

INTRODUCTION TO Theological Education

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

The first course taken in the curriculum, Introduction to Theological Education assists students to develop the writing and analytic skills for theological education, identify their role as interpreters of traditions and contexts, and gain critical self-awareness, with particular attention to how theological education addresses systemic evil, racism, and injustice.

This course begins your seminary journey. We all come from communities and experiences that have shaped the story we tell about ourselves and our world. Sometimes we know about this history. Sometimes we believe the story is the natural order of things, divinely given and determined by God. But there is always history. There are always beginnings to these stories. There are always additions and subtractions and omissions. But this doesn't mean that everything we know is false. But how do we begin to read the story more faithfully? How do we begin to recognize the power of other people's stories and discover the richness and power of a God who can hold all those stories together? This class is about beginning to read ourselves, our stories, our communities in ways that allow us to see the richness, diversity, justice, and love of God in new ways.

Key Questions

- What does it mean to be a critical thinker?
- Who are we as readers and interpreters of the church's theological traditions?
- What is the difference and relationship between academic and devotional, public and personal, pre-critical and critical study of Scripture and theology?
- How do we represent and communicate the church's and our own theological perspectives and insights?

Required Texts

Eric Barreto, ed. *Thinking Theologically*
(Foundations for Learning) Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015. [isbn: 978-1451483413, \$14.00, amazon.com]

Renita J. Weems. *Listening for God: A Ministers Journey Through Silence and Doubt*. New York: Touchstone, 1999. [isbn: 978-0684863139, \$12.99, amazon.com]

Howard Thurman and Luther E. Smith. *Howard Thurman: Essential Writings*. Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2006. [isbn: 978-1570756702, \$13.24, amazon.com]

Assignments

9 exercises

Exercises will include short reflections on readings (these will not exceed 500 words), poetic exercises, photography (cell phones are fine), short bibliographies or locating resources in the library (or on the library website)

1 "podcast" episode

individually or with a partner, you will produce a podcast that draws the listener into a theological conversation with a dialogue partner you read or listened to in class.

***The full schedule and assignment details will be available on Moodle on September 6. There is no pre-work**

Terminal Learning Goals

What will students learn or achieve in general through the course?

(KNOWING)

- transition from pre-critical to critical understandings of Scripture, tradition, and history
- recognize that as interpreters they come from interpretive traditions and need to locate themselves within a spectrum of interpretation
- become critical thinkers with a sense of their own hermeneutical and theological perspectives
- understand what a theological curriculum can help them do as Christian leaders
- begin to develop the critical tools needed to analyze evil, injustice and racism
- sharpen academic writing skills

Skill development (DOING)

- Through this course students will develop the following skills:
- to use critical thinking, including: the ability to distinguish sound from unsound arguments; to recognize and identify presuppositions and assumptions; and to detect, distinguish, and place hermeneutical and theological perspectives
- to concisely explain the difference between the Bible as book of study and as scripture
- to practice reading and understanding primary vs. secondary literature in biblical studies, church history, theology
- to communicate with others in writing and orally
- to explain, describe, define, argue, etc.
- to accurately use the Turabian citation method
- begin to transfer/apply ideas and perspectives from one context to another context

Dispositions developed in the course (BEING)

- What will be key values, attitudes, habits and/or commitments promoted in the course for faithful and righteous Christian learning, living, leadership and/or service?
- becoming a community of learners committed to the work of theological education
- developing an honest openness to others that is both irenic and critical
- being open to transformation through theological education
- having a critical self-awareness that both affirms and corrects/develops a theological perspective
- developing the ability to represent themselves and their traditions
- developing habits supporting integration, connection, and coherence across disciplines and interpretive frameworks

Disabilities and Academic Accommodations: Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary offers academic accommodations for disability or health conditions. Reasonable accommodations will only be considered for students who have met with Alicia and completed the appropriate paperwork and documentation.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: The professors expect that each student will familiarize him or herself with the institution's expectations regarding plagiarism and academic integrity. Here's a link to the current plagiarism policy: [\[Link\]](#)
In the context of the requirements of this course, students are encouraged to ask the professors any questions they may have about understanding and avoiding plagiarism. Do not assume that you already know what constitutes plagiarism. You are responsible for understanding Garrett-Evangelical's expectations regarding plagiarism.

Grading: Pass/Fail

Successfully passing the course will be based on a combination of scores received for written work and the level of collegial and effective class participation. Satisfactory scores on each written assignment will be at or above 70% of the highest possible score.