BIB790/890 — Theology of Creation (Module)  
Fall, 2013

Essential Information
Please refer to the following resources for information essential for the successful completion of courses and degree programs at Nazarene Theological Seminary. Links to these resources are available in the Essential Information section at http://support.nts.edu.

- NTS Mission Statement & Degree Program Objectives
- Tips for online learning success
- NTS library services
- NTS textbook information
- Online technical requirements and Moodle support information
- NTS Student Handbook, including statements on quality of work, plagiarism, and academic probation
- Handbook for Inclusive Language

Instructor Information
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Office Hours: By appointment

Catalog Description
(As this is a Seminar in Bib. Studies course, this description does not appear in the Academic Catalog.)
A study across Christian Scripture of the biblical theology of creation, with particular emphasis on the beginning and foundational text, Genesis 1-2, then on to themes of God’s re-creative work, and of human responsibility within the framework of God’s redemption and renewal of all creation.

Course Narrative & Rationale
Creation narratives and ideas exercise an ubiquitous appeal upon the human mind and heart, addressing as they do what have been called the “universal questions”: Who am I?/Who are we?; Where did I/we come from?”; “Where am I/are we going from here?” Thinking about origins fascinates virtually everyone. If you are in a ministry context, and have not yet encountered questions of origins, you will.

Not only are these topics fascinating; they are crucial. Let me lay out a set of statements that, for some, may seem too extreme: 1.) If we in Christian ministry get our theology of origins right, we will get much
else right, some of it almost “automatically”; 2.) If we get origins wrong, we will get everything else wrong, also--or at least, if we get it right, usually it will be for the wrong reasons; 3.) If our reasons for holding to the “right” conclusions (read “Christian orthodoxy”) on issues subsequent to the affirmation, “Maker of heaven and earth,” in the Creed are not based in a sound theology of Creation, not only will we diminish the good we otherwise may have done, we will do harm to persons, and in ways, we may not realize until it is too late to heal; 4.) Ultimately, all sound Christian thinking rests upon a sound understanding of origins.

My hope for this course is that, by the time we have finished, you will affirm (at a minimum) that these assertions are not as far out as they may have seemed on first reading. One more thing, apropos the descriptor “fascinating”; some of the reading and discussion in our primary (biblical and other) texts for this course will rank with the most delightful reading you ever have experienced, anywhere.

Our in-class week of lectures, large- and small- group discussions, etc., will be a large part of our learning in this course. In addition, a primary learning strategy will be a series of pre- and post-class-session short “essays.” A final post-class-session paper and/or project will serve as a course-summative exercise.

**Degree Objectives**

This course addresses particularly the following NTS Degree Program Objectives:

- MDiv Objective 2: Articulation of the knowledge of God through prayerful, scholarly study and a deepening understanding of the Christian Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments
- MDiv Objective 5: Understanding of local and global [and temporal] diversity through the investigation of cultural contexts, to enable the church to proclaim effectively and to embody the mission of God
- MACFD Objective 1: A deep personal commitment to God and God’s Church and a passionate, vital, and redemptive ministry formed through an ecclesial understanding of the Word of God, the heritage of the faith, the doctrines of the church, and through participation in the life of the church
- MAICS Objective 1: Knowledge of the Christian faith understood in its biblical foundations, historical developments, and theological expressions
- MAICS Objective 2: Articulation of the biblical-theological understandings of the *missio Dei* in ways that assist the church’s response to God’s call to participate in that mission
- MA(TS) General Academic and Research Tracks Objective 1: Skill in academic research and writing
- MA(TS) General Academic and Research Tracks Objective 2: Knowledge of the major theological disciplines and their interrelationships
- MA(TS) General Academic and Research Tracks Objective 3: Ability to use the theological disciplines to reflect and engage the world as informed, thinking, Christian persons
- MA(TS) Research Track Objective 4: Ability to do theological research, critical theological reflection, and graduate-level academic writing.

(Other degree program objectives also will be addressed, though not all so directly as these.)

**Course Outcomes**

In this course, the student should/will:
1. Read and become familiar with important biblical texts bearing on origins themes
2. Become familiar with important ANE texts bearing upon the interpretation of biblical origins texts
3. Encounter a few of the countless “sub-creations” (Tolkien’s word) on creation themes, particularly in literature, music, and painting.


5. Understand and practice articulating God’s re-creation/renewal/restoration as the eschatological telos of which revelation speaks, and toward which all creation looks with eager anticipation (Rom 8:18-25).

6. Practice informed discussion of origins issues in an irenic spirit.

7. Formulate a “Rule of Life” for living Christianly in God's creation-journeying-toward-the-telos or, if you prefer, “home to Eden-in-the-New-Jerusalem.”

(All course reading, all in-class discussion, and all written assignments will contribute to meeting all course objectives. In advanced courses such as this one, doing the work of comprehensive biblical/theological analysis and synthesis, it is not possible to say, “This activity meets this objective, but not this one,” or, “We have met this objective completely; now let’s go on to the next one.” All contributes to all.)

**Church of the Nazarene COSAC Competencies**

This course is designed to aid those in process toward ordination in the Church of the Nazarene in their development of (at least) the following COSAC competencies:

- **CN 1** Ability to identify the literary structure and the main story line of the OT
- **CN 2** Ability to identify the books of the OT by genre
- **CN 7** Ability to describe the major theological concepts of the OT
- **CN 14** Ability to identify and describe the major theological concepts of the NT
- **CN 16** Ability to identify the steps of historical, literary, and theological analysis used in exegesis
- **CN 17** Ability to exegete a passage of Scripture using the steps listed above
- **CN 19** Ability to identify and explain the main characteristics of the nature of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Human Person, Sin, Salvation, the Christian Life, the Church and Sacraments, and Eschatology
- **CN 21** Ability to demonstrate understanding of the sources of theological reflection, its historical development, and its contemporary expressions
- **CN 22** Ability to articulate the distinctive characteristics of Wesleyan theology
- **CN 23** Ability to identify and explain the Doctrine of Holiness from a Wesleyan perspective
- **CP 1** Ability to communicate publicly through multiple methods (oral, written, media, etc.) with clarity and creativity for the sake of fostering meaning
- **CP 2** Ability to write clearly, with grammatical correctness, in modes of discourse used in ministry
- **CP 3** Ability to speak coherently and cogently in discourse(s) appropriate to varied ministry contexts
- **CP 10** Ability to synthesize, analyze, reason logically for discernment, assessment, and problem-solving, and to live with ambiguity
- **CP 11** Ability to analyze the validity of arguments and to identify presuppositions and consequences
- **CP 13** Ability to offer spiritual counsel
- **CP 20** Ability to envision Christian education most appropriate for a local church and to assure the development and empowerment of those serving in it
- **CP 22** Ability to prepare and deliver biblically sound sermons using techniques and skills in culturally appropriate ways
- **CP 23** Ability to develop and utilize existing ministry forms . . . by which individuals, families, and congregations may be formed into Christlikeness
- **CH 2** Ability to make theologically based ethical decisions in complex and/or paradoxical contexts
- **CH 3** Ability to teach and model sexual purity
- **CH 4** Ability to understand and apply ethical dimensions of spiritual leadership in the church
CH 10 Ability to demonstrate realistic self-understanding, including in personal strengths, gifts, weaknesses, and areas of needed growth

CH 11 Ability to maintain the practice of Sabbath and healthy self-care

CH 12 Ability to practice faithfulness in personal relationships, including marriage and family relationships, gender relationships outside of marriage, personal finance, and those relationships subsumed under the term “professional conduct.”

(This list may seem excessive; our purpose is not to claim expertise in every area of theological education. Rather, we hope to suggest the central importance and pervasive influence of creation themes for Christian theology and praxis. We could, with more or less ease, relate this course to the remaining COSAC outcomes, as well. Similarly, the course will aid students in process toward ordination in other denominations.)

Required Texts


Course Outline: Anticipated Module-Week Lecture/Discussion

Mon., Aug. 26 – Personal and course introductions; syllabus review; Genesis 1: The text
Tue., Aug. 27 – Genesis 1: The text (cont.); Walton, The Lost World of Genesis One
Wed., Aug. 28 – Genesis 2-3: The text; Milton, Twain, Tolkien, Lewis, and other “sub-creators”
Thu., Aug. 29 – Other biblical creation texts/themes: e.g., Isaiah, The Psalter, Job, The Revelation
Fri., Aug. 30 – Twenty-first-century contextualizations

(For the schedule of pre- and post-Module fora, short “essays,” final exegetical papers/projects and other assignments, see “Course Schedule” below, and the assignments schedules in our Moodle course.)

General Description of Course Written Assignments

1. Seven, 600-word exegetical (or other) “essays” constitute 70% of the course grade.
   Eight “essays” will be assigned; for each student, the essay with the lowest letter grade will not factor into the course grade. Details of these are in the assignments sections of our Moodle course.
   (Course Outcomes: Numbers 1-7, variously; see note under “Course Outcomes,” above.)

N.B.: An important purpose of these short-essay assignments is to give students sustained opportunities to improve both the content and the mechanics of their writing. This is the major reason for the allotment of three hours of writing time per essay in the “Distribution of Student Learning Hours” in the chart below. Each student should schedule time for multiple proof-readings and, potentially, revision(s) of each of these short essays, before posting to Moodle. With respect both to content and to quality of writing, the bar purposely is set quite high. If you take this opportunity seriously throughout the course, you will find that fewer and shorter written assignments, with an emphasis on quality of writing, will make you a better writer, as longer assignments--often produced with less attention to the writing process itself--usually cannot do.
2. A final exegetical paper or other project constitutes 30% of the course grade.
A 3,500-4,000-word exegetical paper, or other equivalent paper or project, is the culminating course assignment. We will discuss selection, approaches to writing and/or other development, the mechanics of academic writing, and other issues during the week of the Module. This paper is due at or before 11:55 p.m./23:55 hours (CDT), **October 18**.
(Course Outcomes: Primarily numbers 4, 5, 6)

**Distribution of Student Learning Hours**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Pre-module hours</th>
<th>Module hours</th>
<th>Post-module hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face class sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online participation in forums, groups, etc.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other assignments and learning activities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams &amp; quizzes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>73</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Methods for Submitting Assignments**

With the potential exception of final projects which could call for alternate methods of submission, all work is to be posted to the appropriate forums/fora or assignments sections of our Moodle course.

**Form and Style Expectations**

NTS has adopted Turabian’s text on form, style, usage, and other writing issues. Written work is expected to conform to best practices, as set forth in Turabian. For convenience, a summary of the most commonly problematic issues in written work presented in the professor’s courses over the years is included in our Moodle course resources; it is titled, “Better Academic Writing.”

**Inclusive Language**

NTS is committed to the equality of women and men. Recognizing that people too often use language in ways that imply the exclusion or inferiority of women, NTS urges students, faculty, and staff to avoid sexist language in public discourse, in classroom discussions, and in writing. All written work accepted to meet course requirements will have employed gender-neutral or gender-inclusive language, as needed.

**Policy Regarding Late Work**

Short (weekly) essays submitted late cannot earn a grade higher than B+. Essays will not be accepted more than two weeks late. The final paper/project, due October 18, cannot be accepted late.

**Additional Costs**

The professor does not expect course costs beyond NTS tuition and fees, and course textbooks. The professor cannot estimate Individual students’ costs (if any) for travel, meals, and lodging.
**Course Grading**

Written work for this course is set forth in the section, “Course Written Assignments,” with details in the respective sections of Moodle. In addition, class attendance may affect the course grade, as noted below in the section, “Class Attendance.”

**Reasonable Modifications**

In accordance with the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, NTS is committed to providing students with disabilities the opportunity to participate and benefit from its programs and activities. Accordingly, NTS will make reasonable modifications to its programs and activities to accommodate otherwise qualified students with disabilities, unless such modifications would impose an undue burden on the operation of the particular program or activity or would fundamentally alter the nature or purpose of the program or activity. Students needing accommodation(s) should contact the Office of the Registrar. They also should contact the professor—preferably no later than the end of the first class session—to discuss learning needs and adaptive strategies that have been beneficial in the past.

**Class Attendance**

Class attendance and participation is essential for realizing maximum benefit from this educational experience. If a student is absent for more than six class hours or does not participate in the online discussion, the course grade will be lowered. Absences totaling more than eight hours almost certainly will cause a student to fail the course. Prior notification of the professor for any absence is expected, when possible; the professor is to be notified of the reasons for/circumstances of all absences as soon as possible.

Attendance records must be reported for those obtaining Veterans Administration and/or Department of Education benefits. It is the student’s responsibility to notify the professor if attendance is to be reported.

**Audio and Video Recordings**

To foster a safe learning environment in which various viewpoints are respected, both audio and video recordings, and transcriptions thereof, by students, are prohibited without the express permission of the faculty member in charge of the course. If permission is granted, redistribution of such recordings and transcriptions outside the scope of the course is prohibited as a matter of Seminary policy.

Students enrolling in video-conferencing courses and/or participating in certain synchronous Moodle activities should be aware that their images and voices will be transmitted digitally through the video-conferencing equipment and may be recorded. Continued enrollment in such a course constitutes the student’s expression of willingness to participate in the course under these conditions. If you have privacy concerns, please discuss your enrollment with the Registrar.
## Course Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 15-20</td>
<td>1 Pre-Module begins</td>
<td>Personal introductions in Moodle Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 22-27</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Short essay #1; due in Moodle, Saturday, July 27, 11:55 p.m./23:55 hrs. (CDT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 29-Aug 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Short essay #2; due in Moodle, Saturday, August 3, 11:55 p.m./23:55 hrs. (CDT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 5-10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Short essay #3; due in Moodle, Saturday, August 10, 11:55 p.m./23:55 hrs. (CDT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 12-17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Short essay #4; due in Moodle, Saturday, August 17, 11:55 p.m./23:55 hrs. (CDT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 19-24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Short essay #5; due in Moodle, Saturday, August 24, 11:55 p.m./23:55 hrs. (CDT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 26-30</td>
<td>7 Module face-to-face</td>
<td>Class sessions at ENC, Quincy, MA – 12 noon, Monday (08/26) through 12 noon, Friday (08/30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 2-7</td>
<td>8 Post-Module begins</td>
<td>Short essay #6; due in Moodle, Saturday, September 7, 11:55 p.m./23:55 hrs. (CDT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 9-14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Short essay #7; due in Moodle, Saturday, September 14, 11:55 p.m./23:55 hrs. (CDT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 16-21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Through-the-week forum conversations on <em>Care of Creation</em>, and on final papers/projects, as desired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 23-28</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Through-the-week forum conversations on <em>Care of Creation</em>, and on final papers/projects, as desired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 30-Oct 5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Through-the-week forum conversations on <em>Care of Creation</em>, and on final papers/projects, as desired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 7-12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Course Evaluations--approximate release time by the Dean’s Office No written work due in Moodle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 14-18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Final paper/project due in Moodle, Friday, October 18, 11:55 p.m./23:55 hrs. (CDT) This assignment cannot be accepted late.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>