

HTS 551 - Metaphysical Theology I: Tools of Theological Inquiry (3 hrs/4 units)

Instructor Name	Rev. Thomas W. Shepherd., D. Min
Office Hours	TBA
Telephone	816-347-5529 (O) / 816-572-1906 (Cell)
E-Mail	shepherdtw@unityonline.org
Required Texts	Harvey, Van A. <i>A Handbook of Theological Terms</i> . NY: Touchstone, 1997. Shepherd, Thomas. <i>Glimpses of Truth</i> . Carol City, FL: UFBL Press, 2000. ¹ Stone, Howard and J.O Duke. <i>How to Think Theologically</i> , Second Edition. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006.
Other Required Reading	Handouts
Recommended Reading	Harris, Sam. <i>Letter to a Christian Nation</i> . New York: Vintage Books, 2008.

¹Primary text for the course. Currently out of print. Online text will be furnished by instructor during the coursework.

Course Description

Foundation course in how to do theology from a New Thought Christian perspective. Beginning with a discussion of the nature and limitations of intellectual inquiry, students will learn how to apply the tools and methods of theological reflection to their program of lifelong learning. Course will bring these tools of theology to the ongoing process of rethinking and redefining basic Christian concepts for every new generation. Students will learn to think theologically/metaphysically and to apply their insights to professional and personal lives.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate mastery of the language and tools of metaphysical theology by participation in classroom discussions and writing critical analyses of major Christian themes such as *God, faith, Creation, the Trinity, sin, salvation, biblical theology, Christology, anthropology, ministry, church, community, and selfless love*.
2. Correlate traditional theological topics with specifically New Thought concepts such as *substance, prosperity, healing, Divine Order, Mind, Principle, the threefold nature of consciousness, individuality/personality, prayer, meditation, and faith*.
3. Analyze and evaluate the evolution of the God concept, from animatism through panentheism.

4. Respond theologically to the question: “Is Unity a *Christian* movement?” Arrive at a conclusion and demonstrate the ability to defend it logically.

The above learning objectives partially fulfill the following program outcomes for the Master of Divinity and the Certificate in Unity Ministry.:

MD-2 Foundational Knowledge: Demonstrate professional competency through the integration of knowledge and methodology in the areas of scripture, theology, historical studies, communication, pastoral studies, leadership and administration.

Assignments: Pre-class “snapshot” essay, three “two-week” exams, weekly Thursday writing, final exam, major paper.

*** IMPORTANT ***

Pre-Class Assignments

1. **Read the following** before the first class session:

Shepherd, *Glimpses of Truth*, pp. 1-23

Stone & Duke, *How to Think Theologically*, pp. 1-37

2. **Pre-Class Written Work:** “Theological Snapshot.” (400-500 words) Write a short statement of your basic beliefs as of today. This is not a test to see if you know what Unity’s basic beliefs are; it is an opportunity to look *deliberatively* at your *embedded* theology. (Stone & Duke, pp. 13-24.) *Do not just make a list.* Write an integrated, flowing, short essay—about two pages. Think brevity and clarity. **Pre-class assignment is due at the first session.**

Contact the faculty member for a copy of the complete syllabus.