



**A MINISTRY OF AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF INDIANA AND KENTUCKY
IN COOPERATION WITH ABC-GI ALONG WITH SPONSORING
AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES & ASSOCIATIONS**

C104-Introduction to Theology

January 25, February 8, February 22 & March 7, 2020
(Make-up Date, if necessary, March 21)

Rev. Bern Kiser, M.A., M. Div., Instructor
Phone: (812) 595-5199
Email: bernkiser@aol.com

Description and Purpose

This Theology Course will enable you to define what you mean by “theology”. You will engage with classmates in discussing doctrines of Christian belief and ways we communicate our faith, and respond to challenges of faith in the twenty-first century. The approach that Rev. Kiser will take is known as “Systematic Theology,” which divides the theological quest up into various areas, such as: the study of the Trinity, the study of sin, the study of salvation, the study of the Church, etc. This is the form that our text uses.

Our text will help us to do this: (1) an older text, Christian Beliefs, by the Dean and Professor of New Testament at the American Baptist Seminary.

Finally, we will explore other contemporary issues of life, and how we approach them in the light of what we believe – how we “do faith.” People will often say things with which we don’t agree. So, we must learn to listen to others well, even if what they say, questions one of our core beliefs. We will work on listening skills this semester as well.

Focus of This Experience

- As to the manner in which we will study. Our class will be driven by discussion. To have an informed opinion, we must read the writings of others. To best understand what we read, we must write about and discuss our readings. This formula is tested through time and seems effective. We will write to learn.
- Each session, you will be asked to write a few one-paged papers on your reading. Please share the ideas that your reading stimulates and show me that you have read the text by what you write. By reading and writing, we will have much more interesting discussions in class. I am looking for content in writing, not grammatical perfection. These papers may either be typed or handwritten. They will not be graded, but I will take them seriously, so I hope that you take them seriously too.
- It is very likely that the instructor will present handouts for each class. These handouts will be the writings of other theologians who are discussing the topics that we are addressing each session. These handouts will be both read and discussed in class. This will not constitute extra work for you outside of class.

Required Text

1. Christian Beliefs, by Ralph E. Knudsen, Judson Press,
If you have difficulty finding this book, CLI has permission from the publisher to copy it for your use. Please send \$15 to cover the cost of this expense. You may include it in the same check you send for your registration or send the payment separately. All checks must be made payable to *ABC-IN/KY*.

Student Expectations

1. Attend all sessions whenever possible
2. Contact the instructor in advance, if you will be absent
3. Be prepared for each class session
4. Participate in class
5. Support and encourage other students in the class
6. Communicate with the instructor, if you have any questions or concerns

Please bring the following to each class session:

- Textbook
- Good English Translation of the Bible
- Notebook (for handouts, assignments and taking notes)
- 2 pens/pencils (electronic device to take notes, if preferred)
- Syllabus, handouts & assignments
- Personal Journal

Requirements to Earn Credit

1. Completion of all reading and written assignments.
2. Participation in class discussions and exercises.
3. Read additional articles or blogs as may be assigned
4. Bring textbooks and completed assignments to each class session.
5. Attend at least 15 of the 20 hours of classroom time
6. If absent one class session, earn an excused absence by doing the following:
 - a. contact the instructor about your absence (preferably before the absence, but at least within 72 hours of the absence)
 - b. obtain notes from two students who did participate in any class session you missed
 - c. request a copy of the PowerPoint presentation(s) for the class session you missed in note format (3 slides per page); of course, this only applies if the instructor uses PowerPoint in the class session you missed.
 - d. complete a special assignment given by your instructor in addition to regular assignments; this is usually an enriching experience that will most likely pertain to the class session the student missed in some way.

Class Sessions

Note: Assignments listed under each class session date are due on or before that date.

Session 1—January 25

Assignments *prior* to Session 1:

- Read the Preface & the first five chapters (69 pages) of Christian Beliefs by Knudsen
- Titled “What I believe”—Write a brief (no more than 1 page) statement on your present beliefs that are the core of your Christian commitment.
- Please come prepared to discuss the following: (1) What is your present area of ministry in your local church? (2). How do you think that the study of theology may help you grow in ministry? (3). How may this class help you to grow both intellectually and spiritually in order for you to minister even better?

Session One Objectives:

1. We will introduce ourselves, and share what we hope to learn from this course.
2. We will define what we mean by “theology.”
3. We will discuss Knudsen’s first five chapters (covering the Bible, God and Jesus Christ).
4. We will share our “What I Believe” statements regarding our own theological faith.
5. There will also be a class handout from *A Layman’s Guide to Protestant Theology* on the value of theology.

Session 2—February 8

We will discuss three aspects of theology in Knudsen. They are: 1) the Holy Spirit; 2) sin and forgiveness; and 3) salvation.

Assignments *prior* to Session 2:

- In pp. 71-83, in Knudsen, we will discuss the role and work of the Holy Spirit. Look on page 83, and write a one-paged response to 1 of the 10 questions. Choose whichever of the 10 questions you wish.
- In pp. 85-97, in Knudsen, we read of the topics of “sin and forgiveness.” Please choose 1 of the 10 questions on page 97 and write a one-page response.
- On pages 99-111, Knudsen deals with the topic of “salvation.” Write a one-paged response to 1 of the questions on page 111.

Session Two Objectives:

1. Grow in our understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit.
2. Grow in our understanding of the concepts of sin and forgiveness.
3. Grow in our understanding of the concept of salvation.
4. Work on our listening skills.

Session 3—February 22

In session 3, we will discuss issues such as the church and the kingdom of God.

Assignments *prior* to Session 3:

- On pages 113-126, Knudsen discusses “the church.” Please write a one-paged paper in response to 1 of the 10 questions on pp. 125-126.
- On pages 127-151, Knudsen discusses the “Kingdom of God.” Choose 1 of the 10 questions on page 138 and 1 of the 10 questions on page 151. Write a one-paged response on each of the questions you choose.

Session Three Objectives:

1. Grow in our understanding of the function and calling of the “Church.”
2. Understand and be able to convey to others the importance of the local church in God’s overall plan of salvation.
3. Understand the role of the church in the “kingdom of God.”

Session 4—March 7

In session 4, we will discuss “Immortality.”

Assignments *prior* to Session 4:

- Please read pp. 153-163 in Knudsen, choose 2 questions from the questions on page 163 you would like to respond to and write a one-page paper in response to each. This is a deviation from our normal practice.

Session Four Objectives:

1. Students will discuss how they have used (and/or will use) some learnings/insights in terms of their own faith journey.
2. Turn in all work due to complete the requirements of this course
3. Complete Evaluation Forms

DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE

Arrive 8:45am

9:00-10:15 Session A

10:15-10:30 Break

10:30-11:45 Session B

11:45-12:30 Lunch

12:30-1:45 Session C

1:45-2:00 Break

2:00-3:15 Session D

CLASS LOCATION

**Westport Baptist Church
202 E Main St
Westport, IN 47283**