

**ST511: ORIENTATION TO THEOLOGICAL STUDIES (4 units). Richard J. Erickson, Associate Professor of New Testament, and Chris Spinks and Markus McDowell, Adjunct Professors in Theology**

---

**DESCRIPTION:** This Internet-based course explores the nature of studying theology at Fuller Theological Seminary. It considers the functions and skills, as well as the frame of mind, required for getting the best possible results from a Fuller education and from any theological interaction. Focus is placed on the skills of reading, research, and writing. Fostering an attitude of "critical openness," the course emphasizes listening, thinking, and responding, and doing so with intelligence and grace.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES:** As a result of taking this course, students should have increased ability (1) to listen sympathetically, (2) to think critically, and (3) to interact clearly and graciously, in both oral and written form, as they encounter the wealth of varied theological perspective. These skills should be evident in the students' increased ability (4) to prepare a well-designed research paper.

**RELEVANCE FOR MINISTRY:** Christians' understanding of theology, however diverse, and their ability to discuss it meaningfully with each other and the world deeply enhance the life of the Church of Jesus Christ. In order for the Church and the world to benefit from this discussion, Christian leaders need these basic skills for effective preaching, teaching, writing, and decision-making, as well as for developing their character and credibility. These are indispensable qualities for God's servants.

**COURSE FORMAT:** Conducted online, the ten weekly lessons align with Fuller's academic calendar. The course involves reading, writing, orientation to libraries and other resources, and interactive discussion. Each week students and the instructor will interact with the material through journaling, threaded discussions, and web-based research.

**REQUIRED READING:**

- Adler, M. J., and C. Van Doren. *How to Read a Book*. Revised edition. Simon & Schuster, 1972.
- Grenz, S. J., D. Guretzki, and C. F. Nordling. *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*. IVP, 1999.
- Ross-Larson, B. *Edit Yourself: A Manual for Everyone Who Works with Words*. Norton, 1996.
- Stone, H. W., and J. O. Duke. *How to Think Theologically*. Fortress, 1996.
- Truss, Lynne. *Eats, Shoots and Leaves: A Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*. Gotham, 2003.
- Turabian, K. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Sixth edition. University of Chicago, 1996.
- Vyhmeister, N. J. *Quality Research Papers for Students of Religion and Theology*. Zondervan, 2001.
- Various additional articles, "lectures," and readings available online.

**RECOMMENDED READING:** Available in posted documents.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

1. Reading of all material assigned in weekly lessons, to be completed as due.
2. Nine short weekly quizzes (18%).
3. Short weekly exercises based on and designed to aid comprehension of assigned reading: threaded discussions (20%), journaling (5.3%), web surfing and research (1.7%).
4. Six-part resource guide (8.3%).
5. Maximum 4000-word research paper, due in stages throughout the term: first draft due in ninth week, final draft due end of finals week (late submissions not accepted) (30%).
6. Final Exam (16.7%).

**PREREQUISITES:** Permission of the Director of SOT, SIS, and MAGL Academic Advising. *No auditors.*

**RELATIONSHIP TO CURRICULUM:** Elective.

**FINAL EXAMINATION:** Yes, available and due during the last week.