-36.

J. Webster, "Theological Theology," in *Confessing God: Essays in Christian Dogmatics II* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 11-31

_____, "What Makes Theology Theological?" in *God Without Measure: Vol. I*, 213-224.