

Systematic Theology/Hebrew Bible

The Eucharist in Ecumenical Perspective

Professor	D. Deane & D. Driver, PhDs	Course	Version 1.0
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1 Course Description

It is a painful irony that the Eucharist, once the form and instrument of Christian unity, has become a point at which Christian division and brokenness is most visible. Why is this so? Can the Eucharist once again serve as an engine and sign of Christian unity? And, if so, how? This course provides a space in which students can ask these questions and begin to shape responses. It does so by offering an account of the problem's history and scope, and a set of biblical and theological resources for the engagement of Eucharist theology in an ecumenical setting.

The course has three distinct sections. First, we will explore the Eucharist through the lens of scripture. Second, we will offer an engagement with some key voices in Christian tradition. Finally, in the third section of the course, we will facilitate an ecumenical conversation about the role of the Eucharist in the life of the Church. This conversation will be informed by the scriptural and traditional lenses we have engaged in sections one and two.

Prerequisites: RM 1000 or GTRS 6000; and BF 1001 and TF 1000.

2 Learning Objectives

This course aims to do two things. (1) To offer an overview of the ecumenical core of Christian eucharistic theology. (2) To introduce and discuss some of the different perspectives on the Eucharist that shape ecumenical relations today.

2.1 Course Themes

Inconveniently for us, early Christians did not write with us in mind. Almost all early Christian texts are written for insiders by insiders. There are no welcome pamphlets with detailed descriptions of their practices. If there were, we would have a much better sense of how they understood the bread they broke and the cup they drank. Instead, all we have are tantalising snippets – most of which you’ll read – from the early Church where they refer to their eucharistic practices. But how are we to understand these snippets? They make reference to biblical foundations, and so, before you read them, you’ll get acquainted with some important Jewish and Christian sources. *But from these scant sources you’ll be invited, in dialog with each other and the instructors, to develop your understanding of the Eucharist.* What is it? A memorial meal? A symbolic re-enactment of the last supper? Golgotha continued as the hand of God reached out from the Triune life to weave us into union with God and each other? Does it do anything to you? If so, under what conditions is its potency greatest? Why do Roman Catholics ask non-Roman Catholics to refrain from taking communion at Roman Catholic Masses? Is this not ecumenical elitism – a refusal of the very unity the Eucharist symbolises (or instantiates)? We will ask all of these questions in dialog with a subtheme of this course – *the past and future of eucharistic sharing at AST*. AST was at the forefront of post Vatican II Christian ecumenism and eucharistic sharing was once practiced, though the school now observes a eucharistic fast. What needs to be in place for this sharing to resume? Is the Eucharist an instrument for bringing about Christian unity? Is it a sacramental consummation of ontological unity – the sign of Christian oneness? Or, is it an act of friendship between diverse and different strands of Christianity?

In addition to exploring the Eucharist *per se*, and the Eucharist in ecumenical perspective, there is also an opportunity for each student to investigate particular aspects of eucharistic and/or ecumenical theology via the two main papers you will be writing in fulfillment of course requirements. Touch base with the instructors when something grabs your interest. We will recommend readings as you follow your ideas where they lead.

2.2 Learning Outcomes

Students completing this course will know:

1. The Old and New Testament foundations from which Christians have traditionally developed their theology of the Eucharist.
2. The primary references for Christian approaches to the Eucharist in the first 300 years of the Church.
3. The nuanced differences in eucharistic theology that become explicit in the late medieval and reformation eras.
4. How these late medieval a reformation era distinctions inform differences in denominational eucharistic theology today.
5. The history of ecumenical eucharistic theology since Vatican II.

Students completing this course will have developed:

1. A personal theology of the Eucharist in dialog with scripture and tradition.
2. An understanding of how the Eucharist is understood within the three founding denominations at AST.
3. A capacity to correlate liturgical practices in the settings they lead and the theological ideas this course explores.
4. Nuanced, well informed perspectives on the challenges to and possibilities for eucharistic sharing in our 21st century context.

3 Required Texts & Materials

The following texts are required. Students are strongly encouraged to purchase their own copies. Library copies that are not reference works have been placed on a 2-hour reserve.

- [1] George Hunsinger. *The Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let Us Keep the Feast*. Current Issues in Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. ISBN 978-0521719179.
- [2] Brant Pitre. *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist: Unlocking the Secrets of the Last Supper*. New York: Doubleday, 2011. ISBN 978-0385531849.

Students will also want to have a good, modern translation of the Bible, perhaps in the form of a study Bible. The *New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha* (NRSV), 5th ed., ed. M. D. Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) is a solid choice. For the Hebrew Bible, *The Jewish Study Bible: Second Edition* (NJPS), ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) is a fine alternative. Reference copies of both are available in the AST Library and through [Oxford Biblical Studies Online](#).

4 Supplementary Texts

Supplementary readings will be recommended throughout the semester and either placed on reserve or made available online. Give this material good effort and attention.

Also, the following works are worth owning and consulting. [[Schmemmann](#)] offers an important Orthodox voice. [[Making Sense](#)] contains sound advice on core skills like reading religious texts, writing essays and reviews, revising essays, and making oral presentations.

- [Schmemmann] Alexander Schmemmann. *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988. ISBN 978-0881410181.
- [Making Sense] Northey, Margot, Bradford A. Anderson, and Joel N. Lohr. *Making Sense in Religious Studies: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing*. 3rd ed. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2019. ISBN 978-0199026838.
- [SBL₂] Collins, Billie Jean, et al. *The SBL Handbook of Style*. 2nd ed. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014. ISBN 978-1589839649. See the online [Student Supplement](#).

5 Course Outline

We will adhere to the schedule in [Table 1](#) as closely as possible, though the professors reserve the right to adjust it to suit the needs of the class.

See the AST website for a list of other [important dates](#).

§. Topic	Reading	Date
I. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS		
1. Introduction and Syllabus	Sarah Dahl, “Trading Brunch”	7 Jan.
2. Jewish Roots 1	Pitre, Chs. 1–4; Exodus 12, 16	14 Jan.
3. Jewish Roots 2	Pitre, Chs. 4–8; Exodus 24–25	21 Jan.
4. New Testament Foundations	Mark 14, Matthew 26, Luke 13 & 22, John 6 & 13, Acts 2 & 20, 1 Cor 10–11; <i>Optional supplement: Levering 2005</i>	28 Jan.
II. CHURCH TRADITION		
5. Early Church Before Nicaea	“Christianity Before Nicaea,” feat. the Didache, Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, Clement, and Cyprian	4 Feb.
6. Early Church After Nicaea	“4th and 5th Centuries,” feat. Cyril of Jerusalem, Hillary of Poitiers, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Chrysostom	11 Feb.
☞ The first paper is due by the end of the sixth week of class		15 Feb.
~. No Class: AST Term Break		18 Feb.
7. Aquinas and Transubstantiation	<i>Summa Theologica</i> III, Q 73–83	25 Feb.
8. Cranmer and “True Presence”	Peter Brooks 1992	4 Mar.
III. ECUMENICAL LENSES		
9. Ecumenical Perspectives 1	Hunsinger, pp. 1–92	11 Mar.
10. Ecumenical Perspectives 2	Hunsinger, pp. 93–186	18 Mar.
11. Ecumenical Perspectives 3	Hunsinger, pp. 187–244	25 Mar.
12. AST and Eucharistic Sharing	AST Papers and Documents	1 Apr.
☞ The second short paper is due by the end of the last day of class		1 Apr.
☞ End of Term: Final marks are due for all courses		10 Apr.

Table 1: Schedule of Readings

6 Evaluation

Assigned readings must be completed before each class because they form a basis for activity in class. After each class you will prepare a short reflection based on (1) the material you read for class and (2) the lecture/conversation which took place in class. Thus the typical pattern will be: reading before class, lecture and discussion in class, written reflection after class.

The grade structure for ST/HB 3101 has the following elements.

1. Engagement with the **reading** will be evaluated mostly on the basis of completion of weekly reflections. Superior control of the material in class discussion may weigh in your favour in the final assessment.
2. The **weekly reflections** are intended to facilitate a one-on-one exchange between you and the teaching team. Submissions should normally be 1–2 pages, but can be as longer (like a good book review) or shorter (like a brief, well-composed email) as necessary. When you write, spend 75% of your reflection speaking about the material you engaged. What did the reading say and what did you hear in class? Then, spend 25% offering your response to it. What made sense? What didn’t? What points was the

writer or the instructor trying to make that weren't accessible to you? Every week you will receive a response from a member of the teaching team.

3. Two **formal papers** will facilitate your engagement with the key questions from the course. One paper could be more biblical in focus, and one more theological, but you are free to develop each as you see fit. The papers provide space for you to pursue a topic introduced by the course but not explored with enough depth to satisfy your interest. Each should be about 3,000 words in length. The first is due at the end of the sixth week of class; the second, at the end of the last day of class.

The breakdown for the semester's total work is shown in [Table 2](#).

Weekly Reflections	40%
First Paper	30%
Second Paper	30%

Table 2: Distribution of Grades

AST's [Academic Calendar](#) provides guidelines and detailed criteria for academic assessment. Marks are assigned by letter grade using these benchmarks (summarized in [Table 3](#)). Note that, at AST, a grade of "C" is deemed "Unsatisfactory."

A+	94–100	Exceptional
A	87–93	Outstanding
A–	80–86	Excellent
B+	77–79	Good
B	73–76	Acceptable
B–	70–72	Marginally Acceptable
C	60–69	Unsatisfactory
F	0–59	Failure
FP	0	Failure due to Plagiarism

Table 3: Outline of Grades at AST

7 Other Course Policy

Late work will not be accepted, except in genuinely extenuating circumstances. Students must submit something before the deadline if they wish to receive credit. Unless we state otherwise, written assignments are to be uploaded by 11:59 PM on the date indicated.

Formal paper submissions must be typewritten, double-spaced, and formatted as PDFs. They should be free from error. In this course they should follow *The Chicago Manual of Style* or its derivative, SBL Style (see [[SBL2](#)] in [section 4](#), above). As a reminder, AST also upholds an Inclusive Language Policy.

Plagiarism, if **detected**, will result in failure of the course.

Students should request permission to record a class or lecture. If permission is granted, or if recordings are provided (as in the case of an online course), we stipulate that all recordings be for personal use only. They may not be shared or distributed.

If you have abilities or disabilities that require modifications to the assessment process or other aspects of this course, please advise the course instructors as soon as possible.

Finally, we encourage the conscientious use of laptops, tablets, and other technology in class. Please realize that, as **cognitive psychologists have demonstrated**, “laptop multitasking hinders classroom learning for both users and nearby peers.” Do your part to foster an environment of open dialogue by honouring the presence of your classmates. In online and hybrid settings, consider both the physical environment in which you choose to work and the virtual environment that you help create through your participation in various forums. Let your engagement in this course be marked by rigour and charity alike.