

**DT 501 Doctrine of God, Christ, Atonement**  
4 credit hours | Fall 2026 |  
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## **I. Course Description**

*From the Academic Catalog:* Examination of the Scriptural, creedal, historical, theological, and pastoral issues of the doctrine of God, Christ and the atonement. Special consideration is given to the Holy Trinity and the fundamental Christological definitions of the ecumenical councils, in view of developing an apologetic against the various heresies of the past (e.g., Docetism, Arianism, Nestorianism) along with their modern counterparts (Kenoticism, etc.).

## **II. Learning Objectives**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Explain the Scriptural foundations of the doctrines of God, the Holy Trinity, Christology, and the atonement, with particular attention to key biblical texts and their theological interpretation.
- Describe and analyze the creedal and conciliar formulations of Trinitarian and Christological doctrine, especially as articulated by the ecumenical councils (e.g., Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, Chalcedon).
- Trace the historical development of orthodox Trinitarian and Christological doctrine within the life of the Church, noting the pastoral and theological contexts in which these doctrines emerged.
- Identify and critically evaluate major classical heresies (e.g., Docetism, Arianism, Nestorianism, Apollinarianism) and explain the Church's theological responses to them.
- Assess modern theological proposals and movements (e.g., Kenotic Christologies) in light of classical doctrinal definitions and contemporary theological concerns.
- Articulate the theological significance of the doctrines of God and Christ for Christian worship, pastoral practice, and spiritual formation.
- Develop and defend a coherent apologetic for orthodox Trinitarian and Christological doctrine that addresses both historical and contemporary challenges.
- Integrate Scriptural, creedal, historical, and theological sources into clear, well-reasoned written and oral arguments concerning the doctrine of God, Christ, and the atonement.

## **III. The Difficulty of the Material**

Purely in terms of the material to be cover, this will be one of the most difficult classes you will take in seminary. I have tried to confine the difficulty only to the material to be learned and not to the actual assignments. For this reason, I have not assigned a standard research paper. You will only be required to write about the main texts of this course, and I have no expectations for you to do any research outside these readings. If you labor to understand the texts and my lectures, then you will meet my goals for the course. I am rather unapologetic about the complexity of the material. We are talking, after all, about our triune God and the God-man, Jesus Christ, so the dangers of heresy are all over the pace. Lack of precision in these matters has long term personal and ecclesiastical consequences. I have spent over 20 years in academic institutions and churches that have been largely unable to articulate the basic parameters of Trinitarian doctrine. For clergy and lay leaders, this is simply unacceptable.

#### IV. Required Resources

- Browne, E. Harold. *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England*. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1865. Pages 19–83 (skimmed).
- Anatolios, Khaled. *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011. Pages 1–290.
- Mascall, E.L.. *Christ, the Christian, and the Church: A Study of the Incarnation and Its Consequences*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2017. Pages xvii-248 (preface and all chapters)
- Maximus the Confessor. *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*. Translated by Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003. 44 pages total
  - Pages 45–74 (Ambiguum 7)
  - Pages 99-101 (Ad Thalassium 2)
  - Pages 115-118 (Ad Thalassium 22)
  - Page 123-129 (Ad Thalassium 60)
- Boersma, Hans. “Justification” in *Re-formed Catholic Anglicanism*. ed. Charles F Camlin, Charles D. Erlandson, Joshua L. Harper. Dallas, TX: Anglican Way Institute, 2024. Pages 123-134

#### V. Recommended Reading/Extra Credit

Option 1: A student could, if they wished, read *Sermons on the Nativity* by Lancelot Andrewes (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1955) and write a sustained 2,000-3,000 word essay exploring how Andrewes’s Christology is not merely doctrinal but intentionally ordered toward individual piety and holy living. Such an essay might trace how the mystery of the Incarnation shapes prayer, repentance, humility, moral discipline, and the transformation of daily life, showing how Andrewes moves seamlessly from high dogmatic reflection to concrete habits of devotion. A student who successfully completes this optional essay—demonstrating close reading, theological insight, and clear application to Christian life—would receive a 5% increase to their final course grade.

Option 2: As another option for extra credit, a student could read Richard Hooker’s book *The Word Made Flesh for Us* (Hooker, Richard A. *The Word Made Flesh for Us*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.), and write a 2,000-3,000 word essay. This book is a section from a much larger work by Hooker. The editors have also modernized the English to be more readable for modern audiences. A thoughtful essay would trace how the Incarnation relates to sacramentology.

#### VI. Course Protocols

##### A. Late Work Policy

Except for unusual circumstances, students will receive full credit for their assignments only if they complete them on time. Usually, late work will receive a late penalty depending how late. However, students are encouraged to contact the instructor, if they are going to be late. I am more concerned that you learn, and so, I am often willing to be flexible on the due date, if there are good reasons. This policy helps students to plan ahead responsibly, a characteristic that students must cultivate as they prepare to serve others as faithful stewards of God’s grace. This policy also makes class times more edifying since class lectures and discussions are directly related to the assignments in the course schedule.

##### B. Missing Class or Arriving Late

Students must inform the instructor of any absence or planned late arrival prior to the start of class. Students should not miss class unless it is under extenuating circumstances (e.g. sickness, childbirth,

dismemberment, or death. NOT – job stress, excessive homework, children’s events, forgetfulness, or procrastination).

### **C. Internet/Computer Use (TAKE NOTE!)**

Out of respect for instructors and in order to cultivate a healthy discussion-oriented classroom experience, students are prohibited from using the internet during class. Points will be deducted from the classroom participation score of students caught on the internet. Repeated offenders will incur additional penalties.

Computers are also not allowed in class. Students should plan to take notes by hand. If there are special reasons for why a student needs a computer, then please contact the instructor.

### **D. Save your work**

Save a copy of all assignments you submit for grading. Your instructor, facilitator, teaching assistant, or coordinator are not responsible for lost assignments. If you have not begun backing up your work on a separate drive (thumb drive or in a ‘cloud’), now would be a great time to start. Please save a copy of all submitted coursework until you have received a final grade from your professor upon completion of the course.

### **E. Cheating**

Students cheating in course work or examinations are subject to discipline. Cheating includes copying another student’s work and presenting it as one’s own (or allowing another person to copy one’s own work) and using dishonest or prohibited methods to complete a test (or helping another person to cheat). Students who cheat will be subject to significant academic consequences including an immediate failing grade for the course. An offending student may also be put on disciplinary probation. For more details, please refer to the Student Handbook.

### **F. Plagiarism**

Students found plagiarizing are subject to discipline. The most common errors in handling written sources are the following:

- failure to use quotation marks when quoting,
- failure to make a thorough paraphrase when attempting to put the idea in one’s own words,
- failure to credit the source of the information

### **G. Special Needs**

Any student who may require an accommodation under the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act should contact the course instructor in this matter as soon as possible and no later than the end of the first week of classes. Special needs must be documented with the Registrar.

### **H. Syllabus Changes**

This syllabus has been written to reflect accurately the intended learning objects, course protocols, and required homework. The instructor reserves the right to make any alterations to the syllabus deemed necessary to maintain the learning experience. Any changes to the syllabus or course schedule will be announced by the instructor in class or email.

## VII. Course Requirements

Course Grades will be graded using these components with their respective weights:

- A. Reading (30%)**
- B. Writing (60%)**
- C. Participation (10%)**

You receive full credit for requirement A (reading) simply by completing it. Submit all assignments via Populi.

### A. Reading (30%)

All reading assignments are expected to be complete on the day they are listed to be due (see class schedule below). A reading report will be handed in at the end of the semester on Populi. As part of this course, students will be expected to do two forms of reading: regular reading and skimming. Listening to an audiobook version does **not** count towards reading. However, you can listen to an audio version while looking at the text in front of you. For slow readers (like myself), this can be very helpful. It allows you to read more quickly but still pause the audio when the difficulty of the material requires a slower pace. I still use this technique every week.

**Tip for reading well:** Many students are not familiar with reading scholarly texts, and so they are surprised by the occasional complexity of the text. You should know that it is very common for even advanced scholars to have to re-read paragraphs and sections to make sure that the argument of the text is clear. Some texts, particularly older ones like Maximus, can have moments of acute density. It is very helpful to keep a “reading notebook”. I have kept one for over 12 years... Essentially, I write down a one or two sentence summary of every paragraph (for the very dense works) or every section of a book (for lighter books). By putting the argument in my own words, I find that I am able to piece together nuanced themes across the argument of a book. One long term benefit of this practice is that I can go back and read the entire argument of a book that I read 12 years ago. So instead of re-reading a 400-page book, I take 15 minutes to read through my notes. This practice may also be helpful for your writing assignments below. I take all my notes by hand, but you may prefer to keep a running electronic notebook.

**Reading due on the first day of in person class:** In order to aid our class discussions, all students should read the assigned readings below before the weekend intensive. However, Anatolios and Mascall will be read even earlier than the weekend intensive (see the class schedule below):

Anatolios-- Introduction and Chapters 1-2 (pages 1-98)

Mascall-- Chapters 1-6 (pages 1-108)

Maximus-- The 4 chapters listed above (44 pages)

Boersma-- Whole chapter (pages 123-134)

### B. Writing (60%)

Details for assignments are below. Students can go over a page requirement by 500 words, but cannot go under. The writing requirements for this class are very much within normal range for a graduate level

course, but they are admittedly on higher side of normal. However, I've intentionally taken out the research component of the writing so that your time can be spent engaging with the main texts assigned. Instead of a research paper, I want you to deeply engage with the required reading and to reflect on the content and discussion of the class.

1. *Theological Book Engagements* (50%): For each of the four major books that we will be reading, students will write a short essay that engages with the central argument and themes of the book. These essays should not be “devotional” or “practical.” They should demonstrate rigorous theological precision and engagement with the source text. The only source one is expected to use is the book you are writing on, but other scholarly sources may be consulted. In each essay, I want to see that the student has clearly grasped the key ideas of the book and can reproduce them through in the student's own words. Short quotes are fine, but I prefer you to put the argument in your own words. Students who do well on these reflections will have articulated, in their own words, the main point of the book, and will have marshalled key citations in order to prove their point. In order to help guide you, there is a list of topics that you could cover in each book below. But each student is also free to discuss other topics and themes in the book as long as it can be proved to be a major/important theme in the work. [Side note: since you will be referencing just one text, you are free to use parenthetical references that cite the page number. (For example, “Maximus claims that God is super cool and you should love him.” (243)) However, if you reference another source, then you should cite it according to Chicago Manual of Style.]

- ◆ Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea* (**words: 2000**) For this book, I want you to write on either chapter 3 on Athanasius, chapter 4 on Gregory of Nyssa, or chapter 5 on Augustine.

Guiding prompts for all chapters:

- How does his account of the Father, Son, and Spirit illuminate the relationship between Christology and soteriology?
- How does Anatolios connect the eternal relations of the Trinity with the historical mission of Christ (God in himself versus God in relation to creation)?
- How does this work clarify the link between Trinitarian doctrine and the reality of atonement?

Guiding prompts for chapter 3 (Athanasius):

- For Athanasius, why must the crucified Christ be fully divine if the Christian story of salvation is to remain coherent? Explain how Anatolios presents Athanasius's argument that the incarnation, cross, and saving work of Christ reveal not a lesser divine being, but the very character of God's own life and mercy.
- How does Athanasius understand salvation as participation in the life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Explain why, for Athanasius, the Son and Spirit must both fully share the divine life if they are truly able to unite human beings to God. Consider how this connects Christology, pneumatology, baptism, and deification
- How does the Incarnation reveal the inner life of the Trinity?
- How does Athanasius link Christ's work to human deification or restoration?
- How does the divinity of the Son inform his understanding of atonement?

Guiding prompts for chapter 4 (Gregory of Nyssa):

- Gregory famously describes the Christian life as endless progress into the infinite goodness of God. How does Anatolios connect this theme to Gregory's trinitarian theology? In your essay, explain how Christ's divinity, Christ's humanity, the church,

baptism, Eucharist, and moral transformation all belong to Gregory's account of participation in divine life

Guiding prompts for chapter 5 (Augustine):

- How does Augustine think human beings can know the Triune God? Explain Anatolios's claim that Augustine's *De Trinitate* is not merely a speculative exercise but a theological account of how Scripture, faith, reason, purification, and Christological mediation enable true knowledge of God.
- Augustine is often associated with the "psychological analogy" of the Trinity. According to Anatolios, why is it misleading to treat Augustine's account of memory, understanding, and love as a stand-alone analogy? Explain how the image of the Trinity in the human mind must be understood within Scripture, moral transformation, and participation in God through Christ.
- Anatolios argues that Augustine's search for the Trinity is ultimately a Christological quest. Explain how Christ functions as the mediator of true knowledge of God in *De Trinitate*. Why must the mind's attempt to know itself, love itself, and contemplate God be healed and redirected through Christ?

- ◆ Mascal, E.L.. *Christ, the Christian, and the Church: A Study of the Incarnation and Its Consequences* (**words: 2000**)

Guiding prompts:

- How does the Incarnation relate to salvation and sacraments?
- What does it mean that Manhood has been "taken into" God?
- How should we understand the two natures of Christ, and how does this relate to soteriology?

- ◆ St. Maximus the Confessor (**words: 1000**)

Guiding prompts:

- How does Maximus's thought illuminate the participation of humanity in divine life?
- What does it mean that Jesus Christ is a "cosmic mystery"?
- How do we, as "logoi", relate to Christ, as "Logos"?
- What does deification mean according to Maximus?

- ◆ Boersma, Hans. "Justification" (**words: 500**)

Guiding prompts:

- How does Irenaeus's view of soteriology change the terms of the debate between Catholics and Protestants?
- What does it mean for Salvation to be primarily ontological?
- According to Irenaeus, how does the Incarnation abound to our salvation?

2. *Final Reflection* (10%): Write a 1500-word essay. Students are not required to use sources outside the main texts of the class. Students should marshal what they learned in class and make use of what they learned in class discussions. Thoughtful citations from the textbooks would be fitting. In the book engagement essays, you are writing to a theologian, but in this paper, I want you to pretend that you are writing to a well read and intelligent parishioner who is asking questions about the Trinity, Christology, and Atonement. Students should attempt to answer one of the following questions (if there is another topic that a student would like to address, then please check it with the instructor):

- ◆ Why is the doctrine of the Trinity important?
- ◆ How should one understand the relationship between the divine and creaturely nature in Christ? And why is this relationship important?

- ◆ How does the doctrine of the Trinity relate to the Atonement?
- ◆ How does the Trinity relate to creation and salvation?
- ◆ How are the doctrines of the Trinity and Christology reflected in Soteriology?
- ◆ Why are the doctrines of the Trinity and Christology important for the sacramental life of the church.

**Sample Grading Rubric\***

Grade Range	Content (40%)	Argument (40%)	Presentation (20%)
A, A-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mastery</li> <li>• Score: 36–40</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear</li> <li>• Logical</li> <li>• Comprehensive</li> <li>• Critical</li> <li>• Innovative</li> <li>• Persuasive</li> <li>• Score: 36–40</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Almost no errors re format (front matter, headers, body text, footnotes, bibliography), grammar, and syntax</li> <li>• Elegant</li> <li>• Within the word count</li> <li>• Score: 18–20</li> </ul>
B+, B, B-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Above-average grasp</li> <li>• Score: 32–35</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coherent</li> <li>• Well-stated</li> <li>• Score: 32–35</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several errors re format, grammar, and syntax</li> <li>• Score: 16–17</li> </ul>
C+, C, C-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate grasp</li> <li>• Score: 28–31</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marginally coherent</li> <li>• Rudimentary</li> <li>• Minimal</li> <li>• Score: 28–31</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant errors re format, grammar, and syntax</li> <li>• Score: 14–15</li> </ul>
D+, D, D-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low-level grasp</li> <li>• Score: 24–27</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incoherent</li> <li>• Illogical</li> <li>• Score: 24–27</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abundant errors re format, grammar, and syntax</li> <li>• Score: 12–13</li> </ul>
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little-to-no grasp: fails to grasp basic concepts and omits required elements</li> <li>• Score: 0–23</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incomprehensible</li> <li>• Extremely illogical</li> <li>• Score: 0–23</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Egregious errors re format, grammar, and syntax</li> <li>• Score: 0–11</li> </ul>
<b>Score</b>	<b>?/40</b>	<b>?/40</b>	<b>?/20</b>
	<b>Overall grade: ?/100 (per assignment)</b>		

\* This grading rubric is adapted for written assignments from Mark Boda, “Designing and Evaluating Learning Experiences for Courses,” in *Those Who Can, Teach: Teaching as Christian Vocation* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; McMaster General Series 3; Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 87.

**C. Participation (10%)**

In addition to the participation in the weekend intensive. There will be two more shorter meetings that will be devoted to discussing the required textbooks. Your participation grade will be decided based on your involvement in the two discussions and in the weekend intensive.

You will be graded according to the quality of your participation in class. Your grade will be calculated as follows:

- A range = consistent/thoughtful participation in class discussions.
- B range = occasional/thoughtful participation in class discussions
- C range = minimal/somewhat superficial participation in class discussions
- D range = rare/superficial participation in class discussions
- F = no participation in class discussions

Other factors that impact this grade could also be punctuality, respectful attitude, and attendance.

## **VIII. Class Schedule**

### **June 17 – Book Discussion (6:30-9pm)**

- ◆ Read the Introduction and Chapters 1-2 (pages 1-98) of Anatolios and be ready to discuss the contents of these chapters.

### **August 5 – Book Discussion (6:30-9pm)**

- ◆ Read Chapters 1-6 (pages 1-108) of Mascall and be ready to discuss the contents of these chapters.

### **August 28-30 – Weekend Intensive**

- ◆ Read all required pages in Maximus and Boersma and be ready to discuss in class.

### **October 30**

- ◆ All papers due
- ◆ Reading and reading report due