THEO 111-30H Theological Foundations

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THEO 111-30H
Theological Foundations

Fall 2015
M/W/F 1:00--1:50 p.m.—Alter 304
Dr. Anna Miller, professor
Office hours: Monday 10:30-11:30 a.m./ Wednesday 10:30-11:30 a.m. (and by appointment)
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Course Description:
In this course, you will encounter theology as “a mutually critical dialogue between human experience and religious traditions.” Although we will consider a number of ideas and themes through the semester, the touchstone for our exploration will be “meaningful suffering” as it has been addressed in religious tradition at various times and places. With this touchstone, we will consider the ways that personal and social location, as well as historical context, determine our experience of the divine and mysterious. Moreover, we will also explore the ways in which human beings apply faith and experience of the divine to their encounter with the world as they search for justice and well-being.

Course Objectives:
In this course you will-
1) Address and explore important theological concerns and issues
2) Learn to recognize scripture as a series of living texts in which theology was constructed for a particular time and place, even as successive generations use these texts in their own theological exploration
3) Learn and implement new methods of scholarly investigation
4) Develop your own critical thinking and your ability to utilize that thinking in effective discussion
5) Strengthen the reading and writing skills necessary for successful college work
6) Consider the place of faith and theology in addressing concerns of ethical significance (E/RS component)
7) Explore the role of faith and theology in transformative social action (E/RS component)
8) Critique Creatively and intelligently her or his cultural contexts in light of Jesuit commitments to faith, peace, justice, environmental sustainability and interreligious dialogue

Requirements:
1) 10% Participation and daily assignments (Including seminar assignments and library tutorials)
2) 10% Weekly reading quizzes
3) 5% On call grade
4) 20% Short writing and creative assignments (2 seminar papers of 1-2 pages—the first worth 5%, the second 7.5%. Also, one creative assignment for the last unit—worth 7.5%)
5) 15% Group paper over alternate religious tradition research and experience paper (5-6 typed pages)
6) 40% Exams (3 exams during the semester, together worth 25% of your grade. The final comprehensive exam will be worth 15% of your grade. Final exam is Friday, December 18th from 12—1:50 p.m.)

Books

The other readings for the class will be on Canvas.

Attendance and Participation:
Your attendance and participation will be extremely important for your success in this class. You may have up to three unexplained absences without affecting your grade. However, any further missed classes will require written proof of illness, or my assessment of your situation as a true personal or family emergency, to count as an excused absence. Starting with the fourth unexcused absence, your final grade for the course will be lowered by three points for each missed class. As part of your attendance and participation grade, you will be expected to be on time and prepared for discussion. Preparation for discussion will include your completion of any readings or writing assignments assigned for that day of class, as well as your willingness to engage your classmates in discussion over the day’s topic.

Please refrain from using cell phones or other electronic devices in class, unless you are utilizing this device in a way that directly relates to our work together in the class. If I observe a student using technology in the class in any other way more than once (you will have one warning), then all use of technology will be forbidden in class for the rest of the semester. At that point, any use of technology I observe in class will result in a lowering of your participation grade by at least one point.

In the unlikely event that I have to miss a class, I will post it the night before on Blackboard. If it is more sudden, the Theology Department will arrange for you to be notified when you get to class.

Late Work:
For each day any written assignment is late, the final grade of the project will be lowered one full grade from the original assessed grade.

Academic Honesty:
This class will require very strict standards of honesty regarding the work that you put your name to for the class. In this class, questionable academic honesty will mainly relate to cheating on any tests and quizzes, as well as any quotation of someone’s words or ideas without giving them direct credit in your papers. I will adhere closely to Xavier’s policy for academic honesty, a policy that states in part:
The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of results and material submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic record, including letters of recommendation. All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student’s own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another’s efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one’s own. Penalties for violations of this policy may include a zero for that assignment or test, an “F” in the course and expulsion from the University.

Theology Department Grading Policy:

Grades indicate a professor’s assessment of a student’s academic performance and not a student’s effort. In accordance with University policy, letter grades in undergraduate theology courses mean the following:

A = Exceptional academic performance (that is, uncommonly high academic achievement, which demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, uncommon skills in critical analysis and effective communication, and imagination)
B = Good academic performance (that is, high quality academic achievement; demonstrated competency in the discipline above the average or standard)
C = Satisfactory academic performance (that is, academic achievement that meets an average or standard level of competency in the discipline)
D = Minimal academic performance, sufficient to pass
F = Failure

If a course uses number grades, an 8-point scale determines the final letter grade for the course:
A=92-100; B=84-91; C=76-83; D=68-75; F=67 and below. Effective in fall 2005, plus/minus grading may be used in undergraduate as well as in graduate courses. If a theology professor chooses to use plus/minus grades in conjunction with number grades, the following scale applies:
A=94-100; A-=92-93; B+=90-91; B=87-89; B-=84-86; C+=82-83; C=79-81; C-=76-78; D+=74-75; D=71-73; D-=68-70.

For on call grades, reflection papers, and daily assignments, students will receive “check” grades, which will correspond to the following:
√+ = (100%): superior, shows an engagement with the text or question(s), critical reflection and/or excellent writing
√ = (89%): satisfactory, shows an adequate response to text or question(s), some critical reflection and writing without major flaws
√ (-) = (79%): passing, but in need of improvement in the areas of reflection, engagement, or writing
\(\sqrt{-} = (0\%)\): not completed on time, not completed at all, or undeserving of any credit

**While I will try to follow the syllabus as written throughout the semester, I reserve the right to make alterations as necessary**

**Assignments:**

1. For this class you must get a passing grade on the quiz that is part of the library’s tutorial, “XU. Tutor Use.” You will need to get this score to me by Oct. 5. This tutorial is at: [http://www.xavier.edu/library/xu-tutor/xu-tutor-Use.cfm](http://www.xavier.edu/library/xu-tutor/xu-tutor-Use.cfm).

2. You must also take and receive a passing grade on the quiz that is part of the library’s tutorial, “XU. Tutor Evaluate.” I should get your score on this quiz by Oct. 5 as well. This tutorial is at: [http://www.xavier.edu/library/xu-tutor/xu-tutor-Evaluate.cfm](http://www.xavier.edu/library/xu-tutor/xu-tutor-Evaluate.cfm).

3. Several times a semester you will be “on call.” When you are on call, you should expect to be called upon to answer questions over the material for that day. You will receive a schedule during the first week of class for the on call list. For the days you are on call, you should be especially well versed in the reading material and any study questions provided. You will receive a grade based on your level of preparation and willingness to engage in discussion. If you miss class the day you are on call, you will need to designate another student in your place, trading their on call day for your own. Please notify me the night before of a switch by e-mail. While students have a special responsibility for preparation on their on call day, other students not on call can and will be called upon at any time.

4. You will have weekly reading quizzes that are generally very short and in a true/false or multiple choice format. I generally drop one quiz with your lowest grade for the final calculations.

5. You will have two short writing assignments, 1-2 page “seminar” assignments, during the semester. You will also have one creative activity for the last unit.

6. You will have three exams during the semester comprised mainly of true/false, multiple choice and short answer. You will also have a comprehensive final on **Friday, December 18**th from 12-1:50 p.m.

7. At the end of the semester you will turn in a 5-6 page paper (Religious tradition paper) that you will write as a group project based on two visits to a worship service or event in a tradition other than your own, and research you have carried out on this tradition. This assignment will be in several parts. On September 28th you will turn in the tradition you have chosen, and five scholarly sources you will use to research this tradition. At the end of the semester you will turn in a 5-6 page paper that will draw on your own experience of witnessing and interacting with this tradition, as well as the insights you gained about the tradition through your research. You will find a more in-depth description of this assignment on canvas under the assignments tab.

**Schedule of Classes and Assignments**

**Beginnings**

August 24: Class Introduction

August 26: Why We Study Religion
August 28: What is Theology?

August 31: Theology in an Ignatian Key

September 2: Solidarity and Jesuit Education
- Arrupe, “Men and Women for Others” (http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/men-for-others.html)
- Ravizza, “Putting the Pieces Together: Nicolas’s Pedagogy of Ignatian Contemplation,” 10-12
- Boyle, “Kinship,” 187-212

**Unit I: Approaching Scripture and the Proximate Other**
September 4: Approaching the Hebrew Bible
- Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*, 1-46

September 7: Labor Day. No class.

September 9: Spirit Day. No class.

September 11: Two beginnings
- Genesis 1:1-2:3; 2:4-2:25
- Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*, 48-57

September 14: Adam, Eve, and Modern Debates
- Genesis 1-3
- "The Danvers Statement,” 388-390
- Trible, “Eve and Adam: Genesis 2-3 Reread,” 431-438

September 16: Covenant and beloved son
- Levenson, *Death and Resurrection*, 36-42
- Genesis 17
- Exodus 19:3-8
- Joshua 24:1-26

September 18: Dad has a knife: the beloved son in the Aqedah
- Read carefully: Genesis 22:1-19
• Doukhan, “The Aqedah at the ‘Crossroad,’” Pp. 29-33
• Reading on the Jewish High Holy Days
• Aqedah questions due

September 21: Islam and the Beloved Son- A Shared Tradition of Sacrifice
• Doukhan, “The Aqedah at the ‘Crossroad,’” Pp. 33-40
• Koran questions due

September 23: Islam film
• Eck, “American Muslims: Cousins and Strangers,” Pp 222-293

September 25: Islam, cont.
• Abdel-Fattah, Does My Head Look Big in This?, 34-41
• “Why Do Muslim Women Wear the Veil and Long Garments?”

September 28: Exam Review
• Tradition choice and five sources due for alternate tradition paper

September 30: Exam

UNIT II: Contemplating the Gospel
October 2: Who Is Your Jesus?

October 5: Borg Seminar
• Borg, Meeting Jesus, 1-19
• Seminar paper due

October 7: The Suffering Servant: the Gospel of Mark
• Gospel of Mark (in one sitting if possible). Read closely: Mark 1-2; 8-9; 14:1-16:20

October 9: Fall Break. No class.

• Wallis, “The Poor You Will Always Have with You? What Does the Bible Say about Poverty?,” 209-220

October 14: Jesus, the Word and the Beloved Community: Gospel of John
October 16: Paul: Community and the Suffering Servant
  • 1 Corinthians 1; 11:23-12:31; 15: Galatians 3:1-17
  • Philippians 2:1-18
  • Romans 14

October 19: Theology for Whom?: Early Christian Women
  • Romans 16:1-16
  • Galatians 2-5
  • 1 Corinthians 7; 11:2-16; 14:26-37
  • *The Gospel of Mary*
  • King, “Women in Ancient Christianity: The New Discoveries”
    (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/first/women.htm)

October 21: Forgiveness Discussion: Biblical Ethics and Modern Dilemmas
  • Seminar paper on the *Sunflower* due

October 23: Exam

**UNIT III: Suffering and “Promotion of Justice”**

October 26: Living and Dying in Christ: the Early Christian Martyrs
  • Castelli, “Performing Persecution, Theorizing Martyrdom,” 33-68
  • Correspondence between Pliny and Trajan on the Christians

October 28: Ancient Forms, Modern Martyrdom
  • Castelli, “Religion as a Chain of Memory: Cassie Bernall of Columbine High and the American Legacy of Early Christian Martyrdom,” 172-203
  • *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*
  • Questions due over Castelli reading

October 30: Atonement Theology in the Middle Ages and the Example of St. Francis
  • Bynum, “The Power in the Blood,” 177-204
  • Thomas of Celano’s *Lives of St. Francis*, at
    http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/stfran-lives.html

November 2: Living the Gospel and Serving the Poor: St Francis, Dorothy Day and Mother Teresa
  • Review *Lives of St. Francis*
  • Martin, “Living in Her World: Dorothy Day,” 209-228
  • Martin, “Share This Joy with All You Meet: Mother Teresa,” 153-178

November 4: Living the Gospel and Caring for the Creation: St. Francis, Theology and Ecology
  • Francis of Asissi, “Canticle of the Creatures”
November 6: Exam

UNIT IV: “Men and Women for Others”: Encountering the Other

November 9: America and Race in the 21st Century
- “Brian Stevenson on Charleston and Our Real Problem with Race” at: https://www.themarshallproject.org/2015/06/24/bryan-stevenson-on-charleston-and-our-real-problem-with-race
- Creative project due

November 11: Martin Luther King, Jr: Justice, Love and Change
- Cornel West, “Prophetic Christian as Organic Intellectual: Martin Luther King, Jr.,” 425-434
- King, “Letter from Birmingham City Jail,” 289-302

November 13: King, War and Poverty
- King, “A Time to Break Silence,” 231-244
- New York Times editorial, “Dr. King’s Error” (and response letters)

November 16: Black Liberation Theology: Cross and the Lynching Tree
- Cone, The Cross and the Lynching Tree, xiii-xix and 152-166

November 18: Theology of Liberation: With the Poor in a Time of Globalization
- Gutierrez, “The Theology of Liberation: Perspectives and Tasks,” 287-299

November 20: Theology and Migration

November 23-27: Conference and Thanksgiving Break. No class.

November 30: Introduction to Feminist Theology: Women, the Gospel and the Church
- From the Pews in the Back, 81-91, 108-127
December 2: Women in Danger: Feminist Theologians Question the Atonement
  • Rita Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, “Christianity’s Victims,” 20-31

December 4: Hagar or the Cross?: Introduction to Womanist Theology
  • Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*, xi-xii, 231-243
  • Dolores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, chapter 6
  • First draft due for Religious Tradition papers

December 7: Choosing Hagar: Hagar as Redemptive Figure
  • Read carefully: Genesis 16 and 21
  • Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, chapter 1
  • Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 150-153, 182-185
  • Jeansonne, *Women of Genesis*, 18-21, 27-29, 43-52
  • Reading questions due

December 9: Difference in Sexuality: The Church and Homosexuality
  • Gumbleton, “A Call to Listen: The Church’s Pastoral and Theological Response to Gays and Lesbians,” 3-21

December 11: Exam Review