111-02/07 Theological Foundations

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Theological Foundations

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Course Description:
In this course, we will explore theology as a mutually critical dialogue between human experience and religious traditions. What does it mean to think critically in a way that brings us to a deeper understanding of ultimate truths? How does personal and social experience influence one’s faith? And how does a religious tradition, with its set of practices, narratives, symbols, and doctrines, influence a person’s faith and his or her engagement with the world? Over the course of the semester, we will explore answers to these questions by challenging ourselves and engaging others in readings, class discussion, and videos.

Course Objectives:
This course is a required Core Curriculum component of Xavier’s Ethics/Religion and Society (E/RS) Focus, which endeavors to realize Xavier’s mission and philosophy of education. Xavier believes it is important for its students to learn to analyze societal issues critically in terms of human values and to develop a sense of compassionate solidarity and service (See the University Catalog).
In accordance with this goal, this course will:
1) investigate the role of faith and religion in human experience, particularly with respect to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (comparative religion)
2) explore Scripture, with particular attention to genre analysis (Christian Scripture)
3) evaluate current ethical issues critically in light of faith and religion (ethics)

Course Schedule:
The following schedule provides a brief, tentative outline of the course.

Weeks 1-6: Comparative Religion
Weeks 7-11: Christian Scripture
Weeks 12-16: Ethics
Expectations

I expect you to...

- attend class. You should not miss class unless you have a legitimate excuse presented to me in advance (except in the case of an emergency).
- arrive on time. Be here when class starts!
- read the assigned material before class and bring all assigned reading materials to class.
- submit all quizzes and assignments complete, according to instructions, and on time—no late quizzes and assignments.
- actively participate in class. Everyone in class has both a right and an obligation to participate in discussions, and, if called upon, should try to respond. All questions, perspectives, and opinions are important and valuable—you are encouraged to share and discuss.
- show respect to me and your classmates.
- refrain from sleeping and daydreaming in class. I understood that sleep deprivation and even dry content can occasionally result in heavy eyelids and bobbing heads—I take no offense. It is different however, to abandon the effort altogether and put one’s head down on the desk and nap—this could easily be construed as discourteous and conveys indifference to me and your classmates.
- manage Blackboard and email communication. I will communicate with via Blackboard and email. You are responsible for checking Blackboard and your emails regularly, and you are responsible for ensuring that you know how to use these tools.
- turn off all electronic devices in class. You should turn your cell phones off during class; laptops are not allowed in class subject to special appeal to the professor based on personal circumstances.
- take care of any physiological needs before coming into the classroom.
- refrain from reading or working on materials that are extraneous to the course.
- refrain from prematurely packing up your books and bags before class has ended.
- take responsibility for your learning. If you’re absent, it is your responsibility to keep up with coursework and find out what you missed in class; if you have questions, it is your responsibility to ask them; if you’re confused, it is your responsibility to get things cleared up. I want you to succeed, and I’m here to help.

You can expect me to...

- honor and respect you.
- provide course content that is timely, pertinent, and current based on sound research, not hearsay.
- be on time and prepared for all classes.
- give assessments that help you achieve the course goals and help you grow.
- be clear about my expectations.
- be open to your questions and help you find answers to them.
- provide feedback on assessments in a timely fashion.
- be excited about the material. If I’m not challenged, engaged, and having at least some fun, how can I expect that of you?
- hold you to high standards and help you achieve them.
**Course Requirements:**

**Attendance**
Regular attendance is required. I will send around an attendance sheet each day at the beginning of class, and you will be marked absent if you do not sign this sheet. You are responsible for making sure you sign the attendance sheet each day.

You may miss two classes without penalty. Beginning with your third absence, you will lose 3% points from your final cumulative grade per absence. *Save your absences for a legitimate emergency.* If you are absent, I assume you have a good reason for being gone. Therefore, I do not need doctors’ notes or other documentation letting me know why you were absent. The sole exception to this rule is an absence due to a University-sponsored activity (e.g., intercollegiate athletics).

If you are absent from class, you are still responsible for the work assigned for that day as well as any information given out that day. Please attempt to contact fellow classmates to find out what you missed before contacting me.

**Course Readings**
There are three required textbooks for the course. You may purchase them online or through Xavier’s Bookstore; they can also be found on reserve at the library.


These textbooks will occasionally be supplemented by other readings and handouts, which are available on Blackboard.

*You should bring all assigned reading materials to class.*
Quizzes and Assignments
After completing the assigned reading for a given class period, you should take the accompanying quiz on Blackboard and/or complete the accompanying assignment.

The quizzes are open-book and open-notes: in other words, you may use the assigned reading and any notes you took on that reading when taking your quiz. You may not use any other resources (e.g., the Internet) when taking your quizzes. You must take each quiz prior to the class period for which it is due. You have only a limited time to take the quizzes (20 minutes). The quizzes are not designed to be tricky or picky; their purpose is to ensure that you stay on task with the class work. The material covered by the assigned readings will be incorporated into the exams along with the lecture material.

Like the quizzes, you must complete each assignment prior to the class period for which it is due. All assignments must be typed and properly formatted (1 inch margin on all sides, 12-point Times New Roman font, and double-spaced). You must print out a copy of your assignment and bring it to class on the day it is due. I do not accept email submissions.

I do not allow late or make-up quizzes/assignments. Please make sure that you complete your quizzes/assignments prior to the class period for which they are due. It is your responsibility to make sure that you have working technology and a reliable internet connection: I do not allow make-up quizzes/assignments even in the case of computer malfunction or interruption of an internet connection.

Exams
Three exams will be given throughout the course of the semester. The first will follow our unit on Comparative Religion, the second will follow our unit on Christian Scripture, and the third will follow our unit on Ethics. These exams will cover selected information from the class lectures, assigned readings, quizzes, and assignments.

Comparative Religion Reflection Paper
For our unit on Comparative Religion you shall complete a brief reflection paper. Please see the “Comparative Religion Reflection Paper Rubric” for more information.

Grading and Assessment:
Evaluation
Quizzes & Assignments 35%
Exams (3 @ 20% each) 60%
Comparative Religion Reflection Paper 5%
Grading Scale
I follow the Theology Department’s grading policies, including its grading scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100% - 94%</td>
<td>Distinctive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>93% - 92%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>91% - 90%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>89% - 86%</td>
<td>Superior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>85% - 84%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>83% - 82%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>81% - 78%</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>77% - 76%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>75% - 74%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>73% - 70%</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>69% - 68%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 68%</td>
<td>No Credit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grades indicate a professor’s assessment of a student’s academic performance and not a student’s effort. Given the constant threat of the erosion of quality due to grade inflation, I take very seriously what grades stand for. Most students should expect to be in the “acceptable” category unless sufficient reason is given to move one way or another on the scale. An “A” is not the default—an “A” must be earned, not just by avoiding mistakes, but by demonstrating excellence.

Failure to adhere to the class expectations described above may be used as subjective factors in grading, especially in borderline cases.

Late Policy
You are responsible for quizzes/assignments that are due and for what takes place in class whether you are there or not. Assignments and readings are due at the beginning of class on the date specified in the syllabus; late work will not be accepted. Late work due to computer malfunction or interruption of an internet connection does not constitute a special case and is considered late. Exams not taken at the scheduled exam date and time will receive a zero.

Academic Integrity
Academic dishonesty entails the stealing of another’s ideas and falsely representing them as one’s own; it includes actions such as cheating and plagiarism as well as aiding others in these actions. Xavier’s policy on academic integrity can be found in the University Catalog. You are responsible for knowing this policy and will be held accountable to it.

Student Accessibility Services
If you have any special needs for testing or any learning disability, I will accommodate them in conjunction with the Learning Assistance Center. Please be sure to communicate with me early in the term, providing the proper documentation, so that proper arrangements can be made.
THEO 111: Theological Foundations

Disclaimer:
This syllabus is not a promise or a contract. I reserve the right to modify class content and requirements as deemed necessary for the effective teaching of our class. You will be informed well in advance if any such changes are made.