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FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

TF 1023

FALL 2008

T/TH, 11:00 am – 12:20 pm
Schlegel Hall, 122

This online syllabus should be used to gain a better understanding of the content and focus of a course. The syllabus given out in the class may differ from this online version and its content supersedes that of the online syllabus.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Faith Seeking Understanding (FQI) is a team-taught, interdisciplinary course in theology and ethics that is usually taken in the fall semester of the first year. FQI is designed to follow the summer course for entering students, Transforming Seminary Education (TSE), and to anticipate the two-semester course History of Christian Experience (HCE1 and HCE2).

The purpose of FQI is to help students gain greater confidence and competence in thinking theologically and ethically. The course intends to prepare students for this task by providing an introduction to systematic theology and ethical method. Students will reflect on the interplay between belief and behavior, as they wrestle with contemporary issues in theology and ethics. They will gain skill in reading theological texts and thinking doctrinally. FQI is organized around a series of fundamental theological questions, such as: What do we mean by God? What's wrong with us? How does Jesus make a difference? What does the reconciliation God intends for us look like? Why do we need the church? What are Christian views of war and wealth? In response to these questions we will encourage students to listen to a rich variety of voices and to engage those voices as they answer the questions for themselves.

Requirements (see assignment details below):

1. Attendance and informed participation, including four 2-page reflection papers (40%)
Students will prepare a brief paper (about 500 words) based on the assigned question. Papers will be due during the class period on the day assigned. You should strive to write as a learning theologian, both open to instruction from others in the Christian conversation and eager to enter into that conversation yourself.

In preparing these papers, include these parts:

In these papers, students should demonstrate a clear understanding of the assigned readings and a critical theological engagement with the arguments and themes expressed. The papers should not simply be an exposition or outline of the reading (s). Rather, it should reflect your own particular response to what the authors are saying. At least half the papers should focus on what the readings are expressing and the other half devoted to your response. This could be done either by first articulating your impressions of what the authors are suggesting followed by your reaction; or by more of a dialogue with the readings throughout the paper. Please adhere to the 2-page requirement (i.e. 2 full pages) as well.

2. Take-Home Midterm: (30%)

In this exam you will draw together the themes of the course to this point. You will answer three questions, writing about three pages, double-spaced, per question, for a total of 8-10 pages. Questions will be distributed October 9. Exams are due on October 16. You are free to discuss these questions with your classmates, but your writing for the exam must be your own. You may use your books and notes in

preparing for and writing the exam; any quotations or paraphrases from written materials must be properly referenced.

3. Final Examination (30%)

In this exam you will draw together the themes of the course. Study questions will be distributed on November 27.

We highly recommend that students take advantage of the services of the Academic Support Center, located on the lower level of Schlegel Hall, in preparing their written assignments for this course.

Required Texts:

1. Amy Plantinga Pauw and Serene Jones, *Feminist and Womanist Essays in Reformed Dogmatics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008), referred to in the syllabus as “FWE”
2. Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King (Editors), *Christian Theology: An Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), referred to in the syllabus as “CT”
3. Desmond Mpilo Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (New York: Image Books, 1999), referred to in the syllabus as Tutu

E-Reserve Readings:

9/18 *The Trinity: God’s Love Overflowing*, Pt I, lines 109-569. 2006 PC(USA) paper on the Trinity, <http://www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/issues/trinityfinal.pdf>

9/25 Martin Luther King, “Letter from Birmingham City Jail”
[http://www.greatbooksandfilm.com/letter\(king\).htm](http://www.greatbooksandfilm.com/letter(king).htm)

11/06 Chung Hyun Kyung, “Welcome the Spirit; hear her Cries” 1991 World Council of Churches Address
<http://www.cta-usa.org/foundationdocs/foundhyunkyung.html>

11/11 Frederick Douglass, Appendix to the *Narrative*
<http://www.americanliterature.com/NARR/NARR12.HTML>

11/13 H.R. Niebuhr and Reinhold Niebuhr, “Radical Trust in God,” “No Absolutes,” and “A Final Word”
www.ucc.org/theology/brothers.htm

Desmond Mpilo Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 2000)
Stephen G. Ray, Jr., *Do No Harm: Social Sin and Christian Responsibility* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003)

Recommended Texts

Rowan Williams, *Tokens of Trust: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007)

Academic honesty

All work you submit in FQI is expected to be yours. Any quotation of the words of others must be clearly indicated, and all direct indebtedness must be acknowledged by citation of author and source. Students unfamiliar with issues relating to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center and should make use of the available resources at an early date, since violations of Seminary policy on academic honesty can lead to a failing grade for the course.

List of Black Board Readings:

Wayne Boulton, Thomas Kennedy, Allen Verhey, “an Introduction to Christian Ethics,” in *From Christ to the World: Introductory Readings in Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994)

Schedule of classes and assignments T/TH, 11:00 am – 12:20 pm

| <u>Date</u> | | | <u>Subject/Assignment</u> |
|-------------|------|------------------------------|--|
| TH | 9/4 | Introduction | Orientation to the course |
| T | 9/9 | Theological Reflection | STONE AND DUKE, <i>HOW TO THINK THEOLOGICALLY</i> , 1-26 Class exercise |
| TH | 9/11 | Ethical Reflection | BOULTON, KENNEDY, AND VERHEY, AN INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN ETHICS, 1-10 Class exercise |
| T | 9/16 | Knowing God | CT, Introduction and ch.1 |
| TH | 9/18 | Trinity and Language for God | CT, ch. 2 & 3; “The Trinity: God’s Love Overflowing” (web) LYNN JAPINGA, “LANGUAGE ABOUT GOD,”; FWE, CH. 1 1st Reflection Paper: Does “the persistent and exclusive use of male God language demonstrate an insufficient awareness of the mystery of God”? (Lynn Japinga, p. 60) |

| <u>Date</u> | | | <u>Subject/Assignment</u> |
|-------------|-------|----------------------------|--|
| T | 9/23 | Evil in a Good Creation | CT, ch. 5-6; FWE, ch. 2; CHARLES CAMPBELL, <i>THE WORD BEFORE THE POWERS</i> , CHS. 1-2; SERENE JONES, "WHAT'S WRONG WITH US?" Tutu, chs. 1-3 |
| TH | 9/25 | Sin | CT, ch. 7; Martin Luther King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (web) JAMES CONE, "MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., BLACK THEOLOGY—BLACK CHURCH" |
| T | 9/30 | Sin | Tutu, chs. 4-5 2nd Reflection Paper: If "God does not give up on anyone, for God loved us from all eternity, [and] God loves us now and God will always love us, all of us good and bad, forever and ever," then how do we reconcile the demand for justice? (Tutu, <i>No Future Without Forgiveness</i> , p. 84) Class exercise |
| TH | 10/2 | Jesus Christ Incarnation | CT, ch. 8; FWE, ch. 3&4; KARL BARTH, <i>DOGMATICS IN OUTLINE</i> , PP. 65-71 *Professor Ron Stone presenting |
| T | 10/7 | Cross and Suffering | Tutu ch. 6, and Postscript H. RICHARD NIEBUHR, "WAR AS CRUCIFIXION," AND "WAR AS THE JUDGMENT OF GOD" |
| TH | 10/9 | Cross and Suffering | DELORES WILLIAMS, "BLACK WOMEN'S SURROGACY EXPERIENCE CHALLENGES CHRISTIAN NOTIONS OF REDEMPTION" KURIBAYASHI TERUO, "RECOVERING JESUS FOR OUTCASTS IN JAPAN," in SUGIRTHARAJAH, <i>FRONTIERS IN ASIAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY</i> , PP. 11-26; FWE, CH. 5 & 6 Take-home exams due |
| T | 10/14 | Research and Study | NO CLASSES |
| TH | 10/16 | Research and Study | NO CLASSES |
| T | 10/21 | Resurrection and Salvation | ADA MARIA ISASI-DIAZ, "A MUJERISTA CHRISTOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING," in LA |

| <u>Date</u> | | <u>Subject/Assignment</u> | |
|-------------|-------|--|---|
| | | | <p>LUCHA CONTINUES, PP. 240-251 AFUA KUMA, "JESUS OF THE DEEP FOREST" in JESUS AND THE GOSPEL IN AFRICA, PP. 8-15; FWE, CH. 7-9</p> |
| TH | 10/23 | Church and Communion | <p>CT, ch. 9; JACQUELYN GRANT, "THE SIN OF SERVANTHOOD" Class exercise</p> |
| T | 10/28 | Church and Communion | <p>CT, CH. 10; ANTONIO GONZALEZ, "THE GOSPEL OF FAITH AND JUSTICE," PP. 11-40 DAVID KWANG-SUN SUH, "THEOLOGY OF REUNIFICATION," in SUGIRTHARAJAH, FRONTIERS IN ASIAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY, PP. 196-205</p> |
| TH | 10/30 | Holy Spirit and the Word of God | <p>CT, CH. 11; FRANK D. MACCHIA, "THE STRUGGLE FOR THE SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH," 4- 35 DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, "THE INTERPRETATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT" 3rd Reflection Paper: Is it true that "Christ alone can save sinners, and the salvation in Christ alone is the true and genuine salvation"? What does this mean for non-Christians? (Sung Wook Chung, p. 227)</p> |
| T | 11/4 | Life Everlasting | <p>Tutu, ch. 7-11 CT, ch. 12</p> |
| TH | 11/6 | Christianity and Other Religions | <p>CT, ch. 13; Chung Hyun Kyung, WCC Address (web) SUNG WOOK CHUNG, <i>CHRIST THE ONE AND ONLY: A GLOBAL AFFIRMATION OF THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS CHRIST (2005)</i>, CH. 11</p> |
| T | 11/11 | Slavery | <p>Frederick Douglass, Appendix to the <i>Narrative</i> (web) Class exercise</p> |
| TH | 11/13 | War | <p>JOHN HOWARD YODER, <i>THE PRIESTLY KINGDOM</i>, CH.4</p> |

| <u>Date</u> | | | <u>Subject/Assignment</u> |
|-------------|-------|-------------------------------|--|
| | | | H. Richard Niebuhr, Radical Trust in God: "The Grace of Doing Nothing" (web) Reinhold Niebuhr, No Absolutes: "Must We Do Nothing?" (web) H. Richard Niebuhr, A Final Word: "The Only Way Into the Kingdom of God" (web) |
| T | 11/18 | | THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS |
| TH | 11/20 | Sexuality | WALTER WINK, "HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE BIBLE," KEN SEHESTED, "BIBLICAL FIDELITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION," and PEGGY CAMPOLO, "IN GOD'S HOUSE THERE ARE MANY CLOSETS," in HOMOSEXUALITY AND CHRISTIAN FAITH; RICHARD HAYS, "AWAITING THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODIES," in HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE CHURCH, BOTH SIDES OF THE DEBATE 4 th Reflection Paper: Explain your theological understanding of human sexuality in general and then defend the ethics of your position on same-sex relations. |
| T | 11/25 | Spirituality | DOROTHY DAY, ON PILGRIMAGE, in PLACHER, CALLINGS, PP. 413-420; DOROTHY DAY, THE FEAR OF OUR ENEMIES, IN DOROTHY DAY, SELECTED WRITINGS, PP. 321-323 GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ, "JOHN OF THE CROSS: A LATIN AMERICAN VIEW," in THE DENSITY OF THE PRESENT, PP. 137-146 |
| TH | 11/27 | Prayer | HERBERT MCCABE, <i>GOD, CHRIST, AND US</i> , 5-24 THOMAS MERTON, <i>NO MAN IS AN ISLAND</i> , 3-23 |
| T | 12/2 | Liberation and Reconciliation | FWE, ch. 10-14 |
| TH | 12/4 | Conclusion | |