

# Moral Theology for Counseling

Theology

Trinity (Spring), 2024

Difficulty: Introductory

Teacher: James Pocta (j.pocta@davenantinstitute.org)

## Course Description

Scripture, with all its storied beauty, reveals how wickedness and woundedness intersect, giving a self-protective and self-exaltive energy creating a trajectory of life which results in problems, pathologies, and personality disorders. This sin gets its tentacles into every area of life elevating our heart, our will, and our way over His. In this course, we will look at Bavinck's *Ethics* and *Foundations of Psychology*, as well as other theologians and therapists, exploring how a doxological redemptive therapy seen through a theology of counseling leads to freedom through the life-giving purposes of God. God takes a story of shame, sin, and struggle and through sanctifying and redeeming it gives gifts from it. That enables and equips the believer to be conformed to the image of Christ and then give to others using those gifts. Good Biblical counseling seeks the glory of God and goodness for the counseled, in that order, offering deliverance from the bondage of sin and its tentacles.

## Course Format

The format of the course will be a roughly equivalent mix of lecture and guided discussion. It is assumed that students will come having read and engaged with the text selection for that day, and with thoughts (and critical questions) prepared to contribute. Classes will meet via Zoom for two hours each week and will be recorded for later viewing by students who cannot participate. Supplementary student interaction (both informal and formal) is highly encouraged, and I also aim to make myself available to you. Class documents and lectures will be posted on Google Classroom: <https://classroom.google.com>.

## **Course Objectives:**

This course aims (1) to introduce students to theological concepts that inform approaches to therapy, (2) to dialogically engage, learn from, and help train students in the art of thinking well about their hearts, and (3) to encourage students to take that information and relate to others empathetically and compassionately as a counselor.

## **Course Requirements:**

*Class Participation (30%):* Attentive and sustained participation in class is the primary requirement. For-credit students may have two excused absences.

*Reading (30%):* Students will be asked the percentage of reading they were able to accomplish.

*Writing (40%):* Term Paper of 3,000–5,000 words. The goal of this exercise is not simply to summarize the main texts, but rather to *interact* with them and the lectures and then comment - to let them guide them to personal reflections which might have some relevance to each student's narrative.

## **Grading Scale**

Include the following grading scale:

A	93–100%
A-	90–92.99%
B+	87–89.99%
B	83–86.99%
B-	80–82.9%
C+	77–79.99%
C	73–76.99%
C-	70–72.99%
D+	67–69.99%
D	63–66.99%
D-	60–62.99%
F	59.99% or less

Or...

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
93	90	87	83	80	77	73	70	67	63	60	

## Auditing

Auditors are not required to attend class live or submit assignments, but may participate in Zoom meetings, Discord, Google Classroom, and access recordings. If the time does not work for you, you can switch to auditing or to another course. See the drop/switch policy on the Course Catalog or [M.Litt. FAQ](#). Students are entitled to a full refund if the chosen time does not work for them. Please email [j.thiele@davenantinstitute.org](mailto:j.thiele@davenantinstitute.org) with any changes, requests, or questions.

## Course Texts

Herman Bavinck. *Reformed Ethics: Volume I* (Baker Academic, 2019)(via PDF).

Herman Bavinck. *Biblical and Religious Psychology* (Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2024) (via PDF).

Herman Bavinck. Foundations of Psychology ([https://bavinckinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/BR9\\_Foundations.pdf](https://bavinckinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/BR9_Foundations.pdf)).

Jonathan Edwards, “A Treatise on Religious Affections” (via PDF).

Dr. Dan B. Allender, Dr. Tremper Longman III. *The Cry of the Soul* (Wounded Hearts Ministries, 1994).

Dr. Alastair Roberts, “Male and Female He Created Them” (<https://davenantinstitute.org/male-and-female-he-created-them/>).

Dan B Allender, PhD. *To Be Told* (Waterbrook Press, 2005).

Curt Thompson. *The Soul of Shame* (InterVarsity Press, 2015).

Dr. John L. Cox. *Setting Parents Free* (LifeStory Publishing, 2019).

## Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Key Topic	Reading
1	4/8 - 4/13	Introduction: Biblical Counseling	Bavinck, B&RP, part II 1,2,9
2	4/15 - 4/20	Foundations of Psychology	Online, Bavinck, 1-35

3	4/22 - 4/27	Dynamic, Relationship, Story	Edwards, Part I
4	4/29 - 5/4	"Come to Me"	Allender, Longman Chpt 1
5	5/6- 2/11	Gender/Sexuality	Alastair Roberts Video
6	5/13 - 5/18	Story	Allender 1-3
7	5/20 - 5/25	Shame	Thompson, chpt 3
8	5/27 - 6/1	Parenting	Cox, Chpt 1,2,8
9	6/3 - 6/8	Flesh/Spirit	Bavinck, Ethics, Chpts 1,2
10	6/10 - 6/15	Doxological Redemptive Therapy	Allender 3-6