Introduction to Christian Theology

Where are you? This is the first question that God asks of human beings in the biblical narrative, and today it is the question that many of us are asking of ourselves. University students at the beginning of the twenty-first century are coming of age in a culture that is undergoing fundamental change. A central expression of that change is the wide-spread confusion about the character of human life. Who are we? How do we best live our lives? And what is the significance—if any—of the life we lead? While these and a host of other questions about our humanity were long assumed to be settled in the western tradition, now they have all arisen anew. This course is an exercise in map-making. It seeks first to help students understand how we came to this place of cultural confusion about what it means to be human. And it then seeks to provide them with resources in Christian theology to help them discover their humanity as they journey through the strange new landscape of American society at the beginning of a new millennium. As such, it is an introduction to Christian theology.

The course will be divided into four parts. The first will examine the earliest human narrative that shaped the western cultural tradition: the heritage of the classical age. The second will investigate the rise of Christendom and the answer that the western theological tradition has offered to the question of our humanity. The third part will survey the emergence of modernity and the development of the new responses to the human question that it has championed. The final part of the course will explore the state of some of the central contemporary issues in the debates about being and becoming human in the light of the Biblical narrative.