

THEO 110(X3): Exploring the Christian Faith

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THEO 110(X3): Exploring the Christian Faith

Course Welcome

Welcome to Exploring the Christian faith! Allow me to invite you to grow in your understanding, affection, and faith by reflecting deeply on the Christian Scriptures, theology, and spirituality. We will follow Ancient Israel in her hope to be drawn into the life of God. We will see how this hope develops dramatically through the stories of creation, fall, exile, restoration, redemption and restoration. We will see that at the center of Israel's drama is a person, Jesus Christ, its prophet, priest, and king. And we will see how through Jesus, God's presence to humanity expands beyond Israel to encompass all the nations.

Instructor Contact Information

Name: Cristian Mihut
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Email: Cristian.mihut@betheluniversity.edu
Preferred contact method: email
Best time to contact: mornings

Instructor Email Response Policy

Any course related email sent to the instructor will have a response either by email, phone, or through the LMS within 48 hours.

Course Description and Credit Hours

(3 credit hours) (Course description from university catalogue: "This course is designed to acquaint the student with the Christian worldview. In so doing, students will learn about the Christian faith, its distinct theological terminology and its historic theological positions as they are set forth by the Scriptures and interpreted by evangelical Christianity. Further, more than a factual introduction to Christianity, this course both connects the redemptive message of Jesus Christ to contemporary life issues and encourages students to grow in their understanding of and relationship with Him.")

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of the course, students should be able to:

- To gain a deeper understanding of the overarching narrative of the Bible.
- To read, write, and think more analytically, imaginatively, *and* lovingly about the Christian faith.
- To have our intellect, emotions, volition, self-understanding, and our faith stretched and strengthened through reading the Bible, theology, and devotional literature,

through writing and conversation, so that we might flourish as a human and Christian.

- To learn to read the Bible as literature. You will become familiar with biblical genres (e.g., poetry, apocalypse), themes (e.g., exile and restoration), motifs (the sea, the well, the desert, the scapegoat, the dove, etc.) and conventions (e.g., paradox, parallelism)
- To delight in how the Bible lifts us beyond ourselves to more insightful thoughts, deeper emotions, and righteous action.

Required Textbook / Materials

Title: The Bible (Any Study Bible would work well)

Author(s): God and humans

Publisher: Tyndale, or others

Published ISBN: Basically, any major translation of the Bible will do: NIV, KJV, NASB, NRSV, Etc.

Title: Questions to all your answers: The Journey from Folk Religion to Examined Faith

Author(s): Roger Olson

Publisher: Zondervan

Published ISBN: 978-0310287582

Title: Getting Involved with God: Rediscovering the Old Testament

Author(s): Ellen Davis

Publisher: Cowley Publications

Published ISBN: 978-1561011971

Textbooks and other required course materials can be purchased from the [online campus bookstore](#).

Course Requirements

Any online course activities assigned to the course are performed within Canvas.

Additional web sites and related web-based activities, if assigned, will be accessed through the course or through web links provided for web sites located outside the course.

Final Grade Calculation

Grade Distribution

Assignment	Point Value
Online Discussions	30%
Church Visit Reflections	20%
Weekly Quizzes	10%
Three Exams	40%
Total	100%

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percent
A	100% - 94%
A-	< 94% - 90%
B+	< 90% - 87%
B	< 87% - 84%
B-	< 84% - 80%
C+	< 80% - 77%

C	< 77% - 74%
C-	< 74% - 70%
D+	< 70% - 67%
D	< 67% - 64%
D-	< 64% - 60%
F	< 60% and below

Netiquette Policy

In an online course, almost all your interactions with other people will be through the internet. This netiquette policy applies to all your interactions with the instructor and your fellow students, and you are expected to follow the guidelines outlined below.

Respect other people and be willing to share your ideas and thoughts in a respectful way. Simply, respect others' views. You may disagree with someone, but do so graciously and constructively. Pause before writing emails or posts when you are angry, and reread what you wrote carefully before clicking 'send.' Treat others the way you wish to be treated—with respect. Do not post or communicate offensive or hateful content. Bethel University does not permit discussions that are obscene, harassing, sexually explicit, or derogatory toward individuals or groups. These will be deleted, and repeat offenders may be barred from future participation. Do not post or share personal information. Do not post or share information such as addresses, telephone numbers, etc., and do not post or share someone else's personal information.

Learning Activities and Tests

Online Discussion

Class Participation

In the event of classroom meeting cancelation due to a campus scheduled holiday or severe weather, the scheduled class session will continue online. The following requirements are for online discussions:

The student will submit an initial discussion post per discussion topic. This initial discussion is a minimum of 250 words. This initial discussion post must include a level of detail, analysis and reflection related to the discussion topic. The student is expected to cite references to support their opinion. Any use of references must be properly cited using APA format.

Each student is required to reply to a minimum of two student initial posts. The reply post is a minimum of 100 to 150 words. This post must include a level of detail, analysis and reflection. To receive the minimum points possible for a weekly discussion requires each student to post their initial discussion response on the regular night of the class session and two student reply posts by day four of the session – unless otherwise directed by the professor.

Post / Response Guidelines

In an online classroom the majority of discussion among class members will take place in the discussion forum. Online discussion forums are designed to allow the class to engage in a healthy dialog on the lesson topic or question being presented. However, for the dialog to remain productive Bethel University requires each person to conduct themselves in a responsible manner by following the simple guidelines below. These help to maintain a

collaborative and congenial environment by reminding us all that, when we communicate online, we are still engaging real people.

Stay on the discussion topic. Be respectful of participants and their time by staying on-topic and not commandeering a discussion with vague or unrelated comments. Contribute productive information when participating in a discussion by stating a complete and logical idea or concept. The goal in the discussion is to delve into a topic and “learn,” so when you post a comment stay on topic and explain your point of view.

Access the discussions several times in the weekly sessions to remain current and active in the discussion.

Do not post copyrighted material without the expressed, documented permission of the copyright holder or following proper source citation of the information, just as you would when writing an essay or term paper. Cite a source if you use it.

Contact your instructor if you have any questions.

Weekly Assignments

Week 1 Devotion

Week 1 discussion forum: Blueprints, Canvases, and Genesis

Week 1 Quiz

Week 2 Devotion

Week 2 Discussion Forum: On the Nature and Hierarchy of Sin

Week 2 Quiz

Week 3 Devotion

Week 3 Discussion Forum: Boaz & Ruth versus David & Bathsheba

Week 3 Quiz

Week 4 Devotion

Week 4 Discussion Forum: Human Pain, God’s Response, and aftermath

Week 4 Quiz

Week 5 Devotion

Week 5 Discussion Forum: Poverty, Jesus, and God’s Kingdom

Week 5 Quiz

Week 6 Devotion

Week 6 Discussion Forum: Atonement /// Pentecost and the Mission of the Church

Week 6 Quiz

Week 7 Devotion

Week 7 Discussion Forum: Apocalypse Now

Week 7 Quiz

Major Assignments

EXAM ONE (due July 11)

EXAM TWO (due July 25)

FINAL EXAM (due August 15)

FIRST CHURCH REFLECTION (due July 25) **The Assignment:**

You will attend a Christian church service (this does not include cults, college services, small groups, or TV/radio services) that is “**dissimilar**” from your own tradition.

1. Make sure to consult the rubrics below which you have to fill out, and to take notes answering the questions below, while you are attending the service.

2. **Be sure to collect a bulletin/program for additional evidence of your attendance. Scan it and include it in an attachment to the paper, as evidence for your attendance.**
3. On the basis of your notes **you must type a 500-800 word reflection and save as a PDF (preferred) or Word document. You must upload it by SATURDAY, July 25 at 11:59pm.** Make sure you do not only answer mechanically the questions from below, but instead that you write up a coherent, well-organized, evaluative essay that describes, analyzes and evaluates your experience. MLA style. That is, use the questions below only as guideposts that frame and direct your own reflection. The organization and developed case you build must be yours and yours alone. Remember to be charitable and respectful, even if, and especially if you disagree with the theology or liturgy or behaviors you experience in this new church context. Your just is first and foremost to describe the new forms of worship and theological thinking, second to understand why these people worship the way they do, and only third to evaluate against your own values and experiences.

This must appear at the top of the typed reflection:

- YOUR NAME:
- CHURCH YOU VISITED:
- LOCATION OF CHURCH:
- DATE OF YOUR VISIT:
- PASTOR'S/PRIEST'S NAME:
- TITLE OF SERMON/HOMILY:
- SCRIPTURE REFERENCE(S) USED :

Questions you must answer in your reflection:

1. What were your first impressions after entering the sanctuary?
2. What were the main theological themes developed through the service? Was there a consistent or coherent theme developed throughout?
3. How did the order of the service, the music, and the program contribute to your experience of the divine? Did these help or did they hinder it? How so?
4. Reflect on the nature of the Christian symbolism in the physical worship space. What kind of art was evident on the walls? What objects were center stage? How did this symbolism enhance or diminish your worship experience?
5. Reflect on the message. What was the theological nugget of the sermon? How did it connect with your own church tradition? How did it connect with some of the themes we discussed in Exploring the Christian Faith? Provide some specific evaluation of sermon ideas.
6. What is one main similarity between your own church and the church you visited? What is one main difference between your church and the church you visited?

SECOND CHURCH REFLECTION* (due August 8) **The Assignment:*

You will attend a religious service (this does not include cults, college services, small groups, or TV/radio services) that is "dissimilar" from your own ethnic background. (For instance, if you are Caucasian, you may attend an African-American, Hispanic, or Asian Christian church.)

Make sure to consult the rubrics below which you have to fill out, and to take notes answering the questions below, while you are attending the service.

Be sure to collect a bulletin/program for additional evidence of your attendance. Scan it and include it in an attachment to the paper, as evidence for your attendance.

On the basis of your notes you must type a 500-800 word reflection and save as a PDF (preferred) or Word document. **You must upload it by August 8 at 11:59pm EST.** Make sure you do not only answer mechanically the questions from below, but instead that you write up a coherent, well-organized, evaluative essay that describes, analyzes and evaluates your experience. MLA style. That is, use the questions below only as guideposts that frame and direct your own reflection. The organization and developed case you build must be yours and yours alone. Remember to be charitable and respectful, even if, and especially if you disagree with the theology or liturgy or behaviors you experience in this new church context. Your just is first and foremost to describe the new forms of worship and theological thinking, second to understand why these people worship the way they do, and only third to evaluate against your own values and experiences.

This must appear at the top of the typed reflection:



- YOUR NAME:
- CHURCH YOU VISITED:
- LOCATION:
- DATE OF YOUR VISIT:
- PASTOR/PRIEST NAME:
- TITLE OF SERMON/HOMILY:
- SCRIPTURE REFERENCE(S) USED :

Questions you must answer in your reflection:

1. What were your first impressions after entering the sanctuary? Describe in vivid detail the main symbols, objects, or works of religious art that caught your eye. How do they communicate or symbolize the sense of the holy?
2. Describe the order of the service, the music, and the program. Is there a logic to this order? How so?
3. Reflect on the content of the worship and of the message. What is the theological content of the sermon or homily? Make specific and pointed observations! What are the believers urged to do? How is God addressed or conceived? What is the content of the songs? What are the songs about? Provide some very specific evaluation of sermon ideas.
4. Reflect on the behavior and participation of the parishioners during worship. Make very specific and pointed observations about the way in which they engage the worship. How do they use their bodies in worship? What do their faces, hands, actions communicate? What is the overall "feel" you get from the way in which they enter and engage in worship? Why do you think they do what they do? Is there biblical justification or precedent for that kind of worship engagement? How so? What strikes us interesting, bizarre, appealing, repulsive, or fascinating?
5. Record any other observations you would like

Course Schedule

Week #	Required Reading	Assignment / Activity
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bible: <i>The Book of Genesis</i> Roger Olson, "Chapter 2: God is in Control: So Why is the World Such a Mess?" <i>In Questions to All Your Answers</i> pp. 45 - 60 Roger Olson, "Chapter 5: God has a perfect plan for your life: So What if I miss it?" <i>In Questions to All Your Answers</i> pp. 91 - 106 Devotional Reading: Ellen Davis, <i>Improving our Aim & Psalms of Lament</i>, pp 7 - 22 in <i>Getting Involved with God</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Week 1 Devotional Week 1 Forum Week 1 Quiz
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bible: <i>The Book of Exodus</i> chapters: 1 – 14, 19, 20, 32 – 34; <i>The Book of Leviticus</i> (Focus especially on chapter 16 and 19) Roger Olson, "Chapter 8: All Sins are Equal" in <i>Questions to All Your Answers</i>, pp. 139 - 154 Devotional Reading: Ellen Davis, Chapter 5: "I've Got to Turn Aside: The Burning Bush" pp. 45 - 49 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Week 2 Devotional Week 2 Forum Week 2 Quiz EXAM 1
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bible: <i>The Book of Judges</i> chapters 1 - 6 and 13 - 16; <i>The Book of Ruth</i>; <i>I Samuel</i> chapters 1- 10 (Skim as much of I Samuel as you can), <i>II Samuel</i>, chapters 5, 7, and 11 - 17, 18 (Skim the rest of II Samuel as you can); <i>I Kings</i> 1 - 2. Jeff Elkins: <u>Sex, Power, David, Bathsheba, and the American Church</u> (Links to an external site.) Devotional Reading: Ellen Davis, "The One Whom my Soul Love" pp. 65 - 88 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Week 3 Devotional Week 3 Forum Week 3 Quiz
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bible: <i>Isaiah</i> chapters 1 - 9 and 44 - 60; <i>Ezekiel</i> chapters 33 - 37; <i>Zechariah</i> chapter 7; <i>Amos</i> chapter 5 - 9; and <i>Micah</i> chapter 6; <i>The Book of Jonah</i>; <i>The Book of Job</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Week 4 Devotional Week 4 Forum Week 4 Quiz EXAM #2 First Church Reflection

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ellen Davis: <i>Chapter 10: The Sufferer's Wisdom- The Book of Job pp. 121 - 143</i> • Leonardo W. Pine: "The Prophetic Call For Care of the Poor (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site." • Devotional Reading: Ellen Davis: <i>Chapter 3 But Surely Not Those! The Cursing Psalms pp. 23 - 29 OR Week 4:Devotional - THE SILENCE OF GOD.</i> 	
<p>5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IMPORTANT GOSPEL FRAGMENTS: <i>Gospel of John chapters 1 – 4 and John 19 - 21^[L, SEP]</i> <i>Gospel of Mark^[L, SEP], Matthew 5 - 7, Luke 6; Matthew 27:27 - 28:20; Luke 23:26 - 24:53</i> • THE PARABLES OF JESUS: <i>The Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25 - 37); The Rich Fool (Luke 12: 16 - 21); The Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11 - 32); The Lost Coin and the Lost Sheep (Luke 15: 4 - 10); The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16: 19 - 31); The Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18: 9 - 14); The Sower and the Seeds (Luke 8: 5 - 8; Matthew 13: 3 - 9); The Wedding Feast (Matthew 22: 1 - 10; Luke 14: 16 - 24)</i> • Roger Olson: "Chapter 10: Money isn't bad, but only what we do with it," <i>in Questions to All your answers pp. 171 - 186</i> • Len Vanderzee: <u><i>Blessed are the Poor in Spirit sermon</i></u>  pdf. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 5 Devotional • Week 5 Forum • Week 5 Quiz
<p>6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bible: <i>Acts of the Apostles Chapters 1 - 11 & Paul's First Letter to Corinthians</i> - Essential reading for the week • Sermon by David Cramer: "<u>Resonate: Diversity - Acts</u>"  - Essential reading for understanding the Acts Reading, and for answering well the discussion forums, quizzes, and final exam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 6 Devotional • Week 6 Forum • Week 6 Quiz • Second church reflection

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark D. Baker: "Ten Ways God works through the Cross and Resurrection to Provide Salvation (Links to an external site.)" Essential reading for understanding the Atonement, and for responding thoughtfully to the discussion forums, quizzes, and final exam. • Jon Levenson: "Immortality and Resurrection in Judaism" - Essential reading for understanding why Paul focuses on the Resurrection of the body in I Corinthians, and why Paul attacks Gnosticism. • N.T. Wright: "Evolution of the Soul and Immortality in Christian Thought" - Essential reading for understanding the importance of resurrection of the Body in Christian thought. • David Scholer: "In the Know: Gnostics believed that Knowledge is the key to Salvation for a select few" - Essential reading for understanding the heresy of Gnosticism. (and one context for Paul's first letter to Corinthian church) • D. Jeffrey Bingham: "One God, One Christ, One Salvation" Essential reading for understanding the heresy of Gnosticism. (and one context for Paul's first letter to Corinthian church) 	
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bible: <i>Letter to Colossians, Letter to Philipians & the Book of Revelation</i> • Roger Olson: "Jesus is Coming Soon, So why are you buying life insurance?" in <i>Questions to All Your Answers</i>, pp. 139 - 154 • J. Nelson Kraybill: "Apocalypse Now" • Devotional Reading: Ellen Davis: Chapter 16 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 7 Devotional • Week 7 Forum • Week 7 Quiz • FINAL EXAM

Bethel University Policies and Resources

To view all Bethel University policies and information, please review the [Student Handbook](#).

Online Attendance

Online attendance is recorded each time that you log into the learning management system. The academic week is seven days for an online session and is based on the night the class normally meets (i.e. if the class meets on Monday night then the online session will be from Monday night through Sunday night of the following week). To receive full credit for attending online, you must login AND one of the following items must be completed as directed by the instructor:

- Submit an academic assignment.
- Submit a quiz or exam.
- Participate in a posted online academic discussion.

Note that the following actions will not count as attendance:

- Logging into class without active participation does not constitute attendance.
- Work done in a lab or other outside environment will not count toward online attendance.
- Assignments completed the week after the online assignment is due will not count toward attendance for the previous week.

Students are strongly encouraged to log into the course a minimum of three days during the week the course is “online” in order to understand the subject fully and to be successful in class.

An online absence is counted the same as an in-class absence.

Late or Make Up Work

It is important for students to submit work on time as scheduled in the class. This allows the instructor time to grade the material and provide feedback if necessary.

Circumstances may interfere with the ability to submit an assignment on time. However, as a student you agree to take the class and therefore agree to submit work on time.

Students are encouraged to work ahead to avoid late assignments. Please communicate with your professor promptly if you have extenuating circumstances that may contribute to a late assignment.

Assignments (excluding discussion questions) will be accepted late, subject to a 10% deduction off the earned grade per day late (24-hour period), for up to 3 days. No

assignments will be accepted after 3 days. Discussion posts and responses that are not posted by the due date will receive 0 points and are not accepted past the due date.

All work must be completed and submitted by the end of Week 7 of the course. No work will be accepted after the last day of the course.

Class Cancellation / Weather Policy for Online Courses

In the advent of in-classroom meeting cancellation due to a campus scheduled holiday or severe weather, the online course schedule will be maintained. Campus closures do not affect the online course schedule.

Plagiarism

Any act of deceit, falsehood or stealing by unethically copying or using someone else's work in an academic situation is prohibited. A student found guilty of plagiarism will receive an "F" for that paper, assignment or exam. The professor will have an interview with the student and submit a written report to the Program Director or Coordinator for the area in which the student is enrolled. If a second offense should occur, the student will be required to appear before the professor, the director and the vice president for adult and graduate studies. At this point the student's continuation in the course and academic career are in jeopardy. Students are encouraged to refer to the Bethel Library's [online help for proper citation](#).

Disability Services

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a law that provides civil rights protection for people with disabilities. Bethel University is compliant with equal access laws and requests students with disabilities The Center for Academic Success (CAS) is located in the lower level of the Miller/Moore Academic Center.

If you have a disability, or think you have a disability, please make an appointment by calling Disability Services at the Center for Academic Success at (574) 807-7460 or (574) 807-7462 or email academicsuccess@betheluniversity.edu.

Bethel's website offers more detailed information under CAS. Please check out the [Student Guide for Disability Services](#).

Information Technology Help Desk

The Help Desk is open Monday-Thursday from 7:30 a.m. - 6 p.m. and Friday, 7:30 a.m. - 5 p.m., during the fall and spring semesters, and 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. during the summer (starting May 1). Hours may vary on holidays and breaks.

Contact the Help Desk at helpdesk@betheluniversity.edu or by calling (574) 807-7777.

Library

Bethel's Bowen Library offers a range of resources and services, both online and physical, to all students enrolled at Bethel College. All online resources are available at the [library website](#).

Almost all periodicals and journals are available online, and there is a wide selection of e-books available as well. Off-campus access to these resources requires an active Bethel login account. For assistance in locating information, librarians are available to answer questions via email ([Ask a Librarian](#)), phone, or in person during regular business hours. For physical resources, students are able to use the [library catalog](#) to locate books and resources that are held either by Bethel or any other library. Students may use the catalog to request books from another library and have them delivered to the Bowen Library.

Students may also go to any [PALNI](#) library or to Notre Dame or Holy Cross and check material out in person with a valid student ID. PALNI is a consortium of several academic libraries in Indiana of which Bethel is a member; some nearby member libraries include Saint Mary's, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Goshen, and Grace. In addition, physical books and journals, the Bowen Library provides study spaces, computers, and printers (included a web print station) to all students.

Syllabus Acknowledgment

Enrollment in this course is considered an acknowledgment that the student will review and follow the course syllabus and additional college policies as stated within the student handbook, college catalog and student information provided by the college through the campus website.

This syllabus is not a legal contract, but serves as a general outline for the semester. The professor reserves the right to make adjustments to the course as the need arises.