111-24A Theological Foundations

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Theo 111-24a
Theological Foundations
Spring 2014
Sat. 12:45–4:15pm, Smith Hall 252

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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
A Bible (any translation is fine, but NASB, RSV, or NRSV are preferred).

Outline
Weeks 2-4: Religion(s) and Theology in Theory and Comparison
Weeks 5-6: Bible and Theology
Weeks 7-9: 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, discussion boards, 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 (including quizzes and/or reading reviews)
2. 20% - Personal Reflections
3. 20% - First Exam
4. 20% - Second Exam
5. 20% - Final Exam

Grading Scale
\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Grade} & \text{Percentage} \\
\hline
A & 100%-94% \\
A- & 93%-92% \\
B+ & 91%-90% \\
B & 89%-86% \\
B- & 85%-84% \\
C+ & 83%-82% \\
C & 81%-78% \\
C- & 77%-76% \\
D+ & 75%-74% \\
D & 73%-70% \\
D- & 69%-68% \\
F & \text{below 68%} \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

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. Otherwise, you will receive a zero.

Attendance
While attendance will not be taken formally in each class, missing class is absolutely unacceptable! Further, 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!

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.

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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.

**Theo 111-24a—Reading and Assignment Schedule**

**Week One (Sun. Jan. 12)**
Intro and initial readings assigned

**Week Two (Jan 18) Religion, Religions, and Religious—The Academic Study of Religion**

**Week Three (Jan 25) “Religions of the West” or “The Monotheists”**
Judaism

Islam

Film: Three Faiths, One God

**First Personal Reflection Due**

**Week Four (Feb 1) The Art of Theology**


**Second Personal Reflection Due**

Take-Home Essay Exam

**UNIT TWO**

**Week Five (Feb 8) Intro to Biblical Studies; Creation Accounts and Myth**
Kugel, ch. 1 (1–46)
Skim: Borg, chs. 1–3

Kugel, ch.2 (47–57)
Borg, ch. 4 (57–84)

**Week Six (Feb 15) Prophets and NT**
Kugel, ch. 30 (538–68)
Borg, ch. 8 (185–225)
Borg, ch. 9 (227–63)

Take-Home Exam 2

**Unit Three**

**Week Seven (Feb 22) Class, Race, and Theology**
Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (2010, 12) 1–19, 97–139
James Cone Interview

**Week Eight (March 1) Eco-Theology and Theology of Religions**
Olson, “Christianity and other religions,” in *ICCT* (2011) 135–64, 257

Third Personal Reflection Due

**Week Nine (March 8) Consumerism**

Take-Home Exam 3/Final