

# Contemporary Theology

Spring Semester 2010

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Schlegel Hall 121  
WF, 10-11:20am

**\*Final Versions will be distributed on the first day of classes.**

## **Description**

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to major trends and movements in theological discourse throughout the twentieth century, with emphasis on the second half of the century and recent years. Students will be exposed to the theological foundations and ideas that characterized significant shifts in theological perspectives, including in method and context. Special attention will be given to postmodern theological discourse, liberation theologies, and the ways in which modern theology has drawn increasing criticism as a product of Western colonialism and hegemony in the contemporary world. The course will invite critical reflection on postmodern and postcolonial studies, Mujerista theology, Feminist theologies, Womanist theologies, Queer theology, liberation theologies, as well as engagements with the relationship between theology and Empire. Related themes include theology and technology, secularization in the church and society, and the socio-political context within which the Church exists today.

## **Objectives**

To demonstrate an understanding of the major trends reflected in late twentieth and early twenty-first century theological discourse.

To examine the theological and ethical methods employed by the various theological perspectives considered.

To explore the interactions of race, gender, class, sexuality, and ethnicity at work in theological interpretation.

To analyze the relationship between the Church and contemporary theology, considering the applicability of theological discourse in public life and the Church's social witness in the world.

## **Inclusive Language**

LPTS is a seminary that affirms inclusive language, which is a style of writing that seeks to overcome marginalizing terms, language, and stereotypes. Students should avoid using specific pronouns when gender is unknown. Gender pronouns for God should not be used, unless using a direct quote from a theological text or biblical translation. In those cases, use brackets for inclusive language (i.e., His [God's] glory filled the temple).

## **Academic honesty**

All work you submit in CT 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.

## **Grading Requirements**

- (1) Participation and attendance. It is very important for students to be active and informed participates in the course. Students are expected to read all assignments in detail and be prepared to offer thoughtful feedback during class discussions. As graduate students,

- participants are strongly encouraged to take part in the teaching/learning process, particularly through preparedness and contributions to the course. Students will also be expected to present in class on designated readings at least twice during the semester. (10%)
- (2) Students will write three 3-page critical analysis papers focused on one of the course readings. These papers should reflect your interaction with the readings, identifying the major argument(s) being advanced and reflect what you find most compelling about the material. The papers should not simply be an outline of the readings, but a critical dialogue and analysis based on your own theological perspective. At least half the paper should be devoted to analyzing the readings, and the other half attending to your own theological voice as a response. (60%)
- (3) Write a final reflection paper, 7-10 pages. In the final paper, students will explore a critical theological problem in contemporary theology. Drawing on the course readings as well as additional readings from independent research, student will identify a topic or theme in conversation with the instructor. This paper may also reflect on a contemporary problem confronting the Church, or society in general. (30%)

### **Required text**

- Leonardo Boff, *Global Civilization: Challenges to Society and Christianity*, Translated by Alexandre Guilherme (London: Equinox, 2005). ISBN 1-84553-005-5
- Monica A. Coleman, *Making a Way Out of No Way: A Womanist Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008). ISBN: 9780800662936
- Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1996). ISBN: 9781570750816
- Don Compier, Kwok Pui-Lan, Joerg Rieger, *Empire and the Christian Tradition: New Readings of Classical Theologians* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007). ISBN: ISBN-10: 0800662156
- David Batstone, Eduardo Mendiata, Lois Ann Lorentzen, and Dwight N. Hopkins, *Liberation Theologies, Postmodernity, and the Americas* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997). ISBN 0415916593
- Graham Ward, Editor, *The Postmodern God: A Theological Reader* (Wiley-Blackwell Publishers). ISBN-10: 0631201416

### **Suggested Readings**

Jurgen Moltmann, "Control is Good—Trust is Better: Freedom and Security in a "Free World"" *Theology Today* 62 (2006): 465-75.

Paul Tillich, "History and the Quest for the Kingdom of God" in *Systematic Theology III* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 300-361.

Wolfgang Pannenberg, "God's Presence in History" *The Christian Century*, March 11, 1981, 260-263.

Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: A Selection* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), Part I, 29-86.

Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1994), 1-25.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Who Is Christ for Us?* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002).

Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*GAUDIUM ET SPES*) in *The Documents of Vatican II* (Chicago, IL: Association Press/Follett Publishing, 1966), 199-248.

Wolfgang Pannenberg, "God As Spirit—and Natural Science," *Zygon*, 36.4 (December 2001), 783-794.

Kathy Rudy, "A Divided Church: The Political Landscape of Contemporary Christianity," and "In Christ There is No Male and Female: The Social Construction of Gender and Sexual Identities," in *Sex and the Church*, Chapter 1 and 5 (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1997).

Conrad Ostwalt, "Introduction," "Space/Place/Pre-Text" and "Megachurches," in *Secular Steeples: Popular Culture and the Religious Imagination* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International), 1-76.

Marcella Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003). ISBN-10 0415323231

Paul Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice: Ontological Analyses and Ethical Application* (Oxford University Press, 1954). ISBN-10 0195002229

Susan Brooks Thistlewaite and Mary Potter Engel, *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Theologies from the Underside* (Harper & Row Publishers). ISBN 0-05-067992-1

Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

James W. Perkinson, *White Theology: Outing Supremacy in Modernity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). ISBN 1-4039-6584-6

Michael Budde, *The (Magic) Kingdom of God: Christianity and Global Cultural Industries* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).

Dwight Hopkins, *Being Human: Race, Culture, and Religion* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2005). ISBN 0-8006-3757-7

John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Co., 1994, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). ISBN 0-8028-0734-8

Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1964).

Kathy Rudy, *Sex and the Church* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1997).

Conrad Ostwalt, *Secular Steeples: Popular Culture and the Religious Imagination* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International).

## **Outline**

### **Theological Themes**

#### **I. The Postmodern God**

February

- 10 Introductions
- 12 Doing Theology in a “Postmodern” Context: The Postmodern Condition  
Reading: *The Postmodern God*
- 17 What is postmodernity?
- 19 Secularity and the Nihilistic Threat
- 24 Theology and Postmodern Culture
- 26 Theology, Empire and Technology  
Reading: *Empire and the Christian Tradition*

March

#### **II. Human Being: Theological Anthropology**

- 3 Theology and the Human Condition
- 5 Jesus and Empire
- 10 Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality in Doing Theology
- 12 Mujerista Theology  
Reading: *Mujerista Theology*
- 17 Cont.
- 19 Feminist and Womanist Theologies  
Reading: *Making A Way Out of No Way*
- 24 Research and Study
- 26 Research and Study
- 31 GLBT (Gay, Bi-sexual, Lesbian, Transgendered) Theological Perspectives

#### **III. Postmodernity and Global Society**

April

- 2 Liberation Theologies and Postmodernity  
Reading: *Liberation Theologies, Postmodernity, and the Americas*
- 7 “Crossing Borders: Remapping the Sacred/Secular”
- 9 Theology and Praxis
- 14 Theology in the Global South
- 16 Cont.

21	Theology and Poverty
23	Cont.
28	Emerging Theologies and Global Society Reading: <i>Global Civilizations: Challenges to Society and Christianity</i>
30	Theology, Pluralism and Globalization
May	
2	Easter Recess
5	Theology and the Environmental Crisis
7	Cont.
12	Last class—Conclusion (Final Papers Due)