2014

111-23 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 20% of the final grade or 200 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 one (1) excused absences for the semester without any excuse. Any absence thereafter shall count as 45 pts off attendance unless the reason is deemed justifiable by the professor. For instance, a person who misses two unexcused days (which means one more than allowed) will have a final
attendance score of 155 \[200 - (3\times15\text{pts}) = 155\]. 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 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.

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 20% of the final grade. Obviously, there can be no credit given on days a student is absent, since one must be present to participate. 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 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. How participation is weighted alongside attendance is as follows: if the student is absent, the student receives a “0” for the day; if the student is present, but is on the cell-phone or laptop without permission, the student receives a “0” for the day. If the student is present and is engaged, the student receives a 1 or 2 for the day, which are then weighted to 7.5 or 15 pts per class. There are a total of 16 countable days, which includes 2 days worth of points for the field trip, for a possible total of 82 total points for the course. Participation points are tallied at the end of the semester and weighted according to 20% of the final grade. For instance, to receive an “A” (92%) in participation, one must receive a total of 75 points.

4) WEIGHING ATTENDANCE, TARDINESS AND PARTICIPATION
It is important to attend class on time and to 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 study to pass a test. My interest is to provide you with seeing and thinking about things in a way that is nurturing to you as you move on in life. That said, suppose you miss two days as discussed above. As mentioned in the Attendance section, this means you would have a final attendance grade of 155/200. 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 155/200 (since a student cannot receive a participation grade for classes unattended). This means that, if a student misses two days, they can have no better than a final grade of 91 or a B+ (1000-90pts = 910), assuming that a perfect score (which is highly unlikely) is achieved on all other assignments. So, come to class, participate, have fun and learn something new!!!
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.

5). 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.

6). 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.

7). 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.

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### 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 60 pages between each class than 180 at the end of three 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!

**Reflection Journals (4)**

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. For instance, on Monday, Sept 8, I will propose a question at the end of the class based on the topic discussed that day. The student will be expected to submit a reflection via blackboard journal to the professor by class time on the following Monday, Sept 15. 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**

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 on Sunday, September 28, either from 12-4pm or 5-9pm depending on the nature of the 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 two 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 two 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 and a group project will be assigned while on the Field Trip to begin working on while at our destination (to be announced). These projects 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 October 27. It’ll be FUN! Every year, that is the overall feedback! Again, this trip is mandatory and equal to two classes. Alternative assignments are possible for extenuating circumstances.

Response Essay
Prompts will be assigned for this paper towards the end of the course. 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.

Assessments
I’ll be straightforward. 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 evaluate learning 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.

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:

\[
\text{A} = 100–92 \quad \text{B} = 91–84 \quad \text{C} = 83–76 \quad \text{D} = 75–68 \quad \text{F} = 67–0
\]

Late Work
Assignments are due at the scheduled time and date as indicated in the Course Schedule. For instance, for instance, Reflection paper # 1 is due Sept 15. This means that the paper must be received via e-mail by the professor by class time on Sept 15. 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Attendance/Tardiness</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection Papers (4)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Project/Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>First/Second Assessments</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper/Assessment</td>
<td>15%</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, new insights and possibilities. To address adult Montessori learning nuances, this professor reserves the right to alter or add or detract reading assignments, lecture topics, and assessment or field learning activities and their respective due dates according to pace of the class, discussions of interest as well as any new or relevant topics that may emerge that are pertinent to the direction and dynamic of student learning and course direction.

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**WEEK 1—INTRODUCTIONS**

**REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO AUG 27**


Aug 25  
Welcome & Course Overview: “Foundational”
What is God? What is Theology?  
Mystery, the Idea of the Holy, and Gods

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**WEEK 2—FOUNDATIONS**

**REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS OF WEEK:**


Sep 1  
Labor Day—no class

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**WEEK 3—FOUNDATIONS**

**REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS OF WEEK:**

- Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*—“Sacred World & Animals,” 75-82.

Sep 8  
Two Modes of Being-in-the World  
Heirophanies, Theophanies, and Kratophanies  
*Power and Holiness; Things and Power—REFLECTION #1 ASSIGNED*

Sep 10  
Sacred Stones and Trees; Sacred Animals

Sep 12  
Sacred Water and Fire; Sacred World Above

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**WEEK 4—FOUNDATIONS**

**REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS OF WEEK:**

- Lynn White, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis.”
- Berry, *Befriending the Earth*—“Christology,” 66-82.
- Wilma Mankiller, *Every Day is a Good Day*—“Context is Everything,” 41-74.
**THEO 111**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sep 15</td>
<td>Sacred Stones, Trees, Animals, Water and Fire, Sacred World Above, The Divine and Our Present Revelatory Moment, Two Scriptures and Context for Theology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WEEK 5—FOUNDATIONS**

REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO FIELD TRIP:
- Aldo Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*—"Thinking Like a Mountain," 129-137.

**Sep 24**  
FIRST ASSESSMENT

**WEEK 5f—FIELD TRIP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sep 28</td>
<td>REQUIRED FIELD TRIP—THE RIVER JOURNEY—12-4pm OR 5-9pm, GROUP PROJECT ASSIGNED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WEEK 6—STORY**

REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS OF WEEK:
- Ruether, *Gaia & God*—"Introduction," 1-12

**Sep 29**  
Field Trip Illuminations, Group Projects Assigned—REFLECTION #2 ASSIGNED  
Group Project In-Class Work  
Horizon of Interpretation as Grounds for Story

**WEEK 7—STORY/WORLD**

REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS OF WEEK:

**Oct 6**  
Story as Context of Meaning—REFLECTION #2 DUE

**WEEK 8—EXPERIENCE/THING**

REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS OF WEEK:

**Oct 13**  
Entering Into an Encounter—REFLECTION #3 ASSIGNED  
Encountering Event  
World-Thing  
Story-Experience  
Naming and Language

**WEEK 9—STORY/EXPERIENCE**

NO REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS OF WEEK;
<table>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 20</td>
<td>Field Trip Exchange Day #1—no class—REFLECTION #3 DUE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>PRESENTATION WEEK</td>
<td>NO REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS OF WEEK:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 27</td>
<td>Group Presentations—GROUP PROJECT DUE</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>SYNTHESIS</td>
<td>NO REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS OF WEEK:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 3</td>
<td>Synthesis of Theo Foundations with “Story-Experience-Encounter-Thing-World” relation SECOND ASSESSMENT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>FAITH-RELIGION-THEOLOGY</td>
<td>REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS OF WEEK:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 10</td>
<td>What is Faith?</td>
<td>What is Religion? What Good is Religion?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What is Theology?</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>JOURNEY</td>
<td>REQUIRED READINGS PRIOR TO END OF MOVIE:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 17</td>
<td>Shamanic Journey—REFLECTION #4 ASSIGNED</td>
<td>WHALE RIDER MOVIE</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>HOLIDAY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 24</td>
<td>Field Trip Exchange Day #2—no class—REFLECTION #4 DUE</td>
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<td>Nov 26</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break—no class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 28</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break—no class</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
<td>THIRD MEDITATION</td>
<td>Required Readings Prior to First Class</td>
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<td>-Berry, “Reinventing the Human,” 1-3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 1</td>
<td>Break-Out Discussions—FINAL PAPER ASSIGNED.</td>
<td>The Third Mediation and the Call for Ecological &amp; Social Justice</td>
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<td>The Third Mediation and the Viable Human</td>
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WEEK 16—COURSE REVIEW

Required Readings Prior to First Class
- Berry, The G

Dec 8  The Fourfold Wisdom
       Required Review Day, Evaluations

Monday, Dec 15, FINAL ASSESSMENT/FINAL PAPER DUE, 4:30-7:00 pm