THEO 111-25B Theological Foundations

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Theo 111
Theological Foundations

Spring 2015
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Course Description
This course “understands theology as a mutually critical dialogue between human experience and religious traditions.” Through assigned readings, class discussions, and written assessments, this course will introduce you to ways in which religious traditions are experienced both individually and socially. We will examine those aspects of human experience which are “revelatory of a deeper reality,” as well as how those experiences are embedded in sacred scriptures and religious traditions (e.g., symbol, myth, doctrine, and liturgy). Finally, this course will highlight certain areas in which theology and religious faith, combined with issues of social significance, propel us to responsible action in order to impact the world around us. The course serves as a foundation and prerequisite course for all further theology courses. It is also a core course in the Ethics/Religion and Society program.

Course Objectives
Through this course you will be able to:
1. Explain some of the basic academic approaches to the study of both religion and theology.
2. Understand some components of at least one religious faith tradition not your own.
3. Develop a better understanding of the Bible as a collection of texts, written, compiled, and edited by many people over many centuries for specific theological purposes. This will include the elements of intertextuality, textual criticism, and genre analysis.
4. Realize some of the various ways in which religion, faith, and theology can impact society in a positive way.
5. Develop your critical thinking skills through the use of logic in civil dialogue.
6. Enhance your reading comprehension and writing skills.

Required Books
Stone and Duke, How to Think Theologically (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013, 3rd ed.).
Stephen Prothero, God is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions that Run the World—and Why Their Differences Matter (HarperOne: 2010).
A Bible (any translation is fine, but if you’re looking for a recommendation, look no further than The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha).

Outline
Weeks 1–5: Theology and Religion(s) in Theory and Comparison
Weeks 6–11: Biblical Studies
Weeks 12–16: Theology in Practice (i.e., Ethics)
Class Structure
This course relies heavily upon classroom discussion as opposed to lecture. Thus, you must come to class prepared to dialogue on the assigned topic for the day. The required readings, combined with the “guided questions,” will lead us into the discussions for each class session. In the event that class discussion does not move apace, reading quizzes and/or written reading reviews will be implemented. Students are expected to be passionate about their beliefs, but to always remain courteous and sympathetic to others’ as well.

Course Requirements
1. 20% - Class Participation
2. 20% - Personal Reflections
3. 20% - First Exam
4. 20% - Second Exam
5. 20% - Final Exam

Grading Scale
A 100%-94%  C  81%-78%
A-  93%-92%  C-  77%-76%
B+  91%-90%  D+  75%-74%
B  89%-86%  D  73%-70%
B-  85%-84%  D-  69%-68%
C+  83%-82%  F  below 68%

Late Policy
For each day an assignment is late, the grade will be lowered one full letter grade from the grade given to the work. If it is “A” caliber work, it will be recorded as a “B.” If it is “B” level work, it will be recorded as a “C,” etc. If an exam is missed, it must be for a documented emergency.

Attendance
Since class relies on each student’s participation in the discussions, your absence will be recognized and noted. Since this is 20% of your grade, don’t lose easy points here! If you do miss a class, it is your job to figure out what you missed by contacting one of your classmates.

Electronic Devices
Refrain from using any electronic devices during class. If you must take an emergency phone call, please leave the room quietly. Laptops or tablets are only to be used for taking notes and absolutely nothing else as this poses a serious hindrance to the learning of those around you.

Academic Integrity
You are responsible for knowing Xavier University’s policy regarding academic integrity and upholding it.

Learning Assistance Center
Students with special needs will be accommodated in conjunction with the LAC. Please notify the instructor early in the semester in order to make the necessary accommodations.
Theo 111-35—Reading and Assignment Schedule

Week One (Jan 12, 14, 16)
12th—Intro and Syllabus

14th—The Art of Theology


Week Two (Jan 19 (no class, MLK jr. Day), 21, 23) Religion, Religions, and Religious—The Academic Study of Religion
19th—NO CLASS, MLK, Jr. Day
Homework—First Personal Reflection (See Canvas for assignment)


Week Three (Jan 26, 28, 30) “Religious Studies” and “Religions of the West” or “The Monotheists”


30th— Prothero, God is Not One: Introduction

Week Four (Feb 2, 4, 6)
2nd— Prothero, God is Not One: chapter 7, Judaism

4th— Prothero, God is Not One: chapter 1, Islam

6th— Prothero, God is Not One: chapter 2, Christianity
Film: Three Faiths, One God/A History of God

Week Five (Feb 9, 11, 13)
9th
Film: Three Faiths, One God

11th— Second Personal Reflection Due
Review

13th—1st Exam
Week Six (Feb 16, 18, 20) UNIT TWO
Intro to Biblical Studies
18th—Borg, chs 1-2
20th—Borg, ch 3

Week Seven (Feb 23, 25, 27) Hebrew Bible
23rd—Borg, ch 4
25th—Borg, ch 5
27th—Borg, ch 6

Week Eight (Mar 2-6) No Class—Spring Break

Week Nine (Mar 9, 11, 13) NT Gospels and Beyond
9th—Borg, ch 7
11th—Borg, ch 8
13th—Borg, ch 9

Week Ten (Mar 16, 18, 20) NT Letters

Week Eleven (Mar 23, 25, 27) Review and Exam
23rd
Wrap-up and Review
25th
Review
27th
Exam

Week Twelve UNIT THREE: Christianity/Theology in Society
(Mar 30, Apr 1, No Class on the 3rd) Class, Race, and Theology
30th—Alexander, The New Jim Crow
1st—Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*

**Week Thirteen (No Class on Mon the 6th, 8, 10) Con’d, and Poverty and Consumerism**
Guest lecture one of the days


10th—Sider, ch 9, ibid., 183-203

**Third Personal Reflection Due on the 10th**

**Week Fourteen (Apr 13, 15, 17) Eco-Theology, Christians, and the Environment; Science and Religion**


**Week Fifteen (Apr 20, 22, 24) Theology of Religions**

20th—Olson, “Christianity and other religions,” in *ICCT* (2011) 135–64, 257


24th—Knitter, *Theologies of Religions*, 1–15; 238–46

**Week Sixteen (Apr 27, 29, May 1) Heaven, Hell, and Humanity**

27th—Olson, ch 5, 107–34

29th—

1st—Review for exam

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I reserve the right to alter the syllabus, in any way, as the course progresses. It is not a binding contract.