

Barth and Bonhoeffer, 2009  
Schlegel Rm. 122

Instructor: Amy Plantinga Pauw  
Office: 215 Gardencourt  
Phone: 992-5425  
E-mail: [amypauw@lpts.edu](mailto:amypauw@lpts.edu)

*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:**

This course will examine two giants of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Christian theology who confronted both Nazism and the heritage of liberal theology.

**Objectives:**

1. To acquaint students with the thought of two great 20<sup>th</sup>-century theologians;
2. To encourage them to assess the relevance of Barth and Bonhoeffer's theology for the contemporary church and world.
3. To help them hone their own theological perspectives in dialogue with Barth and Bonhoeffer's writings.

**Requirements for 3 credits:**

1. Conscientious attendance and participation in discussion. (25%)  
*Showing up with your reading done is an important component of your work in this course. Lack of attendance and of thorough and timely class preparation will adversely affect your course grade. Please inform me ahead of time if you have to miss class. Missing more than 4 sessions of class puts you in danger of failing the course.*

2. Short paper (7-8 pp.) on your choice of topic. (25%) **Due May 15**

Please discuss your choice of topic with me.

**Some Examples of Possible Topics:**

*The Barmen Declaration and the Belhar Confession  
Barth's biblical exegesis  
Bonhoeffer as ecumenist  
Bonhoeffer's theological debt to Barth*

3. 50-word sentences (50%)

*Students will record their response to the question posed in the syllabus for each class's reading; these will take the form of one 50-word sentence (see description by Professor Charles Cohen of the University of Wisconsin below). We will start each session by reading some of these aloud. I*

*will collect these short assignments every Thursday, and turn them back to you the next Tuesday.*

You must take this course for 3 credits if it is to count as your “core” theology elective. However you may take this course for 2 credits and still fulfill an Area B elective requirement. Please see the instructor if you are interested in this 2-credit option.

Charles L. Cohen on the 50-word assignment:

“A single-sentence exercise with a finite word limit counters students’ proclivity for aerating their prose with superfluities. Given at most fifty words, students must distill their arguments’ fundamentals and phrase them concisely, for, as my syllabus warns, the fifty-first word and its successors face a terrible fate. (I have been known to cut out extraneous verbiage and turn the tattered remnant into a paper airplane—a practice proved sound pedagogically if not aerodynamically.)

Fifty words might appear too many—the contests cereal companies run, after all, ask for only twenty five—but I prefer giving students sufficient rope. For one thing, the fifty-word limit allows them to cope with the assignment, which often requires complicated responses. For another, it weans them from dependency on simple declarative sentences and challenges them to experiment with multiple clauses. Some can handle compound-complex sentences, but most require—and appreciate—tutelage in them. Nor are fifty words too few; no student has ever complained about an inability to pare down the verbiage. Had Goldilocks stumbled into my section instead of the Three Bears’ den, she would have found the word limit “just right.”

Consider, for example, the assignment that I recently gave students in History/Religious Studies 451, entitled “Constructing a hypothesis”: “Using the maps in the front of the packet, compare the distribution of churches within Anglo-America east of the Mississippi River in 1750 with the distribution in 1850 and, in one sentence NOT EXCEEDING 50 words (need I say more?), hypothesize the reasons for the difference.” To complete the exercise, students must examine a series of maps, aggregate data presented graphically and convert it into written form, analyze that data and develop a hypothesis to explain patterns they may have found. They must attend carefully to the material (not the least of the minor assignment’s benefits is its capacity to monitor students’ preparation), read the maps against each other, and offer a succinct but accurate conclusion, thereby rehearsing several critical skills simultaneously.

The quality of the responses varied, as one might expect, but the best submission hit the mark exactly, intellectually and, at fifty words, quantitatively: ‘The maps show a relative decline in Anglican and Congregational Churches in relation to the growth of other churches between 1750 and 1850, which reflects the shift towards the disestablishment of state churches and the demand for a constitutional guaranty of religious freedom that occurred during the American Revolutionary Settlement.’ Even more impressive, English is not the writer’s native language.”

**Academic honesty:**

All work you submit in this class 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.

### **Inclusive Language:**

In your writing, avoid language for people that leaves out part of the population or perpetuates stereotypes. Avoid gender specific pronouns when gender is unknown. Note that Barth and Bonhoeffer wrote in German. When the word *man* occurs in English versions of Barth and Bonhoeffer's writings, it is generally a bad translation of the German word *Mensch*, which means *human being* or *humanity*. If you quote them in their English translations, you should feel free to improve the translated text by recognizing the inclusivity of the word *Mensch*. Gender specific pronouns should generally be avoided when referring to God unless you are quoting from a theological text or a translation of the Bible that uses them; both Barth and Bonhoeffer consistently refer to God with male pronouns.

### **Required Texts:**

John R. Franke, *Barth for Armchair Theologians* (Westminster John Knox, 2006) (*Franke* in syllabus)

Geffrey B. Kelly & Burton Nelson, eds., *A Testament to Freedom: The Essential Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995). (*Essential Writings*, followed by section number and title, in the syllabus)

Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1960)

### **Recommended Text:**

Renate Wind, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Spoke in the Wheel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992)

Note: Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* is available in electronic form through the Seminary's website. Go to [www.lpts.edu](http://www.lpts.edu); click on Library>> Database and Article searching>> Digital Karl Barth Library>> Church Dogmatics. Then search under the appropriate volume (e.g. I/1), paragraph (e.g. § 4 The Word of God in its Threefold Form), and page number (note that the page number is at the **top** of the page, not the bottom). Generations of Barth students have discovered that it is permissible to skip over the "small print passages," because Barth's main argument is in large print. Unfortunately, in the electronic version the small print sections are in regular size type. But if you see citations, page numbers or italicized titles, you will know this is a small print section, and can skip on to the next section. In the reading for Feb. 24, for example, p. 99 starts with a Latin quotation followed by various citations. This is a small print passage. Start your reading at "2. The Word of God Written."

**Bibliography and Reserve List:**

Barth, Karl. *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1963).

Bettis, Joseph. "Is Karl Barth a Universalist?" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 20 (1967): 423-36.

Brunner, Emil. *Natural Theology, comprising "Nature and Grace" by Emily Brunner and the Reply "No" by Karl Barth* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1946).

De Gruchy, John, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

De Gruchy, John, ed. *Bonhoeffer for a New Day: Theology in a Time of Transition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

Ford, David, ed. *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997)

Hart, John W. Karl Barth vs Emil Brunner: *The Formation and Dissolution of a Theological Alliance, 1916-1936* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001).

Hunsinger, George. *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of his Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Iorio, D., R. Libowitz, and M. Little, eds., *The Holocaust: Lessons for the Third Generation* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997),

Kelly, Geoffrey and Burton Nelson, eds., *The Cost of Moral Leadership: The Spirituality of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

Littell, F.H. and H.C. Locke, eds. *The German Church Struggle and the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1974).

Rasmussen, Larry. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: His Significance for North Americans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

Rasmussen, Larry. "The Sufferings of God," *Church and Society* (July/August 1995): 114-123.

Ray, Stephen G. *Do No Harm: Social Sin and Christian Responsibility* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

Robinson, Marilynne. *The Death of Adam: Essays on Modern Thought* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998).

Rosenbaum, Ned. "Bonhoeffer: A Jewish View," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* Vol. XVIII, No. 2 (Spring 1981): 301-307.

Selinger, Suzanne. Charlotte von Kirschbaum and Karl Barth: *A Study in Biography and the History of Theology* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

Willis, David and M. Welker. *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

Young, Josiah Ulysses III. *No Difference in the Fare: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Problem of Racism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

Websites:

<http://libweb.ptsem.edu/collections/barth/Default.aspx?menu=296&subText=468>  
<http://www.dbonhoeffer.org/>

### **Calendar of Topics and Assignments:**

Note: BlackBoard readings are listed in CAPITAL letters; they are also on regular reserve.

Feb. 10 Introduction to Barth

Franke, ch. 1

Sermon and "Letter of Thanks to Mozart," available at

<http://www.ets.edu/hts/hts3/info18.htm>

Feb. 12 Romans Commentary

Franke, chs. 2-3

Barth, EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, pp. 42-65

Journal Question: How does Barth characterize the human relationship to God in his Romans commentary?

Feb. 17 Natural Theology

Franke, ch. 4

Emil Brunner, NATURAL THEOLOGY, *comprising "Nature and Grace" by Emily Brunner and the Reply "No" by Karl Barth* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1946), pp. 31-35; 56-60; 67-90. Pp. 31-35 and 56-60 were written by Brunner. Pp. 67-90 were written by Barth.

John W. Hart, KARL BARTH VS EMIL BRUNNER: *The Formation and Dissolution of a Theological Alliance, 1916-1936* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), ch. 5.

Journal Question: What was the issue in the Barth/Brunner debate, and who was right?

## Feb. 19 The Barmen Declaration

Franke, ch. 5

“Barmen Declaration” available at

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/barmen.htm>

Charles West, “THE THEOLOGY OF BARMEN AND THE JEWS,” and James Kelley, THE ‘UNSTATED’ THESIS OF BARMEN,” in D. Iorio, R. Libowitz, and M. Little, eds., *The Holocaust: Lessons for the Third Generation* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997), chs. 16 and 17, pp. 181-197.

F.H. Littell, and H.C. Locke, eds. *THE GERMAN CHURCH STRUGGLE AND THE HOLOCAUST* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1974), chs. 10 and 11, pp. 167-202.

Journal Question: Did the *Barmen Declaration* say what it needed to say in its context?

## Feb. 24 Revelation

Franke, pp. 99-123

*Church Dogmatics*, I/1, § 4 The Word of God in its Threefold Form, pp. 99-121

Journal Question: Why does Barth say that the Bible *becomes* God’s Word (CD I/1, p. 110)?

## Feb. 26 God and covenant

Franke, pp. 124-128

*Church Dogmatics*, II/2, § 32 The Problem of a Correct Doctrine of the Election of Grace, pp. 3-34

*Church Dogmatics*, III/2, § 43 Man as a Problem of Dogmatics, pp. 41-54

Journal Question: Why does Barth say we should look to Jesus to understand both God and human nature?

## Mar. 3 Election

Franke, pp. 128-130

*Church Dogmatics*, II/2, § 33 The Election of Jesus Christ, pp. 94-117; 161-174; § 35. The Election of the Individual, pp. 345-354.

George Hunsinger, *HOW TO READ KARL BARTH: The Shape of his Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 128-137.

Joseph Bettis, “IS KARL BARTH A UNIVERSALIST?” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 20 (1967): 423-36.

Journal Question: Was Barth a universalist?

## Mar. 5 Barth and Women

Franke, pp. 130-136

*Church Dogmatics*, III/4, § 54 Freedom in Fellowship, pp. 149-183  
Suzanne Selinger, *CHARLOTTE VON KIRSCHBAUM AND KARL BARTH: A Study in Biography and the History of Theology* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), pp. 1-42.

Journal Question: According to Barth, how are men and women different?

#### Mar. 10 Reconciliation

Franke, 136-148  
*Church Dogmatics*, IV/1 §58 The Doctrine of Reconciliation (Survey), pp. 122-154;  
§ 59 The Obedience of the Son of God, pp. 231-255.

Journal Questions: What is Barth's view of human sin, and how is it overcome in Jesus Christ?

#### Mar. 12 Baptism

*Church Dogmatics*, IV/4 [fragment] The Foundation of the Christian Life, pp. 158-166; 182-186; 194-196.

Daniel Migliore, "REFORMING THE THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF BAPTISM: The Challenge of Karl Barth," in *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology*, eds. D. Willis and M. Welker, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 494-511.

Journal Question: Why did Barth reject infant baptism?

#### Mar. 17 Christian Existence

*The Humanity of God*, pp. 37-96.

Journal Question: What does Barth mean by "the humanity of God"? What is his understanding of human freedom?

#### Mar. 19 Barth's Legacy

Franke, ch. 7

Chris Elwood, "GETTING CALVIN RIGHT: How Karl Barth Changed Our Reading of the Reformer"

Darrell Guder, "Encountering Barth as a Missional Theologian"

[http://www.ptsem.edu/Publications/inspire2/8.1/ipds\\_summerfall/1features/2missionarticle.pdf](http://www.ptsem.edu/Publications/inspire2/8.1/ipds_summerfall/1features/2missionarticle.pdf) (scroll down halfway)

Dirkie Smit, "Reading Scripture Theologically with Barth—In South Africa?"

<http://libweb.ptsem.edu/collections/barth/articles/barthsouthafrica.aspx?menu=296&subText=468&disclaimer=668>

Bruce L. McCormack, "The Barth Renaissance in America: An Opinion"

<http://digital.library.ptsem.edu/default.xqy?src=PSB2002233.xml&div=13>

Journal Question: What is the most important thing you will bring away from your reading of Barth?

## RESEARCH AND STUDY WEEK

During this week, please watch the film [Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Pacifist, Nazi Resister](#) by Martin Doblmeier, on overnight reserve at the library.

### Mar. 31 Introduction to Bonhoeffer

Marilynne Robinson, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer," in *THE DEATH OF ADAM: ESSAYS ON MODERN THOUGHT*, pp. 108-125

Charles Marsh, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer," in David Ford, ed., *THE MODERN THEOLOGIANS*, pp. 37-51

NEW YORK TIMES article

Journal Question: Germany officially regarded Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a national traitor until the mid-1990s. Was he a traitor?

### Apr. 2 The Jewish Question

Essential Writings, 11. The Church and the Jewish Question; 12. The Bethel Confession  
Stephen G. Ray, *DO NO HARM: Social Sin and Christian Responsibility* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), ch. 3, pp. 75-96.

Ned Rosenbaum, "BONHOEFFER: A JEWISH VIEW" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* Vol. XVIII, No. 2 (Spring 1981): 301-307.

Ruth Zerner, CHURCH, STATE, AND THE 'JEWISH QUESTION,'" in *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ch. 10, pp. 190-205.

Journal Question: Was Bonhoeffer's view of Jews positive?

### Apr. 7 Life Together

Essential Writings, 50. Life Together

Kelly and Nelson, *THE COST OF MORAL LEADERSHIP*, ch. 7, pp. 145-172.

Journal Question: In his section on "Community," what dangers does Bonhoeffer see in holding an 'idealized image' of Christian community?

## EASTER BREAK

### Apr. 14 Sermons

Essential Writings, Sermons 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34, 38, 41, 42, 46, 47

Patrick D. Miller, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Psalms"

<http://digital.library.ptsem.edu/default.xqy?src=PSB1994153.xml&div=9>

Journal Question: What is the good news that Bonhoeffer proclaims in his sermons?

### Apr. 16 Bonhoeffer's visit to North America

Essential Writings, 66. Second Visit to America; Appendix I, "Protestantism without Reformation"

J. Deotis Roberts, *BONHOEFFER AND KING: Speaking Truth to Power* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), chs. 6-9, pp. 41-71

Journal Question: Was Bonhoeffer right to characterize American Christianity as "Protestantism without Reformation" (p. 523)?

#### Apr. 21 Human suffering (Yom Hashoah)

Essential Writings, 49. The Cost of Discipleship

Chung Hyun Kyung, "DEAR DIETRICH BONHOEFFER: A Letter," in *Bonhoeffer for a New Day*, pp. 9-19.

Kelly and Nelson, *THE COST OF MORAL LEADERSHIP*, ch. 8, pp. 173-186.

Larry Rasmussen, "THE SUFFERINGS OF GOD," in *Church and Society* July/August 1995, pp. 114-123.

Journal Question: Is Bonhoeffer right to call all Christians to participate in Christ's sufferings?

#### Apr. 23 Letters to Pastors and Conspirators

Essential Writings, 64. To the Brethren of Finkenwalde; 67. After Ten Years

Larry Rasmussen, "THE ETHICS OF RESPONSIBLE ACTION," in *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, pp. 202-225.

Journal Question: What is the difference in tone between Bonhoeffer's letters to the Finkenwalde brethren and Confession Church pastors and his letter to his family and conspirators?

#### Apr. 28 Ethics

Essential Writings, 52. Ethics

Nancy J. Duff, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Theological Ethic

<http://digital.library.ptsem.edu/default.xqy?src=PSB1994153.xml&div=8>

Journal Question: In his *Ethics*, how does Bonhoeffer distinguish and relate the penultimate and the ultimate?

#### Apr. 30 Assassination Plot

Andreas Pangritz, "SHARING THE DESTINY OF HIS PEOPLE," in *Bonhoeffer for a New Day*, pp. 258-277.

Larry Rasmussen, "Resistance," in *DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, HIS SIGNIFICANCE FOR NORTH AMERICANS*, ch. 3, pp. 43-56.

Journal Question: Was Bonhoeffer's participation in the assassination plot against Hitler ethically justified?

## May 5 Religionless Christianity

Essential Writings, 69. Letters to Eberhard Bethge

Ralf K. Wüstenberg, "RELIGIONLESS CHRISTIANITY: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Tegel Theology in *Bonhoeffer for a New Day*, pp. 57-71.

Larry Rasmussen, "Worship in a World Come of Age," in *DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, HIS SIGNIFICANCE FOR NORTH AMERICANS*, ch. 4, pp. 57-71.

Peter Selby, "CHRISTIANITY IN A WORLD COME OF AGE," in *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ch. 12, pp. 226-245.

Journal Question: *What does Bonhoeffer mean by non-religious Christianity?*

## May 7 Bonhoeffer's Legacy

John DeGruchy, "Bonhoeffer's Legacy: A New Generation,"

<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=72>

Josiah Ulysses Young III, *NO DIFFERENCE IN THE FARE: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Problem of Racism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), ch. 1.

Beatriz Melano, "The Influence of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Paul Lehmann, and Richard Schull in Latin America" (you may start reading on p. 77)

<http://digital.library.ptsem.edu/default.xqy?src=PSB2001221.xml&div=8&img=1>

Journal Question: *What is the most important thing you will bring away from your reading of Bonhoeffer?*