111-19 Theological Foundations

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COURSE OVERVIEW

This course introduces students to religious thinking and to the foundations of theological concepts by exploring various ways in which we experience divine mystery in the world and how these experiences transform us, inform our religious faith, shape our moral conscience, and orient how we live in the world.

OUR GOALS

Our overall goals are to:

1. Show measurable growth in articulating the presence of mystery within and beyond our “world”.
2. Show how revelatory experience transforms us and informs our religious traditions.
3. Enable students to relate religious experience, scriptural interpretations (as written articulations of religious experiences) in a reflective, inclusive and pragmatic way to one’s life experiences.
4. Demonstrate the integral connection between revelatory experience, religious faith and issues of social and ecological significance.

OUR LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this course, students will demonstrate measurable growth in their ability to:

1. Define the relationship between experience, faith, theology and religion.
2. Define the relationship between power and holiness.
3. Define the relation between mystery, experience, scripture, and religion.
4. Explain the essence of transformative experiences, especially in terms of the “horizon of interpretation,” mystery, power, and “truth/untruth” (i.e, revealing-concealing-illumination).
5. Explain the process of naming something holy and how this process essentially happens.
6. Discuss how our theological relation to divine mystery manifests itself in our relation to the world.
7. Articulate an example of how one can integrate the principles discussed herein into everyday life.

OUR RESOURCES

Resources are available on Canvas under the menu item, “Files.” Readings required for each week, which are provided in the Course Planner below, are in the folder corresponding to each week.

OUR POLICIES:

1). ABSENTEEISM: Attendance is 15% of the final grade or 150 out of 1000 pts. Absences do not excuse students from knowledge about the material discussed or from accepting responsibility for any announcements or syllabus changes or assigned work made while absent. For this course, students are allowed two (2) excused absences for the semester without any excuse. Any absence thereafter shall count as 15 pts off attendance unless the reason is deemed justifiable by the professor. For instance, a
person who misses five unexcused days (which means three more than allowed) will have a final attendance score of 105 [150 – (3x15pts) = 105/150]. Chronic absence will result in recommendation of withdrawal or failure from the course. This is because much of the material—you soon will discover—is not necessarily available in the readings or, at the least, somewhat vague in several of the readings assigned and require class-time clarification. In other words, while the readings are important, they are meant to supplement class lectures and discussions. Thus, attendance is the BEST WAY to prepare for a successful outcome in this class. Also, if a student is absent on the day when a presentation, reflection paper, learning activity or assessment is due, the student must contact the instructor prior to the date assigned or make arrangements with professor to rectify the missed assignment. If working with group members, students must also contact their team members. Failure to inform the instructor will lower the student's grade for that assignment. As per method, I use a roster sheet and take attendance at the beginning of each class. If you are tardy (meaning, you are not present while I take attendance) then it is up to you to be sure that I count you as present. If you are 10 minutes late, this counts as 80% of the class, which means five times in which a student is 10 minutes late equates to one day absent.

2). TARDINESS: It’s hard to show up every day on time. I was a college student and I know how this can be. But, it does distract from the class and it can become habitual. If you are late to class excessively and without a justifiable reason, I reserve the right to count these over time as an absence, especially if this clearly accumulates to missing an entire class over several meetings. I will warn you of this before tardiness dips into your attendance allowance. That said, if you have a schedule problem where it is a real challenge to arrive on time (i.e., your earlier class is in Cohen and it is difficult to get to the Academic Mall in 10 minutes, or your class runs late) please discuss this with me. If circumstances are excessive, I may require evidence of this so we can work on a solution together.

3). PARTICIPATION: Naturally, attendance, tardiness and participation go hand in hand. Participation is worth 15% of the final grade. Obviously, there can be no credit given on days a student is absent, since one must be present to participate. So come to class, and participate!!! To be clear, participation includes involvement in group work, class discussions, asking questions, initiating discussions, and/or attentiveness. While students can receive a perfect score on attendance by attending every class, participation is weighted according to involvement. This does not mean a student has to be outspoken during every open discussion, but it does mean the student has to BE PREPARED and be engaged. Many times, I will call out students spontaneously so participation is not skewed more towards those more prone to raising their hands or initiating a class discussion. But this does account for your preparedness. Participation is tallied at the end of semester and weighted according to 15% of the final grade.

4) WEIGHING ATTENDANCE, TARDINESS AND PARTICIPATION
It is important to attend class on time, be prepared for the topic of the day, and participate while here. My classes are traditionally known to be fun, thought-provoking and quite different. The more you put into it, the more fun you will have, the more you will think about things you’ve never thought about before, and the more likely you will learn in a way that is life-giving. There are lessons and wisdom provided in this class that you may carry with you the rest of your life. My interest isn’t in getting you to pass a test. My interest is to provide you with seeing and thinking about things in a way that is nurturing to you moving forward in life. That said, suppose you miss five days (in addition to excused exchange days) as discussed above. As mentioned in the Attendance section, this means you would have a final attendance grade of 105/150. But, also, since you would receive 0 for participation on those days you are absent, your participation grade would be NO MORE than a score of 105/150 (since a student cannot receive a participation grade for classes unattended). This means that, if a student misses five days, they can have no better than a final grade of 91 or a B+ [1000-2x(150-105) = 910], assuming a perfect score (which is unlikely) is achieved on all other assignments. So, come to class, participate and learn something new!!!!

5). LAPTOPS: Laptops are reserved for those students with documented needs. If a laptop is necessary, said students are permitted to use a laptop only for the documented need, i.e., notetaking, recording, etc. Emails, social media and web-surfing will not be tolerated unless approved or requested by the professor. But keep in mind that the professor's style, which involves a lot of pictures make note-taking on a laptop challenging. Recommended options include recording the lecture and taking photos of the diagrams/models on the board in addition to laptop note-taking.
6) CELL PHONES: Cell phones are absolutely not permitted DURING class time unless a reasonable excuse is given beforehand. Cell phones used during class time can result in a 0 on participation for that particular class. As an avid texter myself, I am well aware of the ability to text under the desk and I am attuned to the behavior that reveals this is being done. Please note that this will absolutely not be tolerated. Sorry for the harshness, but this has become a necessity in recent years. To be frank, rarely are there daily things we can’t wait 50 minutes to text or snap chat someone about.

7) NOTETAKING: Taking a cellphone picture of a blackboard full of notes after class instead of taking written notes during class has been shown to be ineffective. This is because students are not engaged in the class and do not add their own additional notes to the board notes, which can be extremely helpful. Also, there are times in which notes on the board may appear repetitive from previous classes, but there are always new items added in as this is a way in which we are building a “story” of understanding. Please do not assume that you need only add to an older note. We are building a story in this class and bringing up ethical questions and new concepts as we build this story. So stay the course, take good notes each day, and stay engaged. Students who are confused about notes should come see the professor during office hours, which are listed at the top of this syllabus.

8). ACADEMIC HONESTY: Work submitted for evaluation must be that of the student’s whose name is on the paper (for joint projects with classmates, please include their names). The direct and non-attributed use of another’s effort is prohibited. Penalties for violation will be in accordance with Xavier University policies as cited in the catalog. The Instructor reserves the right to instruct students to use “Turn It In” to monitor plagiarism.

9). LANGUAGE: Xavier is committed unreservedly to open and free inquiry, but any abusive, discriminatory, harassing language will not be tolerated. Gender neutral language is expected.

10). INCLUSIVE LEARNING: If anyone needs course adaptations or accommodations because of a documented disability, or if you have emergency medical information to share, or if you have concerns regarding offensive language or behavior, I am happy to meet with you in confidentiality. Just see me or e-mail me to set up a time if my office hours are not convenient for you.

11). HELP: If a student feels they are having difficulty adjusting to campus life or to this course, please do not hesitate to discuss this with the professor either before or after class or during the professor’s office hours. The professor and Xavier are committed to doing our best to help you succeed. Also, the Staff in the Office of Student Success is available to assist students to make the most of their Xavier experience. Personal consultations, success coaching, referrals to on-campus Solution Centers, and guiding students to effectively navigate their college experience are central to their work. You can go to Xavier.edu/student-success to learn more or visit them in Room 514 of the Conaton Learning Commons. You can also email them at studentretention@xavier.edu or call them at 745-3036.

12). RESPONSIBILITY & ACCOUNTABILITY: While the professor and Xavier are committed to student success, students are expected to be responsible and accountable for their progress, effort and success. Students are expected to be honest, to accept responsibility for missed assignments and hold themselves accountable for consequences of not doing course work. Obviously, there are times in which we need help and we have a good reason for not completing work or for missing class. While the professor is empathetic to students needs, the professor strongly encourages self-reliant problem-solving.

13). NEEDS ACCOMMODATIONS: In addition to free and open inquiry, the professor and Xavier are committed to accommodating special needs. Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation or service based on the impact of a documented disability or even a potentially undiagnosed issue, whether physical, learning or medical, should contact the Learning Assistance Center at 513-745-3280. Students, if comfortable, are welcome to discuss concerns confidentially with the professor. Students having difficulty with writing assignments should not hesitate to contact the Writing Center. Also, students are encouraged to talk to the professor about these needs. Finally, if the professor recommends visiting the writing center or any other service on campus, the student is encouraged to
pursue these options as avenues of success for future classes, campus life and professional life. All needs, whether or not documented, are dealt with confidentially.

14). CONFIDENTIALITY: The professor is committed to confidentiality and to fostering a safe, open, inclusive and positive learning environment. All needs and concerns, whether documented or not, will be dealt with the strictest confidentiality of each student and with the student’s health, safety, and overall wellbeing and success in mind.

OUR REQUIREMENTS

Assigned Readings & Preventable Spontaneous Quizzes
Readings prepare students for active participation. This course is designed to engage students and students are expected to keep up on the assigned readings. It's easier to read 20 pages between each class than 180 at the end of two weeks! I encourage students to take notes in the margins of your readings, especially since these are available on Canvas. This kind of note-taking will make your life a lot easier and will really make preparing for your assessments, group projects and response papers more efficient. Again, readings can get overwhelming if you do not keep up on them and, in turn, the course can get confusing. If I am under the impression that students are not reading, I reserve the right to assign spontaneous quizzes worth 10 pts each and will add these on to the final grade weight. So do your part: PREVENT POP QUIZZES, and forest fires too!

Attendance and Participation, (150 points each; 300 points total)  
See “Our Policies” section above for details on this requirement.

Reflection Journals (3), (50 points each; 150 points total)  
Reflection Journals are also used to monitor if students are keeping up with assigned readings but, more importantly, they are designed to offer students an opportunity to synthesize what they have learned. Each reflection journal will be assigned a week before it is due. This journal will be submitted via email in response to a question the professor raises at the end of class and then posts on Canvas, and the student will have a week to submit his/her response. All reflection papers are LIMITED to 300-600 words, depending on the assignment. I am more interested in quality than quantity. I also expect proper grammar and spelling. So make it count! Papers not meeting these expectations, either too short or too long, may not be accepted or considered late. Papers off topic or lacking relevant substance may or may not be returned to the student to rewrite.

Field Trip, Group Project (150 points total)  
At a critical point in the learning process of this course, it is essential to offer an experiential exercise that explores how our social/ecological relations are manifestations of our theological relation to mystery. The bad news is that we will have a field trip. The good news is that this will include a bonfire or some time on the river, away from campus in a very pretty and reflective setting. This is one of my students’ greatest experiences, year in and year out! So, trust that this is something you will be glad you did! Even better news is that I will be canceling three classes at desirable times for students as a way to make up for your commitment to this exciting learning experience, which will far outweigh the 4 regular classes combined. These “field trip exchange days” are indicated in the course planner. There will be reading assignments due PRIOR to this trip and a reflection paper will be assigned while on the Field Trip you may want to begin working on while at our destination.

There will also be a group project associated with this trip. This project will be based on single, but powerfully symbolic things like water, trees, sky, earth, fire, birds, etc, with respect to fundamental religious and theological ideas. The assigned group projects will culminate in group presentations and a written report to be presented and turned in per syllabus schedule. It’ll be FUN! Every year, that is the overall feedback! This trip is mandatory and equivalent to four classes. Alternative assignments are possible for extenuating circumstances.
First and Second Assessments, (100 points each; 200 points total)
I'm not a big fan of exams. They encourage emphasis more on recitation of knowledge than depth of understanding. My interest is monitoring the learning process and so I offer a First Assessment, Second Assessment and a Final Assessment. They will include short answers, short essay questions drawn from class lecture, projects and assigned readings. Again, they are intended to make you think through concepts discussed and to evaluate your learning progression from the initial class to the final class. The best way to prepare for the exams is to attend class and take notes and to take notes on the readings throughout the semester. Many of the questions on the assessments you will have heard in class, sometimes repetitively, and may not be covered in the readings. Again, this is why attendance is critical.

Final Paper and Final Assessment, (100 points each; 200 points total)
Prompts will be assigned for the final paper at least three weeks in advance of the due date. It is designed to challenge students to integrate what they've learned theologically to a social or ecological justice issue. Students will be given ample time to complete the paper prior to the final exam timeframe for this course. This final paper is due when you take the final assessment on exam day. The final assessment is formatted similar to the first and second assessments.

OUR EVALUATIONS

Standards and Scale
Work will be evaluated according to the standards set forth in the Theology Department Guidelines (see www.xavier.edu/theology). These guidelines mandate the following 8-point scale:

A = 100–92  B = 91–84  C = 83–76  D = 75–68  F = 67–0

Late Work
Assignments are due at the scheduled time and date as indicated in the Course Schedule. Assignments not turned in on time will be penalized 10 percentage points for every day they are late. (For example, a late paper originally due on Monday would be penalized 20% if turned in on the proceeding Wednesday. Makeup work will be allowed only if negotiated in advance and for a serious reason. No work will be accepted after the final assessment.

Academic Honesty
This course will be conducted in accordance with Xavier University’s policy on academic honesty. In papers and assignments submitted for this course, both the ideas and wording must be the student’s own or must be clearly attributed to their proper sources using full citations. Re-submission of work used for a previous course, even if it is the student’s own work, is also considered a violation.

Final Grade Calculation (1000 pts total)

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Attendance/Tardiness</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>(150pts)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<td>(150pts)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection Papers (3)</td>
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<td>(150pts)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Project/Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>(150pts)</td>
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<tr>
<td>First/Second Assessments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper &amp; Assessment</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>(200pts)</td>
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Professor Evaluations
The professor-student relationship is reciprocal. I learn from you as much as you learn from me. Learning and teaching belong together. One realizes the other, one is fulfilled through the other. It is my desire to provide the opportunity for student input on the professor’s teaching and progress. Therefore, I will ask students to complete evaluations at the end of the semester, and feel free to discuss how I can improve without any repercussions. As a teacher, I can better improve if I have your honest input.
COURSE PLANNER  
(WITH LECTURE TOPICS & ASSIGNED DAILY READINGS)  

PROFESSOR DISCRETION  

Each group of students brings new challenges and possibilities. To address learning nuances, this professor reserves the right to alter reading assignments, lecture topics, and assessments and their respective due dates according to pace of class, discussions of interest or topics that may emerge pertinent to learning and course direction.

WEEK 1  
REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO AUG 28  

Jan 11  Welcome & Course Overview: “Foundational”

Jan 13  What is God? What is Theology?

Jan 15  Mystery, the Idea of the Holy, Gods

WEEK 2  
REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS OF WEEK:  

Jan 18  Martin Luther King Day—no class

Jan 20  Two Modes of Being-in-the-World

Jan 22  Hierophanies, Theophanies, and Kratophanies  

REFLECTION PAPER #1 ASSIGNED

WEEK 3  
REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS OF WEEK:  
- Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*—“Sacred World & Animals,” 75-82.  

Jan 25  Power and Holiness; Things and Power

Jan 27  Sacred Water and Fire; Sacred World Above

Jan 29  Sacredness of Nature and Cosmic Religions  

REFLECTION PAPER #1 DUE

WEEK 4  
REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS OF WEEK:  
- Lynn White, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis.”  
- Berry, *Befriending the Earth*—“Christology,” 66-82.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb 1</td>
<td><em>The Divine and Our Present Revelatory Moment</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 3</td>
<td><em>Two Scriptures and Context for Theology</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 5</td>
<td>REVIEW</td>
</tr>
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**WEEK 5**

**REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO FIELD TRIP:**
- Berry, *Dream of the Earth*—“Creative Energy,” 24-35.
- Berry, “The New Story”

**Feb 8**

**FIRST ASSESSMENT**

**Feb 10**

*Horizon of Interpretation*

**Feb 12**

*Story as Context of Meaning*

**REFLECTION PAPER #2 ASSIGNED**

**WEEK 6**

**REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS OF WEEK:**
- Aldo Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*—“Thinking Like a Mountain,” 129-137.

**Feb 15**

*Group Projects Assigned, In-Class Work*

**Feb 17**

*Encountering Event*

**Feb 19**

*Encountering Event*

**REFLECTION PAPER #2 DUE**

**WEEK 7**

**REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS OF WEEK:**
- Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*—“Memorial Address,” 43-57.

**Feb 22**

*World-Thing relation*

**Feb 24**

*Story-Experience relation*

**Feb 26**

*Naming and Language, Story-Experience-Thing-World*

**WEEK 8**

**REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS OF WEEK:**
- no readings required

**Feb 29**

*REVIEW*

**Mar 2**

*SECOND ASSESSMENT*

**Mar 4**

*Field Trip Exchange Day #1—no class*
WEEK 9
Mar 7-11  Spring Break—no class

WEEK 10
REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS OF WEEK:

Mar 14  What is Faith?
Mar 16  Religion: What is it? What is it good for?
Mar 18  Understanding Theology?

WEEK 11
Mar 21  Shamanic Journey
Mar 23  Field Trip Exchange Day #2—no class
Mar 25  Easter Break—no class

WEEK 12
Mar 28  Easter Break—no class
Mar 30  WHALE RIDER MOVIE
Apr 1  WHALE RIDER MOVIE

REFLECTION #3 ASSIGNED

WEEK 13
REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO END OF MOVIE:
-Berry, "Cosmology of Religions," 1-8.
-Knitter, One Earth, Many Religions—"Whose Justice? Whose Liberation?" 97-117.

Apr 4  Cosmology of Religions
Apr 6  One Earth, Many Religions
Apr 8  Field Trip Exchange Day #3—no class

REFLECTION #3 DUE

FIELD TRIP
REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO FIELD TRIP
-Edward Abbey, "Fool’s Treasure," Down the River, 160-171
-Aldo Leopold, "Ecological Conscience"

Apr 10  11:30am-3:30pm, Little Miami National Scenic River

FINAL PAPER PROMPTS GIVEN

Let's Have Fun and Learn Something New! 😊
Page 8 of 9
### WEEK 14
- Apr 11: Break-Out Discussions
- Apr 13: GROUP PRESENTATIONS
- Apr 15: GROUP PRESENTATIONS

### WEEK 15
- **Required Readings Prior to First Class**
  - Berry, “Reinventing the Human,” 1-3.
- Apr 18: Overflow Day
- Apr 20: *The Third Mediation and the Call for Ecological & Social Justice*
- Apr 22: *The Third Mediation and the Viable Human*

### WEEK 16
- **Required Readings Prior to First Class**
- Apr 25: *The Fourfold Wisdom*
- Apr 27: *Celebrations*
- Apr 29: *Review Day*

### WEEK 17
- May 6: **FINAL ASSESSMENT/FINAL PAPER DUE, 12:00-1:50 pm, 308 Alter Hall**