111-07H Theological Foundations

Marcus Mescher

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Theological Foundations
THEO 111-07H – Fall 2014
MWF at 9-9:50am
Location: CLC 531

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Email: mescherm@xavier.edu
Phone: 513-745-3689
Office: Hinkle Hall 324
Office Hours: MWF 12-1pm
and easily by appointment

Course Description:
A foundational approach to Christian theology as a mutually critical dialogue between human experience and religious traditions, this course will explore ways human experience reveals a deeper reality, especially as mediated through sacred scriptures and religious traditions. Students will do more than come to understand religious doctrines and practices; they will assess the social, political, and moral implications of religious faith for specific socio-cultural contexts and the difference these make for life in the world today.

THEO 111 is part of the Ethics/Religion and Society (E/RS) focus of Xavier’s core curriculum. As such, this course will partner with the aim of the E/RS program to provide opportunities for ethical and/or religious analysis of socially significant issues in encouraging a worldview that is engaged with questions of peace, justice and responsible action for right-relationships.

Course Objectives:
To successfully complete THEO 111, students will:
1. Think critically and make intelligent judgments about the questions that they encounter in the study of Christian theology. Critical thought is practiced through identifying, analyzing, integrating, synthesizing, and evaluating complex information in a clear and effective manner.
2. Reflect on the varieties of personal experience and come to understand how faith is a developing response to revelatory experiences, both personal and social. Develop an enriched understanding of political, economic, historical, and other cultural forces in the world around them through the study of Christianity as a cultural and still global phenomenon.
3. Examine how revelatory experience is found in and transmitted through story, symbol, myth, doctrine, moral norms, and religious practices. Take part in the traditioning process of Christian theology by engaging biblical criticism and the development of doctrine in various fields (e.g., theological anthropology, Christian ethics, etc).
4. Develop their ability to approach ethical issues from a variety of perspectives through the study of Christianity in various historical and cultural contexts. Demonstrate moral discernment through a Judeo-Christian ethical framework and consider the implications for one’s sense of identity, interpretation of socio-cultural context, and exercise of social responsibilities (e.g., community service, E/RS focus in core curriculum, etc).
5. Read, write, speak, and listen clearly, purposefully, and appropriately in a range of rhetorical situations.

Required Texts:
Course Assessment:

1. **Preparation and Participation (15%)**: Students are expected to be present for every class as lectures and class conversations are considered significant to the core course material. Students should arrive on time, bring a hard copy of the assigned reading and be ready to speak to/from it, be prepared to take thorough notes, and participate in discussion (this includes thoughtful consideration and critical analysis of the readings and how they relate to current theological beliefs and practices).
   - Please also note the following expectations:
     a. For **every class**, students should bring a 3x5 note card that includes (1) a thesis statement or key quote from the assigned reading to demonstrate the student understands what is important to learn about the topic of the day and (2) a question for clarification or conversation to help initiate a lively discussion in class. Note cards will be collected at the start of each class and recorded as part of the participation grade.
     b. As a sign of respect to all, please be on time for class and do not plan to leave until class has concluded. If a student arrives late several times, it may be counted as an absence.
     c. If an absence is unavoidable, please email the instructor beforehand whenever possible. Excessive absences (more than 3) over the course of the semester will result in a lower final grade. More than 6 absences will automatically result in failing the course. No distinction is made between “excused” and “unexcused” absences for this policy.
     d. Students should **not** use personal phones, tablets, or laptops (etc.) during class time. If a student does not comply with this rule, the technology may be confiscated by the instructor; repeated offenses may involve a grade reduction. (Please note: if a student needs to use a laptop to accommodate a learning disability, please see the instructor.)
     e. Each student is required to schedule **at least one office hour visit** to check-in at some point over the course of the semester (more than one check-in is welcome, of course). An “A” in class participation is earned through all the above behavior.

2. **Group Multi-Media Project (10%)**: Students will work in groups of 2, 3, or 4 to visit the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center (http://freedomcenter.org/) and then, making use of the Digital Media Lab resources (www.xavier.edu/dml), create a video and/or social media campaign to highlight the task of Christians to combat prejudice and discrimination as well as unmask privilege. Projects will be uploaded/linked to Canvas course page; more information will follow.

3. **Quizzes (20%)**: Student comprehension of readings and class conversations will be evaluated by quizzes that may be scheduled or unannounced. Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class and cannot be made up in the case of absence. The lowest quiz score will be dropped before calculated for the total grade.

4. **Reflection Essays (30%)**: Students will be assigned three 1,500-2,500 word essays throughout the semester. This will be an opportunity to demonstrate specific and substantial understanding of the course material and effective analysis/application of its relevance for the world today. Please keep in mind that all written work should be formatted in a Word document in standard MLA style (1 inch margins; size 12 Times New Roman font; double-spaced; use footnotes or endnotes to properly cite any ideas or phrases that are not your own). Essays should be submitted via Canvas by the deadline noted in the Course Schedule (see below). Additional instructions will be provided later in the semester; feel free to raise questions with the instructor before the due date.

5. **Final Essay (25%)**: In lieu of a final exam, students will be assigned a 3,000-4,000 word final synthesis essay, which will be submitted on the date of the final exam scheduled for this course (due: Friday, December 19 by 12pm via Canvas).
**Grading Scale:**
Grading is cumulative over the course of the semester. Participation and papers will be graded based on the demonstrated level of effort, comprehension of material, thoughtful reflection, and insightful analysis following the letter grade scale below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Minimum Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100-94</td>
<td>Superior work. Exceptional academic performance that is an uncommonly high academic achievement. Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, critical analysis, effective communication and creativity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>93-92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>91-90</td>
<td>Good work. An academic performance that is high quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>89-87</td>
<td>Demonstrates an above average competency in terms of critical analysis, effective communication and creativity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>86-84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>83-82</td>
<td>Fair work. A satisfactory academic performance that meets an average level of competency including understanding of basic ideas and concepts with some critical reflection and analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>81-79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>78-76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>75-74</td>
<td>Meeting the minimum academic performance sufficient to pass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>73-71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>70-68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>67-0</td>
<td>Failure. An unacceptable performance; not college level work.</td>
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Please consult the Theology Department’s Grading Policy (available at: [http://www.xavier.edu/theology/Grading-Policy.cfm](http://www.xavier.edu/theology/Grading-Policy.cfm)) for more precise guidelines.

**Academic Integrity:**
All of the university’s policies regarding various forms of academic misconduct are in effect for this course. Xavier’s policy reads,

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 one or more of the following: a zero for that assignment or test, an "F" in the course, and expulsion from the University. The dean of the college in which the student is enrolled is to be informed in writing of all such incidents, though the teacher has full authority to assign the grade for the assignment, test, or course.

If a student has any questions about this policy, please consult the Academic Honesty Policy (available at: [http://www.xavier.edu/library/xu-tutor/Xaviers-Policy-on-Academic-Honesty.cfm](http://www.xavier.edu/library/xu-tutor/Xaviers-Policy-on-Academic-Honesty.cfm)) and the instructor.
Course Policies:

1. Feedback: Students will receive feedback from the instructor on written work, and as necessary, on quizzes and class participation. Students will have the chance to evaluate the course’s (and the instructor’s) effectiveness around mid-term, so improvements can be made before the end of the semester. The instructor is *always* happy to give or receive feedback, so please feel free to do so via phone, email, or an office visit. Please feel **very welcome** to stop by during office hours, although scheduling an appointment beforehand (during or outside these hours) will ensure the instructor’s undivided attention to your comments, questions, or other concerns.

2. Class participation: As noted above, students are expected to be actively engaged (listening, note-taking, and speaking) in the material and conversations during class. Students **must** bring the assigned readings to class and be prepared to speak to/from them during every class meeting. Students may be called on to share their response to the readings and discussions at any time. To establish a classroom environment conducive to active, inclusive participation, we will maintain an atmosphere of respect, honesty, and trust. This is a space that welcomes all (thoughtful, well-informed, respectful) views but also seeks to get “underneath” current observations or convictions to critically assess the foundational values, perspectives, and biases. As such, all students should be prepared to address *why* they express the comments and questions they share with the class. The more we can reflect on and share *how* and *why* we are coming to new insights (about Christian theology, the present American socio-cultural context, others, ourselves, etc.) the more precise and profound our learning can become. To this end, side conversations, using technology in the classroom (e.g., texting), or consistently refraining from active participation will result in a lower level of learning and, correspondingly, earn a lower participation grade. If a student experiences difficulty in this learning environment, please see the instructor, who is happy to work with you.

3. Written assignments: Please follow the guidelines stated in this syllabus and in the assignment instructions posted on Canvas. All written assignments should be free of spelling and grammar mistakes. If a paper is found to have numerous typographical errors, it will be returned to be corrected and resubmitted. If you would like help with your writing style, please see the instructor or consult the Writing Center ([http://www.xavier.edu/writingcenter/](http://www.xavier.edu/writingcenter/)) before the assignment is due. Ideas and phrases that are not your own must be cited (parenthetically or with footnotes). All assignments must be turned in on time out of fairness to all students. Late work earns a lowered grade in proportion to how much time has passed since the deadline. Exceptions or extensions can only be granted **before** the due date of the assignment.

4. Workload: As this is an honors section, expectations are raised above the typical 6-9 hours a week of work for a 3 credit course to satisfactorily complete all the assigned work. If you have any questions or concerns about the workload for this course, please discuss this with the instructor.

5. Extra credit: Work for extra credit – typically an essay relating a current event, article, etc. to course material to demonstrate a student’s understanding and application of theological beliefs and practices – is accepted via Canvas on a rolling basis until Monday, December 15 at 5pm. For more detailed instructions, please see the course page on Canvas and/or contact the instructor.

6. Communication: Please check your Xavier email and the Course Canvas site regularly for communication about THEO 111, as any changes or updates to assignments will be shared here.

7. To request academic accommodation for a disability, please contact Academic Support Services ([http://www.xavier.edu/lac/](http://www.xavier.edu/lac/)) and the instructor in order to properly address these needs.

8. Changes: The instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus as needed, and will do so with as much advance notice as possible.
Course Schedule:
1) Monday, August 25: Introduction to the Course
   • Discuss in class:
     i. Why Xavier? Why Jesuit? Why study theology?
     • Read: Brendan Busse, “The Dirtiest Word in Jesuit Higher Education,” The Jesuit Post (07/17/14)

2) Wed, Aug 27: Who is God?
   • Read for class:
     i. Himes, Doing the Truth in Love, pp. 5-22.

3) Fri, Aug 29: Who are we?
   • Read for class:
     i. Himes, pp. 23-37.
     ii. Brendan Busse, “Care-less,” The Jesuit Post (06/09/13) – on Canvas
     iii. Sam Sawyer, “Asking for More,” The Jesuit Post (07/15/13) – on Canvas

4) Mon, Sep 1: No Class – Labor Day

5) Wed, Sep 3: Seeking God
   • Read for class:
     ii. Augustine, Confessions, Book I Chapters 1-5; Book II Ch.1-10: Book VI Ch. 5-6; Book VIII Ch. 1, 3, 5, and 12 – on Canvas

6) Fri, Sep 5: Knowing God in Love
   • Read for class:
     i. (Bible) Epistle of 1 John (pp. 2072-2078)
     ii. Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est, paragraphs 1-18 – on Canvas

7) Mon, Sep 8: What is theology?
   • Read for class:
     i. Johnson, Quest for the Living God, pp. 1-24.
     ii. James Keane, “Varieties of Religious Experience,” The Jesuit Post (01/22/12) – on Canvas

8) Wed, Sep 10: What can we know?
   • Read for class:
     ii. Brendan Busse, “Strength of Faith,” The Jesuit Post (12/12/13) – on Canvas

9) Fri, Sep 12: The Task of Theology
   • Read for class:
     ii. Matt Spots, “What Does it Mean to Experience God?” The Jesuit Post (07/17/12) – on Canvas
10) Mon, Sep 15: Understanding Revelation  
   • Read for class:  
     i. Migliore, pp. 20-63.  
     ii. Bring your Bible to class.

11) Wed, Sep 17: Theology as Conversation  
   • Read for class:  
     ii. (Bible) Psalms Intro and Ch. 1-3, 33, 36-41, 119 (pp. 732-736, 759, 762-767, 828-833).  
     iii. Eric Immel, “Just a Stranger on the Bus,” The Jesuit Post (02/13/14) – on Canvas

12) Fri, Sep 19: The Triune God  
   • Read for class:  
     i. Migliore, pp. 64-91.  
   • Assignment Due: Theological Autobiography (more details to come)  
     i. Submit via Canvas by 11:59pm.

13) Mon, Sep 22: Trinity: The Living God of Life  
   • Read for class:  
     ii. Daniel Horan, “The Doctrine of the Trinity …,” Dating God (09/23/10) and “The Holy Trinity…,” Dating God (06/19/11) – on Canvas

14) Wed, Sep 24: Trinitarian Revelation  
   • Read for class:  
     i. (Bible) Matthew 3:1-4:1 (pp. 1671-1672)  
     ii. (Bible) John 14:1-31 (pp. 1842-1843)  
     iii. (Bible) Acts 1:1-2:47 (pp. 1857-1861)

15) Fri, Sep 26: Good Creation  
   i. Johnson, pp. 181-201.  

16) Mon, Sep 29: Good Creation, continued  
   • Read for class:  
     ii. Dan DiLeo, “Pope Francis on Consumerism, Environmental Ecology, and Human Ecology,” Millennial (06/06/13) – on Canvas

17) Wed, Oct 1: Imago Dei  
   • Read for class:  
     i. Migliore, pp. 139-162.  
     ii. Christine McCarthy, “What’s in a Name?” Daily Theology (06/12/14) – on Canvas

18) Thurs, Oct 2: Fr. Greg Boyle, SJ Talk at Bellarmine Chapel @ 2:30 or 7:30pm
19) Fri, Oct 3: *Imago Dei*
   • Read for class:
     i. (Bible) Genesis, Intro and Ch. 1-4:16, 6-9:17 (pp. 3-11, 13-17).
     iii. Brian Pinter, “*Kosher Catholics?*” *America* (03/29/10) – on Canvas

20) Mon, Oct 6: Human Freedom
   • Read for class:
     i. Migliore, pp. 117-138.
     ii. Sachs, pp. 27-34.
     iii. Jen Owens, “*Transfiguration,*” *Daily Theology* (03/16/14) – on Canvas

21) Wed, Oct 8: The Person in Community
   • Read for class:
     i. Sachs, pp. 35-42.

22) Fri, Oct 10: **No Class** – **Fall Break**

23) Mon, Oct 13: To *Be* Human
   • Read for class:
     i. Sachs, pp. 43-74.
     ii. Adam Green, “*Happiness 101,*” *America* (09/01/14) – on Canvas

24) Wed, Oct 15: The Covenant is for Right-Relationship
   • Read for class:
     i. (Bible) Deuteronomy Intro, Ch 5-8, 15:1-18 (pp. 255-256, 265-270, 279-280).
     ii. (Bible) Amos Intro, Ch. 1-6 (pp. 1216-1225).
     iii. (Bible) Acts of the Apostles Intro, Ch. 1-2, 4-5 (pp. 1855-1865).

25) Fri, Oct 17: **No Class**
   • Instead of attending class, it is required to visit the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center ([http://freedomcenter.org/](http://freedomcenter.org/)) today or another day as part of the Group Multi-Media Project – Due Friday, Nov. 7th.
   • Read: Ken Homan, “*Organizing Activism*” *The Jesuit Post* (07/14/14) – on Canvas
   • **Assignment Due:** *Theology and Cultural Context Essay* (more details to come)
     i. Due via Canvas by 11:59pm.

26) Mon, Oct 20: Jesus the Christ
   • Read for class:
     i. Migliore, pp. 163-196.
   • Watch: Why I Hate Religion But Love Jesus and Why I Love Religion, and Jesus

27) Wed, Oct 22: Jesus Christ in Context
   • Read for class:
     i. Migliore, pp. 197-222.
     ii. Bryan Massingale, “*Sharing Our Faith with Those Who Don’t Look Like Us*” (05/04/05) – on Canvas
28) Fri, Oct 24: God in Jesus Christ
   • Read for class:
     i. Johnson, 49-69.
     ii. John Slattery, “The Resurrection Was Not A Victory March,” *Daily Theology* (04/07/12) – on Canvas

29) Mon, Oct 27: The Good News of Jesus Christ
   • Read for class:
     i. (Bible) The Gospel of Mark (pp. 1722-1758).

   • Read for class:
     i. Johnson, pp. 70-89, 113-132.
     ii. Amanda Osheim, “Fear or Faith?” *Daily Theology* (07/10/14) – on Canvas

31) Fri, Oct 31: The Christian Life
   • Read for class:
     i. Migliore, pp. 223-247.
     ii. Meghan Clark, “St. Mary Magdalene,” *Millennial* (07/22/13) – on Canvas

32) Mon, Nov 3: The New Community
   • Read for class:
     i. Migliore, 248-273.
     ii. Jeremy Zipple, “Global Catholicism” *The Jesuit Post* (02/24/14) – on Canvas

33) Wed, Nov 5: The People of God
   • Read for class:
     i. *Lumen Gentium*, paragraphs 1-17, 30-39 – on Canvas.

34) Fri, Nov 7: The Church’s Mission
   • Read for class:
     i. Migliore, pp. 274-300.
   • **Assignment Due: Group Multi-Media Projects**
     i. Due by 11:59pm – upload on Canvas.

35) Mon, Nov 10: Sacramental Life
   • Read for class:
     i. Himes, pp. 100-135.
     ii. Jason Brauninger, “Spiritual and Religious,” *The Jesuit Post* (05/14/12) – on Canvas

   • Read for class:
     i. Himes, pp. 68-82.
     ii. Sachs, pp. 75-102.
     iii. Pope Francis, “A Big Heart Open to God” *America* (09/30/13) – selections (like “The Church as Field Hospital”) detailed on Canvas
37) Fri, Nov 14: Agape
   • Read for class:
     i. Sachs, pp. 103-112.
     ii. Himes, pp. 50-67 and 136-144.

38) Mon, Nov 17: Hope
   • Read for class:
     i. Migliore, pp. 330-353.
     ii. Jason Welle, “Complicity and the Cross,” The Jesuit Post (03/29/13) – on Canvas
     iii. Bring your Bible to class.

   • Read for class:
     i. (Bible) 1 Corinthians, Intro and Ch. 1-3, 5, 8-13 (pp. 1932-1937, 1938-1939, 1942-1950)
     ii. (Bible) 2 Corinthians, Intro and Ch. 1, 3-8 (pp. 1956-1959, 1961-1967)
     iii. Fran Rossi Szpylczyn, “Thinking About the Gospel is Not Living It,” Daily Theology (02/21/14) – on Canvas

40) Fri, Nov 21: Jesus Sends His Disciples into the World
   • Read for class:
     ii. (Bible) John Ch. 12:44-17:26 (pp. 1840-1847)
     iii. Kevin Ahern, “With Missionary Eyes We Will See,” Daily Theology (11/18/11) – on Canvas

41) Mon, Nov 24: New Questions for Theology
   • Read for class:
     i. Johnson, pp. 90-112, 133-152.

42) Wed, Nov 26: No Class – Thanksgiving Break

43) Fri, Nov 28: No Class – Thanksgiving Break
   • Assignment Due: Biblical Analysis and Application Essay (more details to come)
     i. Due via Canvas by 11:59pm.

44) Mon, Dec 1: Generous God of Religions
   • Read for class:
     ii. Michael Rossmann, “Bedroom Window Spirituality,” The Jesuit Post (10/15/12) – on Canvas
45) Wed, Dec 3: Jesus Christ and Religious Plurality
   • Read for class:
     i. Migliore, pp. 301-329.

46) Fri, Dec 5: A Paradigm of Discipleship in the World Today
   • Read for class:
     i. Boyle, Tattoos on the Heart, pp. xi-40
   • Watch: LA’s Gang Members Transformed – on Canvas

47) Mon, Dec 8: Compassion for Solidarity
   • Read for class:
     i. Boyle, pp. 41-82.

48) Wed, Dec 10: Living in God’s Jurisdiction
   • Read for class:

49) Fri, Dec 12: Lived Christian Faith as Seeking Kinship
   • Read for class:
     i. Boyle, pp. 167-212.

50) Final Essay Due: Friday, December 17 at 12pm (noon) on Canvas

Notes: