I. Overview

This assignment gives you the opportunity to explore some aspect of Christian theology by "meeting" (getting to know) a Christian theologian of your choice. Instead of considering theology in the abstract, you will explore theology in a particular context by considering the perspective, experience, interests, and insights of one particular Christian thinker. By presenting your research to the class, you'll make a valuable contribution to the content of our introductory course by helping to illustrate (along with your classmates) the broad range of thinkers and topics belonging to the Christian theological tradition. For the final exam, you'll reflect in writing on the how these presentations have enhanced your learning experience in THEO 100.

II. Assignment

The assignment consists of two distinct elements, described under the headings below: RESEARCH and PRESENTATION.

A. Research

i. Choose your Theologian

First, choose a theologian of interest to you. Eligible theologians can belong to any historical period (from the Apostolic to the Modern Period) or any affiliation within Christianity (Roman Catholic, Protestant, etc.). In addition, eligible theologians can specialize in any aspect of Christian theology, from particular doctrines (e.g., Trinity), to particular methods (e.g., metaphorical theology), to particular perspectives (e.g., feminist theology), to particular issues of cultural engagement (e.g., science and theology). The one requirement for eligibility involves bibliography: any Christian thinker with at least one published primary source, whose work has generated at least three secondary sources for students to consider, qualifies as "eligible."

Note on choosing a theologian: If you need help or suggestions for choosing a theologian, please speak with me (H. Svebakken) as soon as possible. Also consider topics you're interested in, since I can usually suggest a theologian associated with a particular topic of interest.

ii. Research your Theologian

Next, you must undertake quality research on the theologian of your choice, focusing on one (1) primary source and three (3) secondary sources.

Primary sources take top priority, since they contain the actual words, ideas, arguments, etc. of your selected theologian. The selected primary source—whether a text from the Christian Bible, an ancient or modern essay, an ecclesiastical document (e.g., encyclical), journal article, sermon, book, etc.—should highlight something distinctive about this theologian's work within Christian theology broadly. You should focus on a manageable unit of primary text for this assignment: either a shorter type of primary text (e.g., one sermon) or a shorter unit within a larger primary text (e.g., one chapter of a book). You must include at least one excerpt of your selected primary text in your presentation to illustrate the distinctive contribution of your theologian.

Secondary sources are written not by your theologian but about your theologian, giving you essential information about your theologian's life and work. Consider as secondary sources anything that will help you understand your project better, which will in turn help your classmates understand your presentation better. A secondary source might, for example, provide basic biographical information about your...
theologian, or clarify some aspect of the historical and cultural setting of your theologian, or help you understand the meaning and significance of your chosen primary text (etc.).

Note on the use of online resources: For academic research at the university level, peer-reviewed print resources represent the "gold standard," because of their reliable quality. For this reason, online resources should only be used when they provide information otherwise unavailable from a print resource (which in some cases they may). Please do not include online resources in your bibliography without prior approval. Unapproved online sources will not receive full credit.

iii. Create an Annotated Bibliography

The research phase of your project culminates in the creation of an annotated bibliography of your primary and secondary sources. For each of your four sources (one primary, three secondary) include the following: a correct, complete bibliographical entry followed by a two-part annotation, summarizing and commenting on your source. The annotation for each source (summary and commentary combined) must include a word count (200-400 words required).

**SUMMARY:** Your summary must provide a clear and objective statement of the essential point(s) of the source including a brief overview of its content. A good summary does not just simplify and restate each element of the text in sequence. A good summary first requires a clear understanding of the text, which in turn dictates the necessary elements of an effective summary.

**COMMENTARY:** Your commentary should provide a subjective statement of the significance of this source for your project overall. Consider questions like these: In what particular way(s) did you find the source helpful? What insight(s) did it provide? What important questions did it raise (or answer)? What particular point(s) stood out as especially significant for understanding your theologian and your theologian's work? What did this source contribute that others did not?

B. Presentation

When you've completed your research, you must prepare a slide presentation (5-8 minutes) "introducing" your theologian to the class. Use your slides to guide, organize, summarize, and highlight important parts of your oral presentation, including these four basic elements:

1. **BRIEF BIOGRAPHY:** Basic facts, plus overview of career and affiliation within Christianity.
2. **HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT:** Relevant issues shaping this theologian's distinctive contribution.
3. **DISTINCTIVE CONTRIBUTION:** One specific example (using a brief excerpt from your primary source) illustrating this theologian's distinctive contribution to Christian theology. "Distinctive contribution" may involve one particular text, a particular perspective or idea, a particular impact on the Christian theological tradition, etc.
4. **BIBLIOGRAPHY:** One slide at the end, listing the sources used to prepare the presentation, matching the entries on the annotated bibliography.

PLEASE NOTE: Since the reflection essay for the final exam will incorporate material from these presentations, students may wish to include among these elements some commentary on how their theologian's work contributes in some way to our introductory course in Christian theology.

III. Grading

Grades will be based on (1) a hard copy of the annotated bibliography (36 Points), turned in on the day of your in-class presentation, and (2) a computer file of the slide presentation (24 Points), submitted to the instructor no later than the day of your in-class presentation.