2015

THEO 111-19 Theological Foundations

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Theological Foundations
A Preliminary Syllabus

1. Presuppositions*

   A. Education and Liberation
   B. Horizons
   C. The Task of Dialogue: How do we construct a learning space?

2. In Medias Res

   A. A Working Definition of Theology
   B. Composition of Place
Where am I?
Who am I?
What do I want?
C. Naming the forces that touch my existence
D. Discrepancies and Fears
E. Context – How do we weave our existence together?
F. Language – Memory, Myth, Symbol.
G. Tradition.

3. With whom do I stand?

A. We live in a non-neutral situation
B. What Wisdom can we find?
C. E A T
D. The Jesus Tradition.
   i. Data, Method, Context
   ii. The Search for the Historical Jesus
   iii. The Developing Traditions
   iv. Can we live with such wisdom?
v. What future can we envision together?

4. The Matter of Suffering (“The heart opens sometimes only through suffering” A. Camus)

A. The Question of Innocent Suffering – a Matter of Justice
B. Without Sanctuary
C. The Jewish Martyr Traditions
D. The Death Tradition of Jesus
E. The World in which we live
F. How is theology possible in such a world?

5. Our Life Together

A. Papa Francesco’s Laudato Si (On the Care of Our Common Home)
B. What help from our traditions?
C. The Long Run: Into whose hands can we entrust our dreams?

* Please check for online readings for each section.

Course Protocols:

Our course is essentially an attempt at a multi-sided dialogue, not only with each other, but also with our pasts, presents and futures. It entails an attentive listening to one another and to the hints of wisdom that may filter down through our traditions.
Since we are engaged in such complicated dialogue it is crucial for each of us to be as present to each other as we can. *This means that we shall not use any electric device in class except for a particular classroom purpose. Please turn off all cell phones BEFORE entering class.* (If there is an emergency, notify the professor before class.)

Each student is asked to acquire a Moleskine notebook (240 lined pages, 5x8 ¼”) or an equivalent. Order these most cheaply on Amazon. Bring these to each class.

*Various readings and exercises* will be posted online under files on canvas for our class. Please check for these daily.

There will be **mid-term and final essays**. They will be given for you to do outside the classroom. The final essays will be due on the final exam day. We shall use that exam time for a final conversation. All are to attend.

**Required Texts:**

Moleskine lined notebook (240 lined pages, 5x8 ¼”)
Polebridge Press. 2010. (Both can be purchased on Amazon.)
THEOLOGY 111 and the CORE

Xavier University unabashedly offers a CORE studies program for every undergraduate. Often poorly advised students do not see or appreciate the point of the CORE. Xavier’s CORE attempts to give every undergraduate not only the basis of a genuine liberal education but also the foundation of the Jesuit habit of imagination. This habit of imagination can be articulated with the following questions. Each student needs to return to these questions throughout the semester and enfold one’s classroom engagement in this extended and unending conversation.

**Magis** – Are we open to the depths of our experience? Can we detect mystery in the very heart of things? How do we begin to speak of it? What relationships do we find ourselves enmeshed? Can we learn from others? Are we willing to discover and enter new horizons? Are we willing to deal with the complexity of ourselves and of others? Can we dare to ask the ultimate question of meaning: why are we here?

**Reflection** – What skills, languages and habits of imagination do we need to respond to our ever-growing experience? How do we determine if we are on the right track? Where do we go for help in such matters?

**Discernment** – What is going on in the depths of our experience? Are we open to being surprised by what we find? How do we sort out our relationships in a responsible fashion? What do we discover about the multiple dimensions of our experience and relationships? How do we act towards those we encounter? Why do we do so? How does all this build our world? What future lies in store?

**Cura Personalis** – How do we take seriously all who enter into our discussion and search? How do we deal with the diversity, complexity and depth of these encounters? Do we recognize “the other” in such encounters?

**Solidarity** – What does it mean to say that we are all in this together? What must we do to see the complexity and depths of this connected existence – over space and time? What surprises come in trying to stay connected to this ever-growing picture? What tasks are indicated?

**Service rooted in Justice and Love** – What are we doing for the future of our world? What can we do when we see that people are in need or are subject to
injustice? What keeps us from acting? What enables us to engage? What happens when we discover we are not alone?

Course Goals and Objectives

Our Theological Foundations course understands theology as the critical reflection on how we speak of the depths of our experience. Some have termed theology as “God-talk.” But such language might actually impede the discussion as well as prejudice our investigation. We can say that this is an enterprise that works as a mutually critical dialogue between human experience and religious traditions. In order to carry on this dialogue this course:

1. Conveys an understanding of human experience as revelatory of a deeper reality.

2. Shows how revelatory experience is incorporated in sacred scriptures and religious traditions.

3. Demonstrates the integral connection between religious faith and issues of social significance, and underscores the call to responsible action.

A Learning Note
If there is any student who needs to approach this class from another learning angle please contact the professor ASAP. Accommodations will be worked out if possible. Do not hesitate.

Evaluation

Grades:
The Grade will reflect the competency the student has demonstrated by the end of the course. Mid Term essays, presentations/reports, and will be critiqued and will be able in some instances to be improved.
The following grade weight is approximate:

- Essays (25%)
- Oral (?) (25%)
- Class Participation, Presentations, Exercises (25%)
- Final (25%)

*Emphasis will be placed on the final demonstration of competence. This can outweigh earlier indicators.*

For the Theology Department’s Policy on Grades see:
http://www.xavier.edu/theology/grading_policy.cfm

This class will employ the +/- Grading system, adopted by the Theology Department:

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<th>Grade</th>
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