

RTS

O R L A N D O



Th.M. SYLLABUS

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ST7370

The Theology of John Webster

Michael Allen

Fall 2026

## PROFESSOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

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## COURSE DATES

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**COURSE DATES:** 8/26/26 – 12/02/26

**COURSE COMPLETION DATE:** 12/09/26

## COURSE OVERVIEW

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### DESCRIPTION:

This course involves a close study of the writings of John Webster. Students grow in their ability to read his texts directly and to appreciate the systematic framework of his thought more broadly. In viewing his work closely and broadly alike, its relationship to other theologians is examined, beginning with his early work on modern Protestant theology and moving through to his later, extended engagement of early fathers, medieval doctors, and post-Reformation Reformed scholastics. His practice of theology is examined with respect to various doctrines (e.g. God, covenant, church) as well as with respect to its underlying methodological approach to “theological theology” as an exercise in “biblical reasoning.”

### GOALS:

- Students will grow in their facility to read John Webster with care and patience.
- Students will develop a broader, more nuanced understanding of the development and structure of John Webster's theology.
- Students will appreciate Webster's commitment to both the traditioned roots and astonished development of the Christian theological tradition.
- Students will hone their ability to engage a range of contemporary texts with literary sensitivity.
- Students will practice an array of scholarly protocols: close reading, seminar presentations, and developing a research paper.

## **COURSE DETAILS**

### **1. GRADING SCHEDULE.**

Late work will be penalized 1 letter grade per day, unless prior permission for late submission was granted.

The published RTS grading scale is used in this course. See the latest Catalog.

### **2. ATTENDANCE AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS.**

Attendance and prepared participation is required. If class is not attended, the student's final grade will be affected.

### **3. SPECIAL NEEDS.**

In order to ensure full class participation, any student with a disabling condition requiring special accommodations (e.g. tape recorders, special adaptive equipment) is strongly encouraged to contact the instructor before the beginning of the course.

### **4. ACADEMIC HONESTY (QUOTED AND ADAPTED FROM DR. TIMOTHY PHILLIPS OF WHEATON COLLEGE).**

The assignments are designed to extend and deepen your comprehension and appreciation of Christian theology and to increase your facility with theological method. The processes of defining a topic, researching the results of others' studies, critiquing those studies, and organizing your conclusions in a clear and cogent presentation provides valuable skills for your various leadership ministries. The use of sources is an essential step in appropriating the learning of the Church's tradition in its relationship to cultures to help us understand and faithfully practice Scripture.

Using information obtained from a source without indicating it (whether by footnote, parentheses, or bibliography or some other appropriate reference, depending on the type of assignment) is plagiarism (intellectual thievery and lying). This applies to any information that you gain from someone that is not "common knowledge." It does not apply only to exact quotations or precise verbal allusions. Altering the wording does not remove the obligation to acknowledge the source.

Cheating is the presentation of someone else's work, which the student ought to have done personally. This includes submitting answers to test questions derived by some means other than that intended by the instructor. It also includes turning in written assignments composed in whole or in part by someone else or by use of AI-powered programs (such as ChatGPT, Claude, etc.). See the RTS policy on AI.

## 5. DISCLAIMER.

This syllabus is intended to reflect accurately the learning objectives, instructional format and other information necessary for students to appraise the course. However, the instructor reserves the right to modify any portion of this syllabus as may become necessary.

## 6. SUPPORT.

Canvas allows you to interact with the Professor or his teaching assistant via the Inbox function.

Canvas also allows for interaction with classmates. You can interact with classmates via the Student to Student forum or Conferences.

See FAQ on the Home Page or at Modules > Course Resources for instructions on various Canvas features.

# COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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## ATTENDANCE

Students will attend weekly seminar meetings on Zoom. Students will prepare for the online session as though they were preparing for a seminar on campus (in terms of dress and punctuality). Students will turn on their video camera. Students will mute their microphone except when contributing comments. Students will keep their books, briefs, and any other resources close to hand. Should a legitimate emergency occur, students can quickly slip away and return as promptly as possible.

Students are expected to contribute regularly, as the course functions as a high-level reading seminar. Contributions should be kept on topic, exemplify respect shown to all, and seek to advance our common study of texts and topics. The professor introduces subjects and guides discussion, though the value of the seminars will follow the participation and engagement of the participants.

## READING

Students will read all assigned texts prior to our class. Reading involves active and engaged analysis. Students have only truly read when they are prepared to engage in group discussion of the text – not simply of the things that the text talks about but about the way in which the text discusses them.

The following books are required reading in their entirety for all students:

*Holiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

*The T & T Clark Reader in John Webster* (ed. Michael Allen; London: T & T Clark, 2020).

*Barth's Earlier Theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2005).

Other essays will be required reading and will be provided on Canvas.

Note that two weeks will include audio lectures (never published in print), his 2007 Kantzer Lectures in Revealed Theology, which were titled “God With Us According to the Christian Confession: Perfection and Presence.” Students will listen to the six lectures. Links will be provided to the audio files.

Th.M. students will also read the remaining essays in the following volumes: *Word and Church: Essays in Christian Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001); *Confessing God: Essays in Christian Dogmatics II* (London: T & T Clark, 2005); *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason* (London: T & T Clark, 2012); *God Without Measure*, volume one: *God and the Works of God* (London: T & T Clark, 2015); *God Without Measure*, volume two: *Virtue and Intellect* (London: T & T Clark, 2015). All students will have read portions of these volumes (as they appear in the *Reader* or are provided as PDF excerpts on Canvas), but ThM students will complete their reading of these essays collections.

## WEEKLY READING BRIEFS

Students are expected to prepare a brief on their reading each week. The purpose of the brief is to summarize the thesis, outline, and argument of the relevant chapters, as well as to state one’s own analysis of it (in the form of questions, confirmations, objections, etc.). Briefs may include quotations from various points in the chapter (so long as page numbers are referenced). Briefs should be no more than 350 words. Submit them for grading online prior to the start of class each week.

## SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS

Th.M. students will take turns presenting analysis of discrete sections of the assigned reading. The goal will be to trace the argument by giving attention to sources, both biblical and extra-biblical, and by assessing the presence of tradition and of development.

Presentations will be given orally in a 10-15 minute segment, to be followed by seminar discussion moderated by the instructor. Presentations will include an outline that traces the argument, providing any pertinent quotations and their references as well as any useful bibliography. The handout should not be read verbatim but should be a prompt and guide to giving a presentation. The handout should include relevant quotations from the section. The presentation handout should be no longer than 2 pages (or, better yet, 1 page front and back). Presenters submit a copy to the instructor and provide a draft to the entire seminar. More specific instructions will be given in class by the instructor.

## RESEARCH PAPERS

Students will write a final paper on some theme that appears within one or more of the assigned texts. Papers should be 5000-6000 words for ThM students and 3000-4000 words for MDiv/MA students. They ought to engage in careful exposition of the text in its own terms, to be sure, but they also need to draw on appropriate research regarding the author's theology and context. In so doing, they will engage both primary and secondary sources.

Students will be given a guide to developing a research theme, bibliography, question, outline, thesis, and paper. Students are expected to discuss their subject with the professor and will be guided to gather bibliography and to develop an outline. They will then present a brief synopsis of their work to the seminar. Presentations will occur in our final week of class. Templates for presentations and presentation handouts will be provided. All papers are to be uploaded on Canvas by 11:00 a.m. on December 9.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

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Week 1	August 26	<i>Holiness</i>
Week 2	September 2	<i>Reader</i> , chs. 1-2
Week 3	September 9	<i>Reader</i> , chs. 3-4
Week 4	September 16	<i>Reader</i> , chs. 5-6
Week 5	September 23	<i>Reader</i> , chs. 7-8
Week 6	September 30	<i>Reader</i> , chs. 9-10
Week 7	October 7	<i>Barth's Earlier Theology</i>
	October 14	Reading Week
Week 8	October 21	Later Essays: Principles of Systematic Theology; Trinity and Creation
Week 9	October 28	Later Essays: The Dignity of Creatures; Sins of Speech
Week 10	November 4	Kantzer Lectures, lectures 1-3
Week 11	November 11	Kantzer Lectures, lectures 4-6
Week 12	November 18	Research Collaboration
	November 25	Thanksgiving Break
Week 13	December 2	Seminar Presentations
	December 9	Research papers uploaded by 11 a.m. (EST).

## FURTHER READING

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The following volumes might be studied for further dogmatic essays by Webster:

*Word and Church: Essays in Christian Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001).

*Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

*Confessing God: Essays in Christian Dogmatics II* (London: T & T Clark, 2005).

*The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason* (London: T & T Clark, 2012).

*God without Measure*, volume one: *God and the Works of God* (London: T & T Clark, 2015).

*God without Measure*, volume two: *Virtue and Intellect* (London: T & T Clark, 2015).

*The Culture of Theology* (ed. Ivor J. Davidson and Alden McCray; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019).

For historical theology, translation work, and major editorial projects by Webster, see also:

*Eberhard Jüngel: An Introduction to his Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986; second edition, 1991).

(translated with an introduction) Eberhard Jüngel, *Theological Essays* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989; second edition as *Theological Essays I*, 1998).

(ed.) *The Possibilities of Theology: Studies in the Theology of Eberhard Jüngel in his 60th Year* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994).

(translated with an introduction) Eberhard Jüngel, *Theological Essays II* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995).

*Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

*Barth's Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth's Thought* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

(ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

(ed., with G.P. Schnier) *Theology after Liberalism: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

*Barth* (Continuum, London and New York, 2000).

(translated with an introduction) Eberhard Jüngel, *God's Being is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001).

*Barth's Earlier Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2005).

(ed., with K. Tanner, I. Torrance) *The Oxford Handbook to Systematic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

For sermons and homilies by Webster, see:

*The Grace of Truth* (Farmington Hills: Oil Lamp Books, 2011).

*Christ Our Salvation* (Bellingham: Lexham, 2021).

A complete bibliography of Webster's publications can be found in Michael Allen and R. David Nelson (eds.), *A Companion to the Theology of John Webster* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 315-329.

Secondary bibliography, which continues to grow and develop, will be noted in class sessions. The standard reference volume for the study of Webster is Allen and Nelson (eds.), *A Companion to the Theology of John Webster*, which includes 17 essays and a significant epilogue by Dave Nelson on the projected shape of Webster unfinished systematic theology.



### Course Objectives Related to ThM\* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Theology of John Webster

Professor: Allen

Campus: Orlando

Date: Fall 2026

<b>ThM Student Learning Outcomes</b>		<b>Rubric</b>	<b>Mini-Justification</b>
<i>In order to measure the success of the ThM curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the ThM outcomes.</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong</li> <li>• Moderate</li> <li>• Minimal</li> <li>• None</li> </ul>	
<b>Articulation (Oral &amp; Written)</b>	Articulates knowledge, both oral and written, regarding advanced biblical, theological, and historical scholarship, demonstrating attention to details, concepts, methods, and frameworks.	Strong	Weekly briefs and seminar discussion; presentations and research papers.
<b>Primary Texts</b>	Significant knowledge of, and skills to engage, primary texts within the student's chosen track (Bible or theology). This includes a demonstrated expertise in interpreting primary languages as appropriate (Bible = Greek	Strong	Detailed reading of the major works of Webster, discussed at length each week and

	and/or Hebrew; Theology = optional proficiency in a theological language)		engaged robustly in final paper.
<b>Secondary Literature</b>	Demonstrates a breadth of knowledge of and skill to research and engage critically with secondary literature related to the appropriate discipline.	<b>Minimal</b>	Instructor introduces burgeoning field; students engage piecemeal as fits their final paper topics.
<b>Winsomely Reformed</b>	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes a charitable engagement with a wide variety of views, of those both inside and outside the Evangelical and Reformed perspectives)	<b>Strong</b>	Analysis throughout the seminar on the way in which Webster's Reformed convictions relate to his engagement of the wider catholic tradition (and vice versa).