



**Fall Term 2026
Hooker for Today
(Systematic Theology 560)
LTh Course Syllabus**

Richard Hooker as a Theological Resource for Today's Church

Huron University College Land Acknowledgment

Huron is situated on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Attawandaron, and Lenape peoples, whose sharing and stewardship of the land has been governed by the Dish with One Spoon treaty since time immemorial. We are guided by this treaty in the spirit of peace, friendship, and respect. Huron University College acknowledges its past role in perpetuating colonial and exclusionary relations. Because religious and ecclesial institutions were instrumental in such relations, we consider it our particular responsibility as a Faculty of Theology to work towards justice and reconciliation.

Course Dates: From November 14, 28 and December 12

Time: Saturday from 9:00 – 2:30 P.M. (CT), 10:00 – 3:30 P.M. (ET)

Delivery: Hosted via Zoom

Instructor: The Rev. Canon Daniel F. Graves, BA (York), MDiv (Trinity College), ThM (Trinity College). Theologian-in-Residence, Trinity Anglican Church, Aurora, ON

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Course Description

Richard Hooker is much used and abused as resource in modern theological discussion. Stereotypes of his work (such as the 'three-legged stool' and the '*via media*') are regularly appealed to by those attempting to bring him to bear on modern problems. However, such stereotypes are often not only incorrect, but create more problems for theological reflection

than they solve. Hooker's thought is notoriously complex, and in many way difficult to assign to one brand of 'churchmanship'. Since his death, he has been claimed by Laudians and Latitudinarians, evangelicals and Anglo-catholics, liberals and conservatives. He has been named a champion and defender of the magisterial Reformation and also a transitional figure of a more avant-garde form of conformism. To reduce him to 'three-legged stools' and the '*via media*', is to seriously mischaracterize his thought and limit his usefulness as a theological resource for the complicated issues facing today's church. Hooker's thought is rich. He is an especially eclectic thinker, drawing on both the humanist and the scholastic traditions, on patristics and on scripture, on Plato and on Aristotle. His theological method is rooted in both the Reformation and the Medieval church. It is both generous and pastoral. Hooker still has much to say and much to teach us. His nuanced theological method can teach us to approach the issues facing the modern church with a similar nuance, sophistication, thoughtfulness, and most importantly, generosity.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The objectives of this are three-fold:

- 1) To familiarize students with a representative body of the work of Richard Hooker, a key figure of the sixteenth-century English church, and situate Hooker in his historical and theological context.
- 2) To introduce students to Hooker's theological method as a unique approach and response to the issues faced by the Elizabethan church.
- 3) To provide students an opportunity to engage with Hooker's theological method in examining theological, pastoral, moral, and ecclesiological questions of present-day Anglicanism. In particular, this course will seek to move students away from hackneyed, simplistic, and largely, erroneous modern interpretations of Hooker as a '*via media*' thinker, or espouser of a 'three-legged stool', into a more thorough understanding of Hooker's sophisticated thought and method and how it can help lead us into sophisticated and thoughtful theological reflection on the issues facing today's church.

Required Text(s) [or Study Documents]

Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*

Richard Hooker, *Sermons and Tractates*

Selections and short excerpts/selections from primary sources will be available on the Google Classroom (the Keble edition is available online for free; the Davenant Institute has modern language selections available for purchase or download through Amazon/Kindle)

Course Outline/Plan

Week 1:

Setting the Stage – Richard Hooker in Context

The Elizabethan Setting: The Elizabethan Settlement; the Admonition Controversy; the Marprelate Tracts; Puritanism and Avant-Garde Conformity.

Richard Hooker – Life and Works; The Temple Controversy; Hooker on ‘Law’

Optional preparation readings:

- Peter Marshall, ‘Settlement Patterns: The Church of England 1553-1603’, in Anthony Milton, ed., *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, Volume 1: Reformation and Identity, c. 1520-1662* (Oxford: OUP, 2017), pp 45-62
- W. Brown Patterson, ‘Elizabethan Theological Polemic’, in Torrance Kirby, ed., *A Companion to Richard Hooker* (2008), 89-119.

(To be distributed & read prior to week 1 as background for those interested in getting a ‘head start’)

Approaches to Conflict – Hooker the Reconciler

Hooker’s irenicism and theological rhetoric (we will look closely at passages from these in class)

Readings:

- *Laws*, ‘Preface’
- ‘*A Learned Discourse on Justification*’

Week 2:

Hooker on Scripture

Hooker’s theology of Scripture; its purpose and appropriate use; the ‘main drifts’ of Scripture; *adiaphora*; Scripture in preaching and worship.

Readings

- *Laws*, Books 2 & 3 (selections)

Christology and the Sacraments

In Hooker’s thought Christology and the Sacraments are inextricably linked; ‘participation’; Hooker’s Neoplatonism.

Readings

- *Laws*, Book 5 (selections from chapters on Christology and the Sacraments)

Richard Hooker and the Christian Virtues

Hooker as a moral thinker; sacramental participation as moral formation; exemplarity and the virtues; Law and virtue; Hooker and the Aristotelian/Thomistic tradition

Readings:

- *Laws*, Book 1 chapters 8, 11, selections from Book 3
- *A Learned Discourse on Justification*
- *A Learned Discourse on Pride*

Final Hour: Presentations

Week 3:

Richard Hooker the Pastor

Richard Hooker as preacher; Hooker's 'practical divinity'; theological assurance and doubt; confession, penitence, and absolution.

Readings:

- *A Remedy against Sorrow and Fear*
- *A Learned Discourse on Certainty and Perpetuity of Faith in the Elect*
- *Laws*, Book 6, selections

Richard Hooker on Church Polity

Competing models of 'church', the principle of 'conveniency'; and Hooker as a resource for ecumenical dialogue

Readings:

- *Laws*, Book 3 (selections)
- *Laws*, Book 7 (selections)

Richard Hooker for Today – Beyond the Stereotypes

Final Hour: Presentations

Weekly Format:

Morning/Early afternoon – lecture, historical background/review, close reading of texts

Afternoon: 10-minute student presentations of an assigned reading and class discussion.

Method of Evaluation and Criteria for Grading

(only for students choosing to be evaluated for full course credit)

Student presentations – from a close reading of the texts for a particular week, students will make a **ten-minute** presentation (to be presented last hour of the class) on how Hooker dealt with a relevant theological, ecclesiological, pastoral, or moral problem, and explore how his method may (or may not) be applicable to a similar modern problem or issue. **25%**

Reflection paper – With specific reference to Hooker’s writings read during the course, students will respond to the following question:

- ‘Why is the “three-legged stool” is a misrepresentation of Hooker’s theological method?’
- And then reflect on why such a representation is problematic when using Hooker as a resource for modern theological reflection

750 words (3 pages) 25%

Final written assignment – Expanding on your presentation (or another topic from the course that interested you) write a more thorough theological reflection, solidly based on Hooker’s method, with reference to the relevant texts in Hooker, on how Hooker might serve as a theological resource with respect to a modern issue in the life of the church. The general issues might be theological/doctrinal; ecclesiological/ecumenical; pastoral; liturgical; moral/ethical. **2500 words (10 pages) 40%**. Sources must be referenced appropriately.

Note on the use of AI: these assignments are intended to assess the student’s own understanding and interpretation of the primary sources. This is the reason secondary sources are generally not assigned in this course. Students will have all the tools and resources at their disposal to read and interpret the texts without recourse to secondary literature or the use of AI.

Participation - attendance at lectures (or viewing online recorded lectures), participation in online discussion board, participation in class discussion. **10%**

Due Dates

Presentations – Done in weeks 2 & 3

Reflection Paper – Due Dec. 5

Final Assignment – Due Dec. 31

Huron Grade Descriptors

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

Student Code of Conduct

Membership in the community of Huron University College and Western University implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work, and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. While in the physical or online classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Please review the Student Code of Conduct at:

<https://huronatwestern.ca/sites/default/files/Res%20Life/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-%20Revised%20September%202019.pdf>.

Statement on the Recording of Class Activities

Students may not record or distribute any class activity, including conversations during office hours, without written permission from the instructor, except as necessary as part of approved accommodations for students with disabilities. Any approved recordings may only be used for the student's own private use.

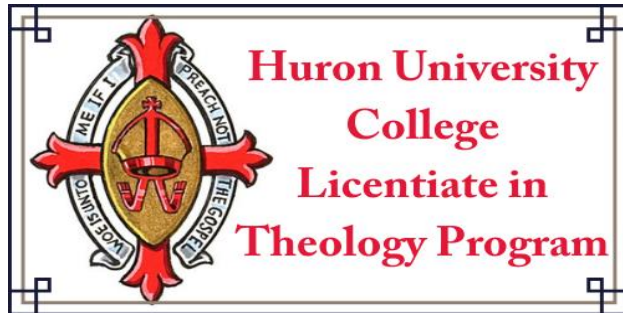
Online courses within the Licentiate in Theology Program are recorded for student engagement purposes. These recordings are only used by the registered students of the class and made available through a restricted video hosting site to respect both privacy and intellectual property. Should a student be uncomfortable with this practice, they can contact the course instructor or the LTh Program Director, Dr. Grayhame Bowcott at grayhame.bowcott@huron.uwo.ca

Statement of Prohibition on the Use of AI

As the primary purpose of Huron's Licentiate in Theology Program is to enable critical thinking, spiritual growth, the cultivation of individual ministry skillsets, and personal discernment for future ministry leadership, this means that we expect our students to offer up only their own ideas and original contributions of writing, assignments, and evaluative content. Any and all use of AI (Artificial Intelligence) is strictly prohibited within this program. Any student who violates this prohibition will be disqualified from receiving credit for the course they are taking. Any student who repeatedly violates this prohibition may risk expulsion from the LTh Program.

Support Services

For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and assistance with requests for medical accommodation, students should contact the LTh Coordinator, Chris Travers, at chris.travers@huron.uwo.ca



THIS COURSE HAS BEEN APPROVED BY HURON'S FACULTY OF THEOLOGY COMMITTEE
FOR THE FALL TERM OF THE LTH PROGRAM, 2026.