THEO 24XX: Theology of Worship
Independent Study

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Course Description: This course provides an overview of the historical, biblical, and theological practice of Christian worship.

Required Textbooks:

Andrew McGowen. *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theology Perspective.* Baker Academic, 2014.

Steven Félix-Jäger, *How to Worship for All Its Worth: A Guide for Pastors, Worship Leaders, and Students.* Zondervan Academic, 2025.

James F. White. *Introduction to Christian Worship.* Edited by Edward Philipps. Fourth ed. Abingdon Press, 2023.

Course Objectives:

- To attain a thorough understanding of what the Bible teaches about the nature, function, and purpose of worship;
- To recognize the role of worship in the formation of the people of God;
- To appreciate the diversity of worship expressions that can be found throughout the global Church.

Assessment:

Advising Meetings (15%)
Reflection Papers (30%)
Church Visit Analysis (20%)
Final Paper (35%)

Advising Meetings:
The student is required to meet with the faculty member regularly to discuss the student's progress with required reading and reflection assignments. The meeting schedule will be agreed upon at the start of the independent study and will include no less than bi-monthly meetings to discuss the students progress.

Reflection Papers:
The student is required to conduct **three** book reviews of the assigned textbooks, each worth 10% of the student's grade. This will be due at week 4, week 8, and week 12 of the class. The papers will demonstrate close engagement with the material and meet the following requirements:

1. 4–5 pages in length (double space, Times New Roman, 12 pt font)
2. A brief summary of the book (1 page)
3. An analysis of what the student appreciated about the book (2-3 pages)
    a. Please cite specific examples from the author's argument and the content of the book. Saying the book was "easy to read" or "well organized" will not count. The student must cite specific features of the author's central claims.
4. An analysis of what the student might critique about the book (1-2 pages)
    a. Please be specific. The student must cite central features of the book's content. Saying that the book was "too hard to read" or is "missing my favorite topic" do not count as critical points about the book. With what aspects of the content of the book might someone disagree?
5. A final paragraph on whether or not the student would recommend the book to others.

Church Visit Analysis:

The student is required to visit **two new** churches and write up a review of the worship/liturgy. The student strongly encouraged to visit a church outside of his or her own tradition. For example, a Pentecostal student might visit an Orthodox or Catholic church. **Two papers** will be submitted with the following requirements:

1. 2-3 pages in length (double space, Times New Roman, 12 pt font).
2. What was the order of service (greeting, worship, sermon, prayer, communion, etc.)?
3. How would you describe the style of the service (high church with liturgy, low church, more casual)?
4. How would you describe the style of worship? Please make use of categories defined in the required textbooks.
5. Offer three points of praise and two points of critique about the service. What did you find helpful? What could use improvement?

Final Paper:

Based on the reading and church visits the student will write their own "theology of worship." Please follow the directions below:

1. 5–8 pages in length (double space, Times New Roman, 12 pt font).
2. In addition to the three course textbooks, the student must locate at least two more (for a total of at least five).
3. Biblical analysis (2-3 pages). What does Scripture teach about "worship" and how we might define it? Please make use of the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and especially the required course material.

4. Theological analysis (2-3 pages). What are ways in which we might think about worship theologically based on your reading for this course? In other words, how does worship teach us about who we are or who God is? The student might cite specific worship examples (songs, liturgy, sermons) that demonstrate a theologically coherent theologyor, inversely, worship examples that demonstrate a theologically anemic understanding of worship.
5. Diversity (1-2 pages). How is worship different in different traditions, histories, and cultures? The student might examine the "American" or "Western" style of worship in contrast to other traditions, cultures, and histories.
6. Personal reflections (1-2 pages). Finally the student must articulate his or her own theology of worship. After this class, what stuck with you the most? What shaped your theology of worship and how will this impact your own life?