

**HTS 551 - Metaphysical Theology I: Tools of Theological Inquiry
(3 hrs/4 units)**

Instructor Name	Thomas Shepherd
Office Hours	Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays 10:00 - 11:30 AM
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Term	Tuesdays & Thursdays 8:00-10:00 am; July 15 – September 18, 2008 (Meeting in Room 204, UI)
Prerequisites	Equivalent knowledge level found in the Unity Spiritual Education and Enrichment courses Metaphysics I and II.
Required Texts	Van A. Harvey (1997). <i>A Handbook of Theological Terms</i> . NY: Touchstone. Thomas Shepherd (2002). <i>Glimpses of truth</i> . Carol City, FL: UFBL Press. ¹ Howard Stone and Duke, J.O. (2006). <i>How to think theologically</i> , second edition. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
Recommended Materials	Unity Spiritual Education and Enrichment course handbook for <i>Metaphysics I: An overview of the fundamental teachings of Unity</i> .

¹Primary text for the course. Currently out of print; second edition in the planning stages. See Unity Bookstore for ordering information of remaining first edition copies. If unavailable, MS Word copy will be furnished by instructor.

Course Description

Foundation course in how to do theology from a New Thought Christian perspective. Beginning with a discussion of the nature and limitations of intellectual inquiry, students will learn how to apply the tools and methods of theological reflection to their program of lifelong learning. Course will bring these tools of theology to the ongoing process of rethinking and redefining basic Christian concepts for every new generation. Students will learn to think theologically/metaphysically and to apply their insights to professional and personal lives.

Content includes:

- Introduction to critical thinking and the tools of theology.
- Application of the theological method to the study of Metaphysical Christianity.
- Connections between basic Unity concepts and other fields of knowledge, such as the physical and social sciences.
- In-depth discussion of linkages and disconnects between mainstream Christianity and New Thought Christian perspectives.
- Opportunities to dialogue about current “hot button” theological issues for clergy and laity.

*** IMPORTANT ***

Pre-Class Assignments

1. **Read the following** before the first class session:

Shepherd, *Glimpses of Truth*, pp. 1-23
Stone & Duke, *How to Think Theologically*, pp. 1-37

2. **Pre-Class Written Work:** “Theological Snapshot.” (400-500 words) Write a short statement of your basic beliefs as of today. This is not a test to see if you know what Unity’s basic beliefs are; it is an opportunity to look *deliberatively* at your *embedded* theology. (Stone & Duke, pp. 13-24.) *Do not*

just make a list. Write an integrated, flowing, yet brief essay—about two pages. Think brevity and clarity.

Important note: Ordinarily the rule for papers is, “Write in 3rd person, stay off camera!” This assignment is an exception to that rule. Use of 1st person singular and non-attributed personal opinion is expected, *this time only*.

REALLY IMPORTANT NOTE:

Pre-class assignment is due at the first session, July 15.

Learning Objectives

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

1. Demonstrate mastery of the language and tools of metaphysical theology by participation in classroom discussions and writing critical analyses of major Christian themes such as *God, faith, Creation, the Trinity, sin, salvation, biblical theology, Christology, anthropology, ministry, church, community, and selfless love.*
2. Correlate traditional theological topics with specifically New Thought concepts such as *substance, prosperity, healing, Divine Order, Mind, Principle, the threefold nature of consciousness, individuality/personality, prayer, meditation, and faith.*
3. Analyze and evaluate the evolution of the God concept, from animatism through panentheism.
4. Respond theologically to the question: “Is Unity a *Christian* movement?” Arrive at a conclusion and demonstrate the ability to defend it logically.

Class Schedule

*Students are expected to complete assigned readings and written work *before* the class session. (See Session #1, Assignments.) Written responses or “Check Your Knowledge” questions are due most Thursdays, except test weeks.

Session #	Date	Topics	Instructor’s Notes	Assignments*
1	Tues. 07-15	Intro Lecture on Metaphysical Theology Overview of course. Requirements and deadlines. Caveats. Definition and scope of theological reflection. Theology & Life. Bonhoeffer & Hitler; three paradoxes (cf. four paradoxes in <i>M-I Workbook</i>); Xmas Faith, Easter world.	TODAY IN CLASS: Pre-Class Paper Due today: “Theological Snapshot” ~~~~~ CYK-Q’s = “Check Your Knowledge Questions”	For Thursday, July 17: Read: <i>Glimpses</i> , 25-39; Stone & Duke, 38-54 Option 1: Answer CYK-Q’s #1, 2, 4, 5 & 6 (p.39, <i>Glimpses</i> .) OR Option 2: Respond in Writing. 3 pp. (500-700 words). You may answer Discussion Q in text, or respond to an idea from class or the readings.
2	Thurs. 07-17	Tools of Theology Definition & Six Functions of theology; Fantastic Four (Stone & Duke, “Methodist Quadrilateral”)	Thursday writing collected.	For Tuesday, July 22: Read: <i>Glimpses</i> , 41-54; Stone & Duke, 55-64
3	Tues. 07-22	Epistemology: How Do We Know What’s True? “Starting Point of Theology” (Stone & Duke.); “analysis & construction,” a.k.a. <i>descriptive & prescriptive</i>		For Thursday, July 24: Read: <i>Glimpses</i> , 55-69 Options CYK: # 1, 3, 5 & 6. (p. 69, <i>Glimpses</i> .)

Session #	Date	Topics	Instructor's Notes	Assignments*
		theology; classical epistemologies; cargo cults; pragmatic enlightenment.		Or: Respond in Writing, 2 pp. (500-700 words)
4	Thurs. 07-24	Christianity & Other Religions Marvin Harris' social systems model; relationship between behavior and belief; some required sociological terms; ethnocentrism; adaptive/maladaptive behaviors; Key term: <i>cultural relativism</i> .	Thursday writing collected.	For Tuesday, Jul 29: Read: <i>Glimpses</i> , 71-89
5	Tues. 07-29	Biblical Theology & Metaphysical Interpretation Definitions of BT & MI; historical-critical analysis; quest for historical Jesus; basic premise of Metaphysical Xny (OP ²); allegory & dangers thereof; "B-I-B-L-E" Method; H/M Sampler. Class discussion on theories of biblical inspiration.	TODAY IN CLASS: Bible texts, references, & commentaries provided for small group work. "B-I-B-L-E" Method	TWO-WEEK EXAM THURSDAY Review: All previous readings & notes. No Written Assignment
6	Thurs. 07-31	1st Hour: Two-Week Exam: Basic Tools of Metaphysical Theology (<i>Glimpses</i> , pp. 1-90; <i>Think Theologically</i> , pp. 1-64) _____ 2nd Hour: Review and Discussion of Tested Concepts	1st Two-Week Exam Today	For Tuesday, Aug 5: Read: <i>Glimpses</i> , 91-111
7	Tues. 08-05	The Trinity, Part I God as Spirit Metaphysical Trinity: Spirit, Soul, Body; historical doctrine of the Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. In metaphysical Trinity, Spirit comes first. Soren Kierkegaard's "leap of faith," Kant's critique of "pure reason" and metaphysics; biblical foundations; holiness and wholeness; purity; blood sacrifice; the "Let Him Out/Let Him In" Controversy; work of the Holy Spirit; fruit & gifts; speaking in tongues; mystery and worship.	Handout provided on "Evolution of the God Concept"	For Thursday, Aug 7: Read: <i>Glimpses</i> , 113-130 Options CYK: # 2, 4, 5 & 6. (p. 130, <i>Glimpses</i> .) Or: Respond in Writing, 2 pp. (500-700 words)

Session #	Date	Topics	Instructor's Notes	Assignments*
8	Thurs. 08-07	<p>The Trinity, Part II God as Father & Mother</p> <p>God as Father-Mother; atheism, dualism, monism; Teilhard; problems of ethical monotheism, deism, naturalistic theism, & pantheism; kenosis; theodicy; incarnational monism.</p>		<p>For Tuesday, August 12:</p> <p>Read: <i>Glimpses</i>, 133-144</p> <p>Begin Reviewing for Two-Week Exam</p>
9	Tues. 08-12	<p>The Trinity, Part III God as Son (Daughter?)</p> <p>Reality Check--who's in your pantheon? Christology: Jesus and Christ—Jesus the Christ, Jesus Christ, and Christ Jesus. Rudolf Bultmann's "demythologizing" and our need to re-mythologize; adoptionism & docetism; monistic Christology; <i>kenosis</i>.</p>		<p>TWO-WEEK EXAM THURSDAY</p> <p>Review: All previous readings & notes.</p> <p>No Written Assignment</p>
10	Thurs. 08-14	<p>1st Hour: Two-Week Exam <i>Glimpses</i>, Chapters 6-8</p> <hr/> <p>2nd Hour: Review and Discussion of Tested Concepts</p>	<p>2nd Two-Week Exam Today</p>	<p>For Tuesday, August 19:</p> <p>Read: <i>Glimpses</i>, 147-172 Harvey, "Soteriology" 224-226 Stone & Duke, 76-88</p>
11	Tues. 08-19	<p>Soteriology: Sin, Atonement & the Work of Jesus Christ</p> <p>Plato's question to Euthyphro; discussion of sin in Hebrew and New Testament Consciousness; Unity definitions of sin as "missing the mark," Ed Rabel's contribution; Sin-Reconciliation cycle; subjective & objective guilt. Critical look at classical theories of Atonement: Appeasement, Ransom, Penal Substitution, and Moral Influence; Reconciliation. Symbolism of the cross.</p>		<p>For Thursday, Aug 21:</p> <p>Read: <i>Glimpses</i>, 175-193 Harvey, "Eschatology," 80-82</p> <p><u>Options</u> CYK: # 1, 2, 4, & 5 (p. 192, <i>Glimpses</i>.)</p> <p>Or: Respond in Writing, 2 pp. (500-700 words)</p>
12	Thurs. 08-21	<p>Eschatology: Where Do We Go from Here?</p> <p>Book of Revelation popular eschatologies; individual destinies, fate of human race, the Universe; heaven or hell; universalism; reincarnation; purgatory; will the universe end? <i>Parousia</i> (Second Coming); Faith as the key.</p>		<p>For Tuesday, August 26:</p> <p>Read: <i>Glimpses</i>, 195-230 Harvey, "Sacrament," 211-215</p>
13	Tues. 08-26	<p>Sacramental Theology Definition and discussion of "sacrament" as point at which God is experienced; is God known by</p>	<p>Small Group Discussion: Design New</p>	<p>TWO-WEEK EXAM THURSDAY</p>

Session #	Date	Topics	Instructor's Notes	Assignments*
		revelation, discovery, or both? <i>Sacramentum/Mysterion</i> ; "Twelve Sacraments of Life."	Sacraments for Metaphysical Churches	Review: All previous readings & notes. No Written Assignment
14	Thurs. 08-28	1st Hour: Two-Week Exam <i>Glimpses</i> , Chapters 9-12, <i>Atonement</i> , <i>Eschatology</i> , & Sacramental theology. <hr/> 2nd Hour: Review and Discussion of Tested Concepts	3rd Two-Week Exam Today	For Tuesday, Sep 2: Read: <i>Glimpses</i> , 233-247 Harvey, "Church," 51-54
15	Tues. 09-02	Ecclesiology: Theology of Church & Ministry Who speaks for the Church? Fundamentalism critique; dualism of Sunday "Church World" and "real" world; the Church as <i>basilica</i> (physical building), <i>ecclesia</i> (gathered community) & <i>koinonia</i> (beloved community); Church in Middle Ages, screening out the people; influence of culture on religious thought; Church as ideas, heritage & people; Luther's "priesthood of all believers;" new theology of church and ministry.	Handout on Church as <i>basilica</i> , <i>ecclesia</i> and <i>Koinonia</i> .	For Thursday, Sep 4: Read: <i>Glimpses</i> , 249-269 Harvey, "Predestination" 187-188 Respond in Writing: 2 pp. (500-700 words) "Theology of Church & Ministry" Or: "Divine Order"
16	Thurs. 09-04	Divine Order Platonism and soul-growth; "the fall," importance of free will and choices; predestination vs. Divine Order; immutable law vs. probabilities and tendencies; Newtonian vs. quantum models of reality; social science model; deep problems with absolute Law, four choices for modern Job; principles not laws; St. Paul again; trying again; rethinking science & law; rejecting "God of the gaps" theology.	Controversial chapter (14) asks us to look at Divine Order as <i>flexible</i> ; not as absolute law but as <i>principles</i> and <i>tendencies</i> .	For Tuesday, Sep 09: Read: <i>Glimpses</i> , 271-310 Stone & Duke, 89-104
17	Tues. 09-09	Social Ethics & Outreach "Evangelism" Theological arguments for and against doing Social Ethics (Ch 15) & Outreach Evangelism (Ch 16). Four kinds of ethics. Discussion of Outreach, ways of teaching Unity to others.	Handouts on "Types of Ethics" and ethical scenarios for small group discussion.	For Thursday, Sep 11: Read: <i>Glimpses</i> , 311-351 Respond in Writing: 2 pp. (500-700 words) "Theology of Prayer" Or: "Pastoral Theology"

Session #	Date	Topics	Instructor's Notes	Assignments*
18	Thurs. 09-11	Prayer & Pastoral Theology Prayer viewed theologically—what is it? Six misconceptions about Prayer; grid of 36 prayer types (p. 213, <i>Glimpses</i>); discussion of Pastoral Theology	Final Exam Tuesday Includes: Glimpses, Ch's 1-18; Stone & Duke, pp. 1-104 All class notes & handouts.	Review all Notes & Reading Assignments
19	Tues. 09-16	Comprehensive Final Exam	Final Exam Today	For Thursday, Sep 18: Read/Skim: <i>Glimpses</i> , 333-387
20	Thurs. 09-18	Pop-Fad Spirituality: Can New Thought Grow Up? (Ch 19) Galactic Christianity (Ch 20) Lecture/discussion of final two chapters, <i>Glimpses</i> .	Major Paper Due Today	

Course Requirements:

Assignment	Total Value	Date Due
Pre-Class Essay	(5%)	07-15
Thursday Responses	(15%)	07-17, 07-24, 08-07, 08-21, 09-04
Two-Week Exams	(20%)	07-31, 08-14, 08-28, 09-11
Final Exam	(25%)	09-16
Major Paper	(35%)	09-18

Percentages are total value of each requirement, i.e., all the “Thursday Responses” taken together total 15% of the final grade.

Additional Assignment Details

Assignments for the Master of Divinity:

Major Paper: Write a 15-20 page major paper in which you reflect theologically and in depth about one of the major topics discussed during this course. Focus down to a single idea, and if possible find some controversy to address—Divine Order vs. Predestination, capital punishment and a theology of prison ministry, docetism and the One Presence-One Power principle, cultural relativism and the Christian Right, the problem of evil, dualism in the doctrine of God, etc. All topics must be approved by instructor.

Final Grade Determination

Percentage	Points	Grade
90% - 100%	4.0	A
80 - 89%	3.0	B
70 - 79%	2.0	C

Notes: Anything below “C” is ordinarily considered a failing grade in graduate programs. Grading is on straight 4-point scale; grades will be “rounded” to letter grade. Pluses and minuses are merely instructor commentary and will not be calculated in the grade equation (B+ or B- will be recorded as “B”).

Assignments for the Certificate in Unity Ministry:

Major Paper: Write a 15-20 page major paper in which you reflect theologically and in depth about one of the major topics discussed during this course. Focus down to a single idea, and if possible find some controversy to address—Divine Order vs. Predestination, capital punishment and a theology of prison ministry, docetism and the One Presence-One Power principle, cultural relativism and the Christian Right, the problem of evil, dualism in the doctrine of God, etc. All topics must be approved by instructor.

Final Grade Determination

Percentage	Points	Grade
90% - 100%	4.0	A
80 - 89%	3.0	B
70 - 79%	2.0	C

Notes: Anything below “C” is ordinarily considered a failing grade in graduate programs. Grading is on straight 4-point scale; grades will be “rounded” to letter grade.

Assignments for the Master of Arts in Religious Studies:

Major Paper: Write a 15-20 page major paper in which you reflect theologically and in depth about one of the major topics discussed during this course. Focus down to a single idea, and if possible find some controversy to address—Divine Order vs. Predestination, capital punishment and a theology of prison ministry, docetism and the One Presence-One Power principle, cultural relativism and the Christian Right, the problem of evil, dualism in the doctrine of God, etc. All topics must be approved by instructor.

Final Grade Determination

Percentage	Points	Grade
90% - 100%	4.0	A
80 - 89%	3.0	B
70 - 79%	2.0	C

Notes: Anything below “C” is ordinarily considered a failing grade in graduate programs. Grading is on straight 4-point scale; grades will be “rounded” to letter grade.

Late Assignment Policy

Exams must be taken when scheduled. No make-up exams will be given except for bona fide emergencies; documentation may be required. All work is due on the day scheduled. Late assignments will be assessed five percent (5%) penalty per day, weekends and holidays included.

Academic Integrity

All work submitted in this course must be the student’s own original work generated specifically for this class. This policy includes all assignments, exams, papers, and other projects required by the instructor. The submission of another person’s work represented as that of the student without properly citing the source of the work will be considered plagiarism and will result in a failing grade (zero) for that assignment or exam. A second incident will result in a failing grade (zero) for the course. Repeated offenses may result in dismissal from the program. *Previously written papers or other materials from student files—even though written by the student who is submitting the assignment—are also not acceptable.* The rule is, *new work for new assignments.* Students should consult the Unity Institute Student Handbook for a full explanation of academic honesty and plagiarism.

Attendance Policy

While attendance has no direct impact on the final grade, there is a very strong correlation between attendance and success in the class. If students miss a class, students are responsible for obtaining the lecture notes,

information and/or directions from another student. Should students decide to quit attending this class, they must officially drop it at the Registrar's Office. Failure to do this will result in an F for the course regardless of how many days the student has attended.