The Christian doctrine of sin is one of the most interesting and varied doctrines in all of systematic theology. It also has some of the most significant implications for theology and practice, as what one believes about sin greatly affects and even determines what one will think about creation, anthropology, and soteriology. This course aims to introduce students to a) the historical development of the doctrine of sin and b) its contemporary variations in order to c) evaluate the biblical, theological, and pastoral ramifications of various perspectives on the doctrine.

In this course, students will read a variety of historical and contemporary perspectives on the doctrine. The questions covered include:

1) What did the earliest theologians of the Christian church think about sin?
2) How does a doctrine of creation relate to a doctrine of sin?
3) What is the relationship between sin and freedom of the will?
4) What is the condition that sin creates? How is this condition best described?
5) How does the work of Christ relate to a doctrine of sin?
6) How have modern theologians, particularly feminists and womanists, related to the question of sin?

**Required Readings:**
Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*
Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/1 (Paragraph 60)
Alan Jacobs, *Original Sin: A Cultural History*
Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*
Chanequa Walker Barnes, *Black Women and the Burden of Strength*
David Kelsey, *Imagining Redemption*
Stephen Ray, *Do No Harm: Social Sin and Christian Responsibility*
Park, Andrew S. *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (recommended)

Assignments will include two short papers (4-6 pages) on the readings and a longer paper (10-12 pages) that will compare two viewpoints on the doctrine.

Additionally, each student will be responsible for one class session where they will introduce the text and walk the class through the main argument presented. This may be done in pairs depending on the enrollment of the course. Students will be responsible to prepare discussion questions and email them to the professor the night before the class session. These questions should be suitable for class discussion, and at least one will be
selected for that purpose. A sign-up will be circulated after the first class session where students can select the topic and week of their choosing.

January 31- Week 1: Introduction, Sin in Biblical Context  
Alan Jacobs, *Original Sin: A Cultural History*

February 7- Week 2: Earliest Christian Theology and the Doctrine of Sin  
Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*

February 14- Week 3: Augustine on the Fall and Original Sin  
Augustine, *On Genesis, Bk 11 (on the Fall)*  
*City of God, Bks 12-14*  
"On the Spirit and the Letter" (all available at ccel.org)

On reserve: Ian McFarland: "Augustine of Hippo: Willing and the Ambiguity of Desire" in *On Adam's Fall*

*Reading Week: February 21, No class*

February 28- Week 4: Julian of Norwich on the Fall  
*Revelations of Divine Love* (selections)  
Paper 1 due on Athanasius

March 7- Week 5: Calvin on the Fall  
Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis, Genesis 3: 1-24*  
Calvin, *Institutes Bk 1.1 35-51, 2.1-6*  
David Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* 110-121 (on reserve)

March 14- Week 6: Karl Barth on Sin  
Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV/1 Paragraph 60*  

March 21- Week 7: Social Sin and the Modern Context  
Stephen Ray's *Do No Harm: Social Sin and Christian Responsibility*

Mary Potter Engle, 'Evil, Sin, and Violation of the Vulnerable' in *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*


*Reading Week: March 28*
April 4- Week 8: Sin and the Feminist Turn


Paper 2 due on Social Sin

April 11- Week 9: Womanist Theologians on Sin


April 18- Week 10: Too Heavy a Yoke: Black Women and the Burden of Strength

April 25: Sin in Cross-Cultural Perspective: China
Hibbert and Hibbert, "Contextualising sin for cross-cultural evangelism” in Missiology 42, no. 3 (January 7, 2014), 310–21.


May 2
David Kelsey, Imagining Redemption
Final papers due.
Short Papers: (4-6 pages)
These papers are intended to formally familiarize students with two major movements in the study of Sin- the thought of the early church theologian Athanasius, and the modern retrieval of the biblical concept of social sin. 
February 28, Athanasius- Students should identify one concept in Athanasius and dig deeper into the text in order to identify the full meaning of this concept. For instance, what does “corruption” mean for Athanasius? How does this relate to his understanding of sin?

April 4, Social Sin- For social sin, students should identify what this category means and work to a) associate it with a movement in modern theology, and b) ground it in Old testament teaching about sin. You should quickly note that the idea of social or generational aspects to sin is not an invention of modern theology, but is deeply rooted in the Hebrew Bible. In this paper, I would like you to make the connections between biblical teaching on sin, and modern emphases on the effects sin has on communities and institutions.

Final Paper Assignment: Comparative Theologies of Sin (10-12 pages). Due May 2. Students should select two thinkers on the doctrine of sin- one should be assigned in this course, but the second can be an (approved) thinker of the student’s choosing. In this paper, students should a) introduce the varying perspectives on sin, noting the author’s concerns, biblical and theological sources; b) evaluate the efficacy of these perspectives, including identifying their shortcomings; and c) make concluding remarks regarding what, in the opinion of the student, are the necessary aspects of a doctrine of sin. This paper should in the first two thirds be primarily textual, but should move to a more evaluative or constructive mode in the final third. Students will demonstrate through the writing of this paper both their sense of the “facts on the ground” as they relate to the doctrine, and their own conclusions regarding how this doctrine works for the sake of the church.

All papers submitted for Systematic Theology I must abide by the following guidelines:

All papers must be submitted electronically. Papers should be typed in a Times font, size 12, double spaced, with 1” margins. Papers must correctly cite all quoted sources. Students may choose either Chicago style (preferred), or MLA. Footnotes are preferred to endnotes and internal citations. A Works Cited page must be included with all written work. Page numbers must be included, starting on the second page. Each paper must include a title, the date, and the student’s name.