111-22 Theological Foundations

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Theology 111  
Theological Foundations  
Spring 2014

This course introduces students to theology as an academic discipline by exploring the intersection of human experience, reason, scripture, and religious tradition. It serves as a foundation both for further study in theology and also for the grounding of the University’s core curriculum in its Ethics/Religion and Society (E/RS) focus. Thus we examine the nature of theology, the complex relationship between religion and society, and the development of an ethical system as both a universal human response and a religious response to the self and to others. One of the guiding themes for our work this semester will be the question, “What does it mean to be human?”

COURSE GOALS:

1. To gain a working knowledge of the basic terminology and concepts in theology.
2. To gain familiarity with the basics of the gospel narrative of Mark and to explore the core message of Jesus.
3. To gain initial familiarity with Christian spirituality as a living tradition embodied in historical context. Specifically, we will be working with the examples of Francis and Clare of Assisi, Ignatius Loyola, and Oscar Romero.
4. To gain familiarity with the Ignatian tradition—specifically, the spiritual practices of Ignatius Loyola’s Spiritual Exercises and the lens of social analysis that a “faith that does justice” invites.
5. To explore the relationship between religion and issues of social significance with particular attention to the ethical questions they raise. Specifically we will explore questions of trafficking in persons and the exploitation of children.
6. To encourage initial and ongoing reflection about what it means to be human, both in a world of suffering and violence and in a pluralistic, global context.

TEXTS: The following texts will be used in the course. They have been ordered through the University bookstore or can be purchased through other sources. Please be advised that the University bookstore will begin returning them to the publishers after January 31, so they will be unavailable.

PLEASE NOTE: These are not the only readings for class. There are other REQUIRED readings available on Blackboard. You are also responsible for bringing a bible into class on the days noted below.

GENERAL POLICIES:

Attendance: Students are expected to attend all classes and participate in discussion. The professor reserves the right to lower a student’s grade after two unexcused absences. An excess of four absences may result in failure of the course.

Participation: Students are expected to participate regularly in class discussion and to turn in assignments on their due date. Active involvement in questioning and discussion, as well as respectful listening to others’ contributions is critical to success in this course. PLEASE TURN OFF ALL CELLPHONES AND COMPUTERS IN CLASS, so that we may bring a real presence to one another into our work together.

Preparation for class: Since much of this course relies on active class discussion, it is imperative that you stay on top of the reading assignments. You are to have prepared the readings for the day listed on the schedule below. Late assignments will be penalized, and extensions are not granted automatically.

Grading: You will have periodic assignments, quizzes and reflection papers as well as a midterm exam on theological concepts. Your final exam will cover theological reflection on social problems in light of what it means to be human. Your final grade for the class will be decided on the basis of the following formula:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignments, quizzes, and reflections</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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The Theology Department employs the following grading standards in keeping with Xavier University policy. Grades are indicative of student academic performance, not student effort.

A = Exceptional performance, evidenced by uncommonly high academic achievement and mastery of the subject, critical analysis, effective communication and creativity.
B = Good academic performance, evidenced by high quality academic achievement and demonstrated by above average skills in analysis, communication and expression.
C = Satisfactory academic achievement, evidenced by standard or average competency.
D = Minimal academic performance
F = Failure

The above grades reflect a spectrum of performances and may be tempered with a + or –.

The Theology Department uses an eight-point grading scale, such that A = 92-100; B = 84-91, C = 76-83, D = 68-75, and F = 67 or below.
Schedule of Readings and Assignments (Subject to Change if Necessary)

Tuesday, January 14  Review syllabus; read and discuss Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, “The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education.”

HOMEWORK:  Read Chapter 5 of Faith, Religion and Theology (FRT); prepare a one-paragraph description of the Freudian critique of religion and a one-paragraph description of the Marxist critique of religion and for each of the two critiques answer the question: “To what extent does this critique provide a valid concern about religious institutions and religious people, and to what extent does this critique fall short of capturing the reality of religious life?”

Thursday, January 16  Turn in Homework Assignment above and Discuss Chapter 5 of FRT

HOMEWORK:  Read Chapters 1 and 2 of FRT

Tuesday, January 21  Discuss Chapters 1 and 2 of FRT; formulate definition of Faith

HOMEWORK:  Read Chapter 6 of FRT

Thursday, January 23  Quiz on FRT chapter 6: know the “3 C’s of Religion” and the 4 corruptions of religion; Discuss FRT chapter 6

HOMEWORK:  Read FRT chapter 9

Tuesday, January 28  Discuss FRT chapter 9

HOMEWORK:  Prepare a three-paragraph essay responding to the following question: “Describe the process aspect of theology and the product aspect of theology, explaining why each element is essential to theological understanding.” Read FRT chapter 10; locate bible.

Thursday, January 30  TURN IN ESSAY (above) and discuss FRT chapter 10 (Please bring a bible to class.)

HOMEWORK:  Read Gospel of Mark, chapters 1-10 and background information on Mark on Blackboard

Tuesday, February 4  Discuss Gospel of Mark:1-10 (Please bring a bible to class.)

HOMEWORK:  Finish reading Gospel of Mark and complete the worksheet

Thursday, February 6  Turn in worksheet and complete discussion of Mark; introduce Nolan, Jesus before Christianity (Please bring a bible to class.)

HOMEWORK:  Read Nolan, Jesus before Christianity, pp. 1-23. Write a 500-750-page essay outlining your sense of what, in our contemporary world, feels to you like “the urgent reality of our present historical
situation.” (Nolan, p. 7). What situations in our world feel like they are “problems that are a matter of life and death”? You might consider some of what Nolan describes—environmental problems, poverty, etc. Please bring both Jesus before Christianity and The Joy of the Gospel into class for the next two weeks.

Tuesday, February 11
HOMEWORK:
Crisis: Discuss Jesus before Christianity, pp. 1 – 23
Read Jesus before Christianity, pp. 27-51; The Joy of the Gospel, pars. 50-75

Thursday, February 13
HOMEWORK:
Poverty: Discuss Jesus before Christianity, pp. 27-51
Read Jesus before Christianity (JBC), pp. 55-109 and Brown, Liberation Theology, pp. 43-50

Tuesday, February 18
HOMEWORK:
The vision of Jesus: Discuss JBC, pp. 55-109 and Brown, pp. 43-50

Thursday, February 20
HOMEWORK:
The vision of Jesus: Discuss Brown and Joy
Complete worksheet on the Community of Jesus

Tuesday, February 25
Review for Midterm

Thursday, February 27
Midterm

SPRING BREAK

LIVING THE GOSPEL: SOME EXAMPLES

Tuesday, March 11
Discovering God in Surprising Places
Come to class prepared to discuss Brown, Liberation Theology, pp. 51-67 (Discovering God, the One Whose Love Frees) and Joy of the Gospel, pars. 89-92

HOMEWORK:
Read Brown, Liberation Theology, pp. 73-78 on base Christian communities; compare with view of church in Joy of Gospel, pars. 111-114, 119-121, 169-175

Thursday, March 13
Discussion of Community Building based on Brown and Joy

Tuesday, March 18
Continuation of Community Building; readings to be assigned

TUESDAY, MARCH 18 @ 7:00: POPE FRANCIS PRESENTATION

Thursday, March 20
The Challenge of Justice
HOMEWORK: Romero, pp. 7-42
A FAITH THAT DOES JUSTICE

Tuesday, March 25
Romero
HOMEWORK: Read Romero, pp. 43-63

Thursday, March 27
Romero
HOMEWORK: Read Romero, pp. 85-119

Tuesday, April 1
NO CLASS (no foolin’!)
HOMEWORK: Work on Romero essay; begin reading Sold

Thursday, April 3
Turn in Romero essay; lectio from Half the Sky and discuss Sold, pp. 1-97
HOMEWORK: Continue reading Sold

Tuesday, April 8
Discussion of Sold, pp. 98-202
HOMEWORK: Finish reading Sold

Thursday, April 10
Finish discussion of Sold
Read Half the Sky, pp. 233-252

Tuesday, April 15
“What You Can Do” + IJM video
HOMEWORK OVER BREAK: Read JBC, pp. 113-162

EASTER BREAK

Tuesday, April 22
Who emerges? Finish Discussion of JBC

Thursday, April 24
Discuss “Spirit-Filled Evangelizers,” Joy of the Gospel, pars. 259-280
HOMEWORK: Read Romero, pp. 64-84

Tuesday, April 29
ACCOMPANIMENT
HOMEWORK: Read Nolan, pp. 163-171 and Brown, Liberation Theology, pp. 107-127

Thursday, May 1
THE CHALLENGE OF BEING A GOSPEL PEOPLE

Final Exam: Thursday, May 8