

**FIRST YEAR COLLOQUIUM**  
**2000/2001**  
**THE DIVINITY SCHOOL**

As a distinctive element in the Divinity School's venture in theological studies, the First Year Colloquium offers entering students a year long opportunity to meet weekly in various configurations of students and faculty to discuss assigned readings that stretch across the theological spectrum. Although the Colloquium will focus on specific themes—"thinking theologically about" particular issues—the enterprise is anchored in the process of reflection and conversation. The process itself revolves around the basic question: "What does it mean to think theologically?" It is a learning process, because "thinking theologically" will acquire new, nuanced, and different meanings on the multiple subjects addressed in the course of the year.

While the issues for discussion originate in the schedule of readings for this year, the learning process in the First Year Colloquium aims to enhance student performance in the multiple academic endeavors of the three-year Master of Divinity program. From the outset, students and faculty will engage one another from a variety of backgrounds, multiple vocational callings, and different theological viewpoints. The purpose of the discussions is not to establish the validity of one viewpoint on an issue against all other viewpoints, but to explore the difficulty, complexity, and variable perspectives on crucial theological issues. The willingness to be open to each other in reflective theological conversation becomes the test of freedom for one another in responsible theological dialogue.

Indeed, the comfortable flow and positive outcome of the colloquium presupposes the ability of faculty and students alike to be tolerant of one another in the integrity of our diversity and the refusal to exclude any one of us on the basis of the differences in our particularity.

**Purpose and Objectives**

The ambitious endeavor to nurture critical, perceptive theological thinking (which hopefully means heightened self-understanding and appreciation of the differences in perspectives) translates into several specific goals, including:

1. To introduce the student to representative sources, alternative approaches, and critical issues in the exercise of theological reflection.
2. To provide opportunity for dialogue among first-year students and the faculty on historic and contemporary themes in the diversity of Christian traditions.
3. To offer occasion for theological reflection and dialogue essential to Church ministry within the great variety of Christian vocation and calling.

Some of the questions that inform the year's work are: Beyond the various disciplines in divinity studies (that constitute theological education), what is "theological reflection"? What does it



mean to "think" "theologically"? What are the "ways" that we do theological reflection? What are the criteria and their differing configurations in evaluating particular perspectives? What are the implications of theological thinking for the life of the church and the vocation of ministry?

What the colloquium does **not** attempt to do is likewise essential to its conception:

**Not** to forge a "consensus" that undercuts the legitimacy and integrity of different theological perspectives (though reflective thought will aim at civility of expression).

**Not** to establish a "community" wherein relational concerns outweigh the difficulties of serious theological discourse (though community remains one of the concerns of the colloquium).

**Not** to provide a "platform" for the faculty to present their views for the benefit of beginning students (though the differences in faculty perspectives will be increasingly evident through the year).

Although expectations are high and feelings of vulnerability are inevitable, the faculty hopes that students will experience the colloquium as invigorating (and not intimidating).

### Procedures

The four-week cycle of weekly meetings are divided into a **plenary session** of the entire colloquium, successive **small groups** of four or five students with one professor, and concluding **forums** of fourteen students with three professors.

At the initial **plenary session** specific faculty members will offer analyses of the book to enhance the understanding and subsequent discussion of the colloquium. The faculty presentations aim to clarify the content, argument, and issues in the assigned text.

The second session divides into **small groups**, and each student submits a one-page, single-spaced "Response" (500 words) on the assigned book. These structured (but dense) essays presuppose thoughtful reading and require careful analysis, each essay a written exercise designed to enable the student to participate freely in the give and take of the theological discussion about the book's content. The professor leading the group will grade the papers of his or her group.

The third session consists of a second **small group** meeting with a different professor. Although written responses are not required, everyone will read the new materials to continue the dialogue on the assigned text. (The only exception to this pattern occurs in November, because a written response on Douglas, **Sexuality and the Black Church**, is due on November 14, and another response on Wink, **Homosexuality and Christian Faith**, on November 21. However, these papers together constitute a single grade, functioning as one paper.)



The final session of the four-week cycle occurs in **forums**, which brings three groups together with three professors for a larger dialogue. Discussion will concentrate on the central issues in the book and (perhaps) significant concerns related to it. The limited size of the forum nurtures the expectation that all students will participate.

### **Book Response Guidelines**

Your book responses are sharply limited to one-page, single-spaced (500 words). This limitation requires the student to revise the paper for appropriate content and brevity, which is not an easy task. Since the six book responses count 60% of the year's colloquium grade, the importance of carefully crafted and well-written papers can hardly be overemphasized.

Each book response follows the same structure. Number your the items in your response to the required text as follows:

1. Provide full bibliographic information.
2. State the thesis of the book in one (or two) sentence(s).
3. Specify the actual purpose(s) of the book.
4. Identify the author's context and clarify its relevance.
5. Trace the development of the argument of the book (of crucial importance).
6. Comment briefly on one or two theological insights in the book.
7. Indicate two points where one might argue against the author.

The rotation of professors for each group session will give students a variety of faculty grade assessments of his or her written work over the course of the year.

### **Attendance, Requirements, and Grading**

Since all faculty and entering students are to participate in the Colloquium, attendance is mandatory. An unanticipated absence due to a crisis will necessitate some form of compensatory work in addition to the assignment itself. Absence(s) will dramatically reduce the student's final grade.

The schedule for the Colloquium provides an explanatory lecture before each student's written response is due, but it does not allow for late papers or rewritten papers. Awareness of the inadequacies in a specific paper should challenge a student to improve the quality of future work. The pace of the colloquium requires disciplined reading, careful writing, informed dialogue, and ongoing reflection—collective expressions of academic engagement. The uniqueness and character of the First Year Colloquium shape the work load rather than the actual credit hours.

Grading will follow the Divinity School scale. The six responses to the assigned textbooks over the year will count 60% and a final paper at the end of the year 40%. Guidelines for the final paper are included below. The course grade for the two semesters' work will be determined through the collaboration of the entire faculty, at least two professors grading a student's final essay.



## FINAL COLLOQUIUM PAPERS

The Final Paper for the First year Colloquium enables the student to demonstrate achievement or accomplished learning in "thinking theologically" through the two-semester colloquium course. The essay climaxes the year's work and counts 40% of the student's colloquium grade for 2000-2001.

The student selects 3 different topics for theological reflection from at least 3 different colloquium books. You should *delimit* each topic of discussion sharply enough to enable you to engage in careful, thoughtful reflection. The task is not to survey in grand generalities the scope and depths of a great theme but, conversely, to define the "subject matter" with sufficient precision to enable you to demonstrate your ability in thinking theologically about it. The goal is for you to demonstrate skill in theological thinking (cogitation) in three distinct areas of thought (with reference to at least three different books) with reasoned and perceptive analysis. The essay requires you to exercise cognitive, reflective skills in critical theological discernment, but you must narrow each of your three topics into manageable units that allows for such in-depth reflection.

A rigorously prepared paper at least 12 but no more than 14 pages, the essay includes an introduction to explain the selection of your 3 different topics (1 page), approximately 4 pages for an exploration/analysis/description of *each* topic/theme/area wherein you have gained perspective/insight/enrichment in thinking theologically through the year, and a brief conclusion to your essay, e.g., the integration of the diverse elements in your presentation (1 page). Attend carefully to the demands of a written (versus oral) exercise in theological reflection. Paraphrase material rather than footnote quotations (though a rare, brief quote might be referenced in parentheses). Revise earlier drafts for clarity, conciseness, and precision as well as for punctuation, spelling, and grammar.

Submit 2 copies of your essay by 11:00 AM, Friday, April 27. All papers will be graded and returned within ten days.

### Calendar

September 5	Forums A/B	To think theologically . . . Douglas John Hall, <i>Thinking the Faith</i> , 17-45, 57-66
September 12	Plenary	Jon Levenson, <i>Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible</i>  Presenters: Phyllis Tribble Brad Braxton
September 19	Groups 1-6	Student Papers Due



September 26	Groups 1-6	Reviews: T. R. Hobbs, <b>Biblical Theology Bulletin</b> , 34-35; Christopher R. Seitz, <b>Interpretation</b> , 302-304; Samuel Terrien, <b>Journal of Biblical Literature</b> , 317-319
October 3	Forums A/B	Discussion of Levenson
October 10	Plenary	Martin Luther, <b>Three Treatises</b>  Presenters: Bill Leonard Sam Weber
October 17	Groups 1-6	Student Papers Due
October 24	Groups 1-6	Articles/Essays
October 31	Special Plenary	Guest Lecturer: Robin Scroggs "Homosexuality in the New Testament"
November 7	Plenary (School)	Kelly Brown Douglas, <b>Sexuality and the Black Church</b>  Presenters: Brad Braxton Valerie Cooper
November 14	Plenary (School)	Walter Wink, <b>Homosexuality and Christian Faith</b>  Presenters: Phyllis Trible James Dunn (Frank Tupper)  Richard B. Hays, <b>The Moral Vision of the New Testament</b> , "Homosexuality," 379-406 Kathryn Green-McCreight, "The Logic of the Interpretation of Scripture and the Church's Debate over Sexual Ethics," <b>Homosexuality, Science, and the "Plain Sense" of Scripture</b> , 242-260
November 21	Groups 1-6	Student Papers Due on Douglas
November 28	Groups 1-6	Student Papers Due on Wink
December 5	Plenary	Evaluation and Preview of the Spring Semester



Spring Semester

January 23

Plenary

Nancey Murphy, **Beyond Liberalism and  
Fundamentalism**

Presenters: Frank Tupper  
Bill Leonard 25

Respondent: Elaine Swartzentruber,  
Department of Religion

January 30

Groups 1-5

Student Papers Due

February 6

Groups 1-5

Reviews: Ted Peters, **Dialog**, 36 (1997), 316-318;  
Gerald T. Sheppard, **Interpretation**, 52  
(1998), 425-428; Keith Yandell, **Christian  
Scholar's Review**, 28 (1998), 369-372;  
Symposium: Philip Clayton and Nancey  
Murphy, **Zygon** 33 (1998), 467-480

February 13

Forums A/B

Discussion

February 20

Plenary

Gordon Lanthrop, **Holy Things: A Liturgical  
Theology**

Presenters: Jill Crainshaw  
Sam Weber

Respondent: Candyce Leonard, 20 min  
Interdisciplinary Studies

February 27

Groups 1-5

Student Papers Due

March 6

Groups 1-5

Review Articles

March 20

Forums A/B

Discussion

March 27

Plenary

Falk and Harrelson, **Jews and Christians in  
Pursuit of Social Justice**

Presenters: James Dunn  
Frank Tupper

Respondent: Mary Jane Berman  
Department of Anthropology

April 3	Groups 1-5	Student Papers Due <i>May 1st</i>
April 10	Forums A/B	Discussion
April 17		No Meeting: Preparation for Final Papers
April 24		No Meeting: Preparation for Final Papers
<b>Friday, April 27, 11:00 AM</b>		<b>Final Papers Due in Dean's Office</b>
May 1	Plenary	Discussion and Evaluation

**Meetings: Dates, Places, Groups**

<b>Plenary</b>	<b>Jan 23</b> Room 202	<b>Feb 20</b> Room 202	<b>March 27</b> Room 202	<b>May 1</b> Room 202
<b>Forums</b>	<b>Feb 13</b>	<b>March 20</b>	<b>April 10</b>	
A-Room 203	1,2, Weber Leonard	3,4,5 Leonard Tupper Weber	5,1,2 Braxton Tupper Weber	
B-Room 206	3,4,5 Dunn Braxton Tupper	1,2 Dunn Braxton	3,4 Dunn Leonard	



<i>Small Groups</i>	<i>Jan 30</i>	<i>Feb 6</i>	<i>Feb 27</i>	<i>March 6</i>	<i>April 3</i>
Brad Braxton Balcony Room	1	2	3	4	5
James Dunn 503 Tower	2	3	4	5	1
Bill Leonard Office 111	3	4	5	1	2
Frank Tupper Room 203	4	5	1	2	3
Sam Weber 505 Tower	5	1	2	3	4

**Groups for Colloquium**

*Group 1*

David Brewer  
Linda McCrea  
Tripp Martin  
Jodi Simmons  
Boo Tyson  
Sarah Weaver

*Group 2*

Robyn Byrd  
Josh Goocey  
Michelle Jones  
Simon Osunlana  
Kristi Rolison  
Brian Whitaker

*Group 3*

Cindy Burns  
Tacuma Johnson  
Daniel Miles  
Mark Sandlin  
Rebecca Terry  
Melissa Vaughn

*Group 4*

Brian Ammons  
Willard Bass  
Heather Cronk  
Margaret Leinbach  
David Smith

*Group 5*

Andrew Daugherty  
Josh Helms  
Beth Hoagland  
Laura Mayo  
Michelle Meggs