

Associated Canadian Theological Schools
**THS 701: Current Theological Issues - Including Open Theism,
Pluralism/Inclusivism, Spiritual Gift Theology**

Kenneth G. Radant, Ph.D.
Fall Semester, 2008
3 Credit Hours
Prerequisites: THS 571
(or permission from the instructor)

513-2044, ex 3828; kenr@twu.ca
<https://courses.mytwu.ca>
Thursdays, 8:30-12:10
Room: tba

I. Course Description

A seminar exploring a selection of current theological issues. We will reflect briefly on principles that help us to engage theological problems effectively, and on the landscape of contemporary Christian theological debate. We will then examine a number of major issues under discussion today. Several strategic issues will be chosen and examined by the instructor; students will select and present papers on other relevant topics. Key topics for this year's class include: *open theism, pluralism/inclusivism (the status of the unevangelized), and issues relating to "spiritual gifts."*

II. Course Objectives

By the conclusion of this course, a student should be able to:

- 1) Describe notable features of the contemporary theological landscape, particularly as it relates to the Evangelical community but also with the wider Christian intellectual world in view;
- 2) Articulate a thoughtful, biblically-grounded, Evangelically appropriate, practically helpful personal philosophy of engagement with theological issues;
- 3) Summarize and apply key principles and strategies for addressing theological issues;
- 4) Engage in informed, insightful, constructive dialogue on a range of current theological issues including open theism, pluralism/inclusivism (particularly with respect to the state of the unevangelized), and the nature and use of "spiritual gifts";
- 5) Present a thoroughly-researched, intelligent critical review of a particular current theological issue;
- 6) Model academically credible, theologically sensitive, pastorally wise interaction with other Christians on current theological issues, demonstrating the qualities and skills that promote fruitful dialogue in real-life ministry settings in the church, academy, and marketplace.

III. Course Texts

Ken Berding. *What Are Spiritual Gifts? Rethinking the Conventional View*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006.

Dennis L. Okholm, and Timothy R. Phillips, ed. *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.

John Sanders. *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998.

Ken Radant, “An Introduction to the Study of Theology, Parts 1 & 2” (See “Reading,” below)

Ken Radant, “Are Our ‘LifeKeys’ the Right ‘SHAPE’ for our ‘Network’? A Theological Assessment of Recent Trends in ‘Spiritual Gift’ Teaching.” Paper read at the 2006 Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Washington D.C.

(Copies of the Radant papers will be posted on the course website.)

IV. Course Requirements

A. Reading

For this course, you will be reading ...

- **Each of the course textbooks in its entirety.**
 - Berding (205 pp)
 - Okholm & Phillips (283 pp)
 - Sanders (282 pp)
- **My paper “Are Our ‘LifeKeys’ the Right ‘SHAPE’ for our ‘Network’?”** (33 pp)
- **Another 100 pages on “spiritual gifts” from an older source which represents the “typical” Evangelical concept and the earlier stages of Evangelical “spiritual gift” theology.** (See the bibliography at the back of the syllabus for suggested sources. You may substitute another alternative of the same type, though substitutions should be made in consultation with the instructor.)
- **The research papers of your classmates.** (20-25 pages each; see below)
Once student papers are turned in to me, I will post them on the class website where everyone will have access to them.
- **Collateral reading relevant to our class** (which—taken together with student research papers—should add up to a minimum of 350 pages).

Some guidelines on the collateral readings:

- One major goal in this assignment is to allow you to do customized supplementary study on the subjects addressed in class. Each student comes with different interests and needs, and as graduate students I assume you have the wisdom to identify resources that will be helpful to you. ***You are free to choose your collateral material.*** It is not necessary to get my approval for your selections, though I am always happy to discuss subjects and make suggestions if you would find that helpful.
- Obviously your collateral reading ***should be demonstrably linked to the course objectives.*** Most of it will probably deal with the issues covered in our class or with other related issues of interest to you. Some may also deal with the principles that govern our engagement with theological issues as Evangelicals.
- Your collateral reading ***should add breadth*** to the course. Do not focus it all on one subject or draw it all from a very narrow range of sources.
Of special importance: this means that ***though you may include some of the research for your research paper within your collateral reading, it should not account for more than 130 pages of the collateral reading.***

- You do not need to restrict yourself to technical academic literature for the collateral reading. Sometimes challenging theological issues are explored in other, less formal venues as well. **However, the sources you choose should all reflect serious critical reflection on the subject**, of the sort that would have credibility if cited in an academic paper. In particular, be very selective if you choose to use online resources. Unless they are peer reviewed in some form, online documents should make up only a small percentage of your collateral readings,.
- This reading should not only broaden the range of topics you explore in conjunction with the course, but it should also broaden your exposure to different points of view. **Read materials that represent various perspectives and approaches on the subject matter.** Do not do all your reading in sources that are familiar and comfortable to you.
- Recommended: If you have not read the 2 Radant articles, “An Introduction to the Study of Theology, Parts 1 & 2,” in conjunction with other courses, I highly recommend that you read them early in this class. (You may include them in the collateral reading if this is your first time through them.) They will orient you to my own approach to theological issues, and give food for thought as you work on your own philosophy paper (see below).

Those who have read the papers previously may find it helpful to scan over them again as a refresher, though this is not a requirement.

To maximize the value of the reading and enhance our class interaction, **you will be expected to complete the appropriate text readings by the relevant class period**, as set forth on the course outline (below).

Where possible, I would encourage you to read student papers before the class sessions in which the material is presented. However, this is not a requirement.

To provide accountability, **you will submit a brief reading report** together with the second installment of your philosophy paper (see below), on **December 5**. A template will be provided.

Please note: no marks will be given for reading unless a suitable reading report is turned in to the instructor by the date stipulated.

B. Research paper and presentation

You will prepare a major research paper on one current theological issue of your own choosing.

- Paper topics will be determined in consultation with the class, since students will be presenting papers and reading each other’s paper in the second half of our course. *Do not start working on your paper until class meets and we are able to decide on topics together.*

I am assuming that many, if not most students will choose to write on an issue different from the three I have chosen as the focus in the early portion of the class. However, if some students want to do in-depth study relating to one of these areas, that can also be arranged. We will need to coordinate our work so that the student paper supplements what I plan to present without too much duplication.

- There will be opportunities to discuss the purpose, style, and expectations for the papers at the beginning of the course and through the early weeks as I present on several issues. In general, your

task will be: (1) to introduce the issue to the class, helping everyone understand its nature, context, and significance; (2) to survey the major views on the issue together with important proponents; (3) to provide some logical and theological analysis of the questions under debate; (4) to offer an evaluation of the major options and a statement of your own current stance on the issue, complete with rationale; (5) to assess the nature of your conclusion and explore possible implications and follow-up steps.

This is a graduate level theology seminar, so it is understood that research and argumentation will be carried on at a graduate level in a tone that befits good academic study. At the same time, we are exploring issues that have bearing on the life of the church, and so I assume that we will be reflecting on the practical impact of our research for day-to-day Christian ministry.

- The *text* of your paper should be no less than 20 pages and no more than 25 pages in length. Papers are to be well-written in accurate Turabian format (please note my preference for foot- or end-notes rather than in-text documentation). A more complete set of guidelines on the instructor's personal perspective and expectations for research papers can be found in *Ken Radant's Classes, A Survival Guide*, a handout which I will post on the course web site.
- You will submit your paper to me by email at kenr@twu.ca, as a document attachment in MS Word or in a format that will convert neatly and easily to Word. (For more instructions on soft-copy submission, see below.) The paper is due in my inbox at noon on **Thursday, Nov 6**.

☑ You will present an overview of your research to the class and facilitate a time of class discussion on the issue.

- Presentations will take place in the second half of our course. The amount of time given to each issue will depend on the number of students enrolled. A presentation schedule will be developed in consultation with the class, early in the semester.
- Your presentation will be built on the work you have done for your research paper, but it should not consist of a reading of the paper. Some guidelines to think about as you prepare:
 - This is an opportunity to provide more background into the issue and why you have chosen it. Frame the issue more fully for the class.
 - With respect to major questions, views, proponents, and arguments, you will need to survey the same basic content that you put forward in the paper. Do this succinctly and creatively. Highlight things that deserve special attention, and probe deeper in areas of strategic importance. Bring in quotations and other concrete illustrations that add vividness to what you present in the paper.
 - You will need to present a case for your own evaluation and conclusions. The class presentation will probably review the general outlines of the case you make in the paper, but then it should focus more intensively on strategic threads in the argument which you view as most important. The presentation may also supplement what is in the paper at various points.
 - In the presentation you will also likely be able to explore practical implications more fully and creatively than you can in the paper.
 - Bottom line: plan so that your presentation will be a helpful reinforcement and supplement of the paper, not a duplication in oral form.

- Expect to field questions and comments from the class during your presentation. Also, each presentation should be followed by a time of class discussion, in which your classmates probe the issue with you, clarify (and perhaps challenge) your argument, supplement what you have presented with insights they bring, and work together for better understanding of the issue and its implications. You are responsible to facilitate that discussion.
 - Make sure you leave ample time for it.
 - Encourage discussion by coming prepared with good questions and other strategies for encouraging dialogue.
 - Chair the interaction well, ensuring that everyone has opportunity to speak into the issue and highlighting the useful insights they contribute.
 - Attempt to steer the conversation in a way that provides a balanced treatment of the issue, and work for good closure to the exercise.
- Your grade for the presentation and for overall participation in class discussion will be based partly on my evaluation and partly on a peer review by your classmates. More information on the peer evaluation process will be provided in class.

C. Theology perspective paper

You will write a 12-15 page reflection paper summarizing your own personal philosophy for dealing with current theological issues.

This paper will be written in 2 parts.

1. The first section will outline a general framework of assumptions, working principles, and strategies for confronting theological issues.

It should ...

- Offer a definition for theology, as you understand it, together with some brief comments about the relationship between theological concepts and the day-to-day life of Christians and churches.
- Provide some explanation as to why some aspects in theology are easy while others are hard, why some points of doctrine are (and should be) broadly accepted while others are debated. What is the relationship between the “essentials” and the “peripheral things” in Christian theology? What determines whether a concept falls into the one sphere or the other? What does this say about the nature of theology in general? What does it imply for the problem of theological diversity among Christians who believe they are studying and pursuing the truth?
- Offer some practical guidelines as to how one distinguishes “essentials” and “peripheral matters” in theology, and how one might dialogue with others who disagree on this assessment.
- Offer some practical guidelines as to how the Christian community should engage each kind of theological concept. How do we establish, clarify, refine, teach, and preserve “essentials” of our faith? And how can we engage in constructive, edifying, credible, intellectually honest, academically and pastorally responsible discussion on issues where there will inevitably be differences of opinion?
- Illustrate your points briefly and concretely.

The first section of the paper should be 7-8 pages in length. It is due on **Thursday, Oct 16.**

- 2. The second section of the paper will illustrate and apply the perspectives presented in the first section, showing how they can be put into practice as we work through the current issues discussed in this course.

It should ...

- Show in practical terms how your personal philosophy helps you—and how it would help your church or Christian ministry community—to sort through 3 or 4 of the issues discussed in our class.
- In doing this you may refer to issues which I have presented and issues that your classmates have presented. You should use a combination of both. But you should not use the issue you have presented as a major illustration in the second section of the paper. Interacting with other issues will force you to engage the whole breadth of the course more fully rather than limiting your focus to the issue you have researched.

The second section of the paper should be 5-7 pages in length. It is due on **December 5**.

This theology perspective paper is not a formal research paper. It is a reflection exercise, designed to make you think about the principles that guide you as you engage in discussion on theological issues. I am not expecting you to do focused research for this paper or to support it with extensive notes and bibliography. You should be drawing on insights raised in this class with its readings, and in other courses where principles of Christian thought are explored. Where possible, references are certainly welcome. And you are encouraged to direct some of your collateral reading to the subjects explored here. However my primary goal is not to make this a research project, but rather to press you to think clearly and explicitly about principles which are too often vague and undefined in Christian conversation, in spite of their significance in our doctrinal conversations. Clear thinking about these foundational matters will nurture more productive conversation on the issues we tackle together.

You will not be presenting your reflection paper, but we will be discussing these issues in class.

V. Grading

Assignment weight (%)

Reading completed	5
Reading completed <i>on time</i>	5
Major research paper	50
Research paper presentation	10
Theology perspective paper (part 1)	15
Theology perspective paper (part 2)	10
<u>Class participation</u>	<u>5</u>
Total:.....	100

Late Assignments will be penalized as follows:

- Reduction by 5% of assignment value for each (working) day after due date
- Late or incomplete reading is evaluated qualitatively
- No late assignments will be accepted after Dec 12

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	Grade Point
A+	97-100	4.30
A	93-96	4.00
A-	90-92	3.70
B+	87-89	3.30
B	83-86	3.00
B-	80-82	2.70
C+	77-79	2.30
C	73-76	2.00
C-	70-72	1.70
F	Below 70	0.00

VI. Submitting Papers Electronically

I have asked you to submit your research papers electronically, for easier distribution to the class. If you wish, you may also submit the theology perspective paper and reading report in soft copy. For all assignments submitted electronically, I have two requests which will help me to handle your papers easily and not lose them.

(1) Please attach the documents as MS Word files, or if you are not using Word, as files that will convert easily and neatly to Word. (Examples would include Wordperfect or .rtf—"rich text format"—files.)

(2) Before you attach your file, please save it ("save as") using the following format:

last name – initial – assignment name.doc. So, for example, my research paper would be saved with this file name: radant-k-paper.doc. This makes it much easier for me to track and file your papers. (Imagine how much easier it would be to misplace them if I received 5 documents all titled "research paper.doc"!)

VII. Web and Online Support

All ACTS courses are supported with web pages through the TWU MyCourses system. (See the web address on p. 1 of the syllabus.)

I will use the course web page to post my "Introduction to Theology" articles, my "Lifekeys" article, and any course notes or other materials I wish to distribute to the class. I recommend that you check the page periodically for updates and announcements. I will also post student papers on the page so everyone can access and read them once they have been submitted.

You should have received information on the TWU virtual campus and MyCourse system with your class registration materials. If you do not have an appropriate password, cannot figure out how to make the tools on the web page work, or find that the system is not functioning properly at a mechanical level, please do not come to me for assistance, as I am not equipped to help you with that kind of tech support. (*Do* email me to let me know if there are things I'm supposed to post which are not yet present on the website, or if you need a work-around to get or submit information while waiting for the tech people to resolve tech problems. These are faculty issues, and I can help you with them.) For basic information like passwords, you can get help from the

Registrar's office. For help with tech issues, contact the "esupport" people who are experts with such things. They can be reached at esupport@twu.ca, or 604-513-2148 (toll free at 1-866-614-4652).

Plan to use your TWU email account—or at least, set it to forward automatically to your personal account. Your grades for this and other courses are always distributed through the TWU mail system at the end of the semester. Also, this is the email address that gets automatically loaded into my course administration tools. **Any notices, mid-course grade information, etc., which I want to send you during the semester will go to your TWU email address.**

VIII. Tentative Course Outline

Date	Topic(s)	Assignments Due
Sept 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory business • Presuppositions and principles • Surveying the contemporary landscape 	
Sept 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More landscape? • Issue: Open Theism 	Read: <u>Sanders</u>
Sept 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Theism (2) 	
Sept 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue: Pluralism & Inclusivism 	Read: <u>Okholm & Phillips</u>
Oct 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pluralism (2) • Issues Relating to "Spiritual Gifts" 	Read: other early "spiritual gifts" text
Oct 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Spiritual Gifts" (2) 	Read: <u>Berding; Radant</u> "Lifekeys..."
Oct 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing other issues? – faculty led 	<u>Theology Perspective Paper (1)</u> is due
Oct 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues TBA, student presentations 	
Oct 30	<i>Reading Week (no classes)</i>	
Nov 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues TBA, student presentations 	<u>Research Papers</u> are due
Nov 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues TBA, student presentations 	
Nov 20	TBA – Ken will be at ETS/SBL meetings	
Nov 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues TBA, student presentations 	
(Dec 4 ?)	(Final exam week – optional session if we need it)	
Dec 5	<u>Reading report, Theology Perspective Paper (2)</u> due	

Supplement: Important Academic Notes from ACTS

Web Support – Student Portal <https://students.twu.ca>

All students at TWU have a TWUPass username and password. This is determined at the time of an online application or can be managed through the computing services help desk or the link on the student portal. Your student email account is also available through this student portal and is vital for communication about grades, account statements, lost passwords, sign-up instructions, etc. If you do not know your account or password, there is a link at the login area called “I forgot my password.” When you click on that link, you will be walked through the process of retrieving your account information.

Campus Closure

In the event of deteriorating weather conditions overnight or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to the radio stations CKNW (980 AM), CKWX (1130 AM), MAX (850 AM), PRAISE (106.5 FM) and KARI (550 AM) by 6:30 a.m., and an announcement will be placed on the University's switchboard as well as on the website <http://www.twu.ca/conditions/>. The first announcement regarding a closure will cover the period up to 1:00 p.m. only. If classes are to be cancelled beyond 1:00 p.m., this decision will be announced by the same means before 11:00 a.m. that day. Students and faculty should assume that all night classes will continue to operate. If the emergency continues into the evening, students and faculty may check for a closure notice on the University's switchboard and website after 3:00 p.m. that day.

Paper Formatting

Students need to adhere to Turabian format except in counseling courses, for which APA format is used.

Students are encouraged strongly to use RefWorks (available through the library home page www.twu.ca/library) as their bibliographical manager and as a tool for formatting bibliographies. They will need to be aware of the need to “clean up” most bibliographies generated by this program. Students are encouraged to view the documents on the following websites for format samples: <http://faculty.ucc.edu/egh-damerow/turabian.htm> or www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/. Note that in RefWorks the available formatting styles are those of Turabian (Notes), 6th edition, and APA – American Psychological Association, 5th edition.

Counseling students are expected to purchase the APA Publications Manual. More information found at the following website. <http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html>.

CANIL students can locate this on the CANIL intranet, under the “student” side. A hard copy is given to incoming students in the fall.

Please check with your professor to see which one he/she recommends you use!!

Research Ethics

Please note that all research projects involving human participants undertaken by members of the TWU university community (including projects done by ACTS students to satisfy course or degree requirements) **MUST** be approved by the Trinity Western University Research Ethics Board. Information and forms may be found at <http://www.twu.ca/research/ethics/Main.asp>. Those needing additional clarification may contact Dr. Bruce Guenther. Please allow at least three (3) weeks from the date of submission for a review of the application.

Academic Honesty

A fundamental expectation, grounded in biblical ethics, for anyone involved in academic work at ACTS is that he/she practice academic honesty. Students must become familiar with, and adhere to, the principles and requirements associated with academic honesty. Further details on this subject are contained in the ACTS Student Handbook in section 4.12. The handbook is available online on the ACTS webpage (www.acts.twu.ca) at the following link: www.acts.twu.ca/Handbook.html.

Equity of Access

It is the responsibility of a student with a learning disability to inform the ACTS Director of Student Life of that fact before the beginning of a course so that necessary arrangements may be made to facilitate the student's learning experience. We are unable to accommodate any student who informs the Director of Student Life of a disability after the beginning of class.

IX. Some Sources for a Typical Evangelical Theology of "Spiritual Gifts"

- Blanchard, Tim. *A Practical Guide to Finding Your Spiritual Gifts*. 1957, 1983.
- Criswell, W.A.. *The Baptism, Filling, and Gifts of the Holy Spirit*. 1973.
- Flynn, Leslie B. *19 Gifts of the Spirit*. 1974.
- Gangel, Kenneth O. *Unwrap Your Spiritual Gifts*. 1983.
- Gee, Donald. *Concerning Spiritual Gifts*. 1927, 1972. (An early Pentecostal source)
- Hohensee, Donald, and Allen Odell. *Your Spiritual Gifts*. 1992.
- Horton, Harold. *The Gifts of the Spirit*. 1934, 1993 (Another early Pentecostal source)
- Hubbard, David A. *Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gifts*. 1985.
- McRae, William J. *The Dynamics of Spiritual Gifts*. 1976.
- Packo, John E. *Find and Use Your Spiritual Gifts*. 1980.
- Sanders, J. Oswald. *The Holy Spirit and His Gifts*. 1970
- Unger, Merrill F. *The Baptism and Gifts of the Holy Spirit*. 1974.
- Wagner, C. Peter. *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*. 1974.
- Yohn, Rick. *Discover Your Spiritual Gift and Use It*. 1974.