



---

## Grace Communion Seminary

### TH504 Trinitarian Perspectives on Faith and Science

#### Syllabus

Instructor: Kerry V. Magruder, PhD

#### GCS Mission Statement

*“Equipping the Saints for Pastoral Ministry.”* We are committed to equip the saints for pastoral ministry through quality graduate-level distance education programs in biblical, theological, ministerial and pastoral studies informed by Incarnational Trinitarian faith.

#### Course description

The early church developed the doctrine of creation through sustained theological reflection on the Incarnation. This course explores what it might mean today to ground our thinking about science, nature, and creation in the foundational theological perspectives of the Incarnation, Resurrection, and Trinity. This course surveys some of the conflict points for science and religion frequently encountered in modern culture, reassessing them in light of the theological perspectives of the Trinitarian theology of Thomas F. Torrance, and incorporating insights from the writings of C. S. Lewis.

#### Required Readings

Torrance, Thomas F. *Space, Time and Resurrection (STR)*. Edinburgh: Handsel, 1976. ISBN: 9780905312002. 209 pp.; we will read selections. About \$30 at online booksellers. Available in many editions, including Apple Books and Kindle.

Torrance, Thomas F. *The Ground and Grammar of Theology (GGT)*. Charlottesville, Virginia: The University of Virginia Press, 1980. 192 pp.; we

will read selections. About \$44 at online booksellers for ISBN 0567043312 edition. Available in many editions, including Logos Bible Software (\$25).

Lewis, C. S. *Out of the Silent Planet*. New York: Macmillan, 1965. Originally published in 1938. 160 pp. A substantial portion will be assigned. About \$10 at online booksellers for ISBN 0743234901 edition. Available in many editions, including Apple Books, Kindle and in audiobook format.

Torrance, Thomas F. *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988. About \$27 online for ISBN 0567665585 edition. Available in many editions, including audio lectures, Apple Books and Kindle. 345 pp. You will choose two chapters from chs. 2, 3, 4, and/or 5 as the subject of the final paper. If you do not wish to purchase a copy, the free original audio lectures should be adequate if you allow extra time for repeated listening and transcribing.

## **Recommended Reading**

Torrance, Thomas F. *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*. Edited by Robert T. Walker. Milton Keynes: Paternoster; Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2008. In this course readings will be cross-referenced to chapters 2, 3 and 9.

Torrance, Thomas F. *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*. Edited by Robert T. Walker. Milton Keynes: Paternoster; Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2009. In this course, we will read on reserve (no purchase necessary) the Epilogue, "Reconciliation of the Mind," pp. 437-447.

McGrath, Alister E. *T. F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography*. Edinburgh: T& T Clark, 1999.

Colyer, Elmer M. *How to Read T. F. Torrance: Understanding His Trinitarian and Scientific Theology*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2001.

Torrance, Thomas F. *Divine and Contingent Order*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1981; Available in many editions, including Logos Bible Software (\$18.99).

The complete C. S. Lewis Ransom Trilogy:

Lewis, C. S. *Out of the Silent Planet*. (required; see above) Vol. 1.

---

Lewis, C. S. *Perelandra*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1965.  
Originally published 1943. 222 pp. Vol. 2.

Lewis, C. S. *That Hideous Strength*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.,  
1965. 382 pages. Originally published 1946. Vol. 3.

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

This course will contribute primarily to GCS Student Learning Outcome #2:  
“Reason from a sound theological basis as new covenant Christians centered in  
Incarnational Trinitarian faith.”

This course will contribute to Program Objective #2 for the Master of Pastoral  
Studies (MPS) and Master of Theological Studies (MTS): “Challenge the student  
to think theologically, to analyze differences between various Christian traditions,  
and to synthesize central themes of the nature of God and Christian proclamation of  
the word of God.”

## **TH504 Course Objectives**

This course will equip participants to...

1. Converse with four scientists and creation workers about their vocational callings, in order to gain experience that will help make our churches safe and welcoming places for those who are involved in any of the fields of the natural sciences, including healthcare, technology and engineering, agriculture, and conservation.
2. Critically analyze misconceptions that underlie the most common caricatures of conflict between Christian faith and modern science such as the flat Earth myth, the trial of Galileo, the immensity of the universe, the plurality of worlds, the age of the Earth, Darwin and evolution, and the Church and ecology, in order to be able to respond to persons, unbelievers and believers alike, who are troubled about such issues.
3. Develop and demonstrate a practice of thinking theologically about God and nature, or faith and reason, according to a “Christian theological instinct” that reasons from a Trinitarian basis and goes beyond responding *ad hoc* to select misconceptions about Christianity and science.
4. Develop and articulate a creational theology which arises naturally and organically from the nature of the gospel and the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity. That is, to practice drawing out the implications of the

Incarnation and the Trinity for a Christian perspective on creation and the natural sciences.

5. Describe and explain select perspectives of T. F. Torrance and C. S. Lewis on faith and science.
6. Enter into weekly discussion with other students in the course to share ideas, concepts and reflections on how the course materials apply to ministry.
7. Practice reading well by adopting strategies appropriate to the nature of the text, such as close reading for the dense prose of T. F. Torrance and literary reading for the Ransom Trilogy of C. S. Lewis.

## Tentative Course Schedule

As with most GCS courses, this class is 13 weeks long – 10 weeks for lectures, two for finishing assignments and writing the final paper, and one week for final feedback from the instructor.

WEEK	Sp '20	PERSPECTIVE	APPLICATION
0	Jan 2	Registration begins. Class Orientation Assignment open.	
1	Jan 14	Thinking Theologically	Flat Earth Myth
2	Jan 20	Language and Reality	The Galileo Affair
3	Jan 27	Knowing Kata-physin	Art, Astronomy, Music and Theology in Galileo's World
4	Feb 3	Relational Space and Time	Maxwell, Einstein, and the Big Bang
5	Feb 10	Contingent Order	Geology. Anthropic principle. Plurality of Worlds.
6	Feb 17	Stratified Reality	Materialism, Determinism, Reductionism. Mind/Brain/AI.
7	Feb 24	Dualism: Cultural Split	Deism, Intelligent Design and Scientific Atheism
8	March 2	Transformation of Natural Theology	Darwin, Evolution, Evolutionary Creation
9	March 9	Evil and the Natural Order	Nature and the Fall

10	March 16	The Priest of Creation: Magic, Ecology, Stewardship.	The new Creation and the future of the universe
11	March 23	All regular assignments for weeks 1-10 and extra-credit book essays are due by Monday, March 30, 11 pm.	
12	March 30	Weeks 11-12 are devoted to the final paper on two chapters from Torrance, <i>The Trinitarian Faith</i> .	
13	Apr 7	Final paper due by 11 pm Tuesday, April 7, 2020.	

The schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

## Course Requirements and Assignments

	Description	Points
<b>Orientation</b> Weeks 0-1	Orientation tasks involve reading the Full Syllabus and writing an autobiographical sketch. Follow the instructions in the Orientation Appendix. The Full Syllabus and Orientation Assignment will be available after Registration opens on Jan 2, 2020, so you may complete it before the semester begins!	20
<b>Weekly assignments</b> Weeks 1-10	25 points/week * 10 weeks. See below.	250
<b>Final paper</b> Weeks 11-12	Due Week 13, April 7, 2020. 4-page paper on science and <i>The Trinitarian Faith</i> .	30
<b>Optional Extra Credit</b>	Book Essay (up to 4 essays, at up to 8 points each)	
		300

### WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

Each of the 10 regular weeks of the semester has a rhythm of four regularly recurring assignments, worth a total of 25 points per week.

- 2 lecture presentations per week, each in video (1 hr) or slide script format (PDF), with forum interaction (1.5 hrs). 7 points each. 5 hrs and 14 points total. The first presentation introduces a general “perspective”; the second explores “applications” of that week’s perspective.
- 1 reading assignment (4 hrs), with forum interaction (1 hr). 6 points. 4 hrs readings/week: close reading of select passages from T. F. Torrance (40 pp./wk) or literary reading of C. S. Lewis (60 pp./wk).
- 1 “Last Words” assignment (5 pts), which varies between a weekly Website Task (6 weeks, <1 hr), OR a Conversation with a scientist or creation worker (4 weeks, with forum post, 2 hrs). Last Words also includes a final reply to responses on the week’s forums.

**Weekly Assignments Table**

<b>Weekly Assignments</b>	<b>Hrs/wk</b>	<b>Pts/wk</b>
<b>1. Perspective Assignment</b>	2.5 hrs	7 pts
Presentation	1 hrs	
Forum	1.5 hrs	
<b>2. Reading Notebook Assignment</b>	5 hrs	6 pts
Reading	4 hrs	
Forum	1 hrs	
<b>3. Application Assignment</b>	2.5 hrs	7 pts
Presentation	1 hrs	
Forum	1.5 hrs	
<b>4. Last Words</b>	1-3.5 hrs	5 pts
Final forum replies	0.5 hrs	
(Conversation OR	3 hrs	
Website Task)	<1 hr	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>13-15</b>	<b>25 pts</b>

•

Forum interaction is central to the design of this course and makes up over one third of the semester grade (see table, next page). All learning is personal, and personal activity is always relational. This course is designed to optimize interactions and the development of understanding in the context of personal relations. Your reflections

will represent thought-in-the-making, not finished essays. Forum discussions are the primary place where you will make connections between the class material and ministry. Dare to make the best of this opportunity. Express how you understand the course material, and how it may apply to ministry, even before your views are fully formed. You don't have to fear being marked down, as grades for forum participation are based on effort. And you will benefit from the thoughtful responses of others as you go on to process your thoughts more deeply. Know that others are likely working through the material with similar trepidation. Imagine that we are in a seminar class and exchanging ideas honestly and forthrightly in an atmosphere of mutual trust and sympathy as we together seek to understand the course material and relate it to our lives. A forum reflection is not fluff like a casual conversation at a sports event, nor independent study, nor a fully-formed final paragraph of a peer-reviewed research paper. Rather, it's like going around the room in a seminar class where each person states in turn what they took from the common reading and why it matters to them; then discussion and further learning ensues. If your forum reflections prompt thoughtful replies, consider them a success.

<b>Course Forums</b>						
<b>Forum</b>	<b>Weeks</b>	<b>Number of posts</b>	<b>Pts</b>	<b>Pts due to Forum</b>	<b>Semester Points</b>	<b>% of Grade (300 pts total)</b>
<b>Orientation Forum</b>	0-1	1	20	10/20	10 pts	3.33%
<b>Perspective Forum</b>	1-10	10	7	1/2	35 pts	11.67%
<b>Application Forum</b>	1-10	10	7	1/2	35 pts	11.67%
<b>Reading Notebook Forum</b>	1-10	10	6	1/5	12 pts	4%

<b>Conversation Forum</b>	3, 5, 7, 9	4	5	1/2	10 pts	3.33%
<b>Total</b>		<b>35</b>	<b>25 pts</b>	<b>2 pts</b>	<b>102 pts</b>	<b>34%</b>

*Final Paper*

The final exam is a 4-page take-home paper that counts for 30 points or 10% of the final grade. It is due by 11 pm Tuesday, April 7, 2020, the 13th week of class. In this paper, you will draw connections between the perspectives on faith and science we explore this semester (left column, below) and the doctrine of the Trinity elucidated by Nicene theology according to Torrance’s account in any two chapters (2, 3, 4, and/or 5) of *The Trinitarian Faith* (right column, below). Although Weeks 11 and 12 of the course are devoted to the paper, you can begin writing it sooner!

Perspectives	<i>The Trinitarian Faith</i>
Thinking Theologically	Ch. 2 “Access to the Father”
Language and Reality	
Knowing Kata-physin	Ch. 3 “The Almighty Creator”
Relational Space and Time	
Contingent Order	Ch. 4 “God of God, <sup>[L]</sup> <sub>[SEP]</sub> Light of Light”
Stratified Reality	
Dualism: Cultural Split	Ch. 5 “The Incarnate Saviour”
Transformation of Natural Theology	
Evil and the Natural Order	
The Priest of Creation: <sup>[L]</sup> <sub>[SEP]</sub> Magic, Ecology, Stewardship.	

