

TESP 4: The Christian Tradition

Dr. Gary Macy

Sect. 51253 Kenna 304 MWF 10:30-11:35
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Bulletin Description:

A theological examination of the Christian tradition covering such topics as religious experience and the meaning of God: Jesus in the Gospels; the development and history of the Christian churches; the relevance of Christianity in the 21st century global world.

Objectives:

- 1) Students will be able to describe and compare the central religious ideas and practices from several traditions or within one, and from at least two globally distinct regions. (knowledge of global cultures; complexity of content as well as of method; ambiguity)
- 2) Students will be able to use critical approaches to reflect on their own beliefs and the religious dimensions of human existence. (critical thinking; complexity of method; reflection)

Methodology:

Individual authors will be studied in order to illuminate key Christian teachings. Readings will include the following three areas: 1) primary sources from the first century of Christianity, 2) sources from the second millennium of Christianity focusing on the differences and similarities between the founding documents of Christianity and later documents, and 3) a discussion of Christianity in the 21st century in the United States. The early centuries of Christianity emerged in very different cultures (first century Jewish, Roman, Syrian or Egyptian cultures).

Sample of Required Reading:

- 1) The New Testament (preferred text available in the book store: *New Oxford Annotated Bible* 2007 ed.)
- 2) Julian of Norwich, *Showings?* (Paulist, 1978) or Athanasius of Alexandria, *The Life of Anthony*, (Paulist, 1980)
- 3) Ronald Modras, *Ignatian Humanism: A Dynamic Spirituality for the 21st Century* (Loyola Press, 2004)

** Espín and Nickoloff (eds.), *An Introductory Dictionary of Theology and Religious Studies* (Liturgical Press, 2007) is highly recommended as a source book

Assignments:

1. Attendance and active participation at all sessions (20 points)
2. Two essay/short answer quizzes on readings and lecture material (20 points each)
3. Three short papers (20 points)
4. Final exam (25 points)

Assignments:

You are required to write assignments #1 and #2 on the dates on the syllabus. You may choose to write either assignment #3 or assignment #4. This final paper will be due on the date shown in the syllabus.

Assignment #1

Find two translations of the Gospels that are different from the one you are using in class. Check the translation of the Sermon on the Mount (Mat. 5:1-48; Luke 6:17-38). What differences do you see between the two versions of the Sermons? How are those differences based in the cultural background of the time in which they were written? Which of the three translations do you prefer and which of the three translations do you think is most accurate? In other words, which translation do you find most attractive to a person of the twenty-first century in the United States and which translation most closely mediates the first century background of the Gospel writers as you learned it in class. Be sure to list the three translations you are using.

Assignment #2

Find three web sites on Julian of Norwich. Please rank these web sites by the following categories:

- 1) Historically Most Accurate (1-3) In other words, which of the web sites accurately portrays the central Christian beliefs (e.g. charity, grace, forgiveness, salvation) of the author in their historical, cultural and geographic setting.
- 2) Most Interesting (1-3) In other words, which of the websites most appeals to your twenty-first century understanding of what religion, specifically Christianity, should be? Describe how the web site makes at least two central themes of Christianity (e.g. charity, grace, forgiveness, salvation) speak to you. How does this support or challenge your own beliefs.

Assignment #3

For the Fall 2009 quarter, the students will be required to attend either the panel discussion, or one of the public lectures that are part of the The Legacy of the Martyrs conference on campus November 2-5. The students will write a reflection paper discussing how the session they attended 1) clarified their own understanding of what it means to attend a Jesuit university, and 2) challenged their own belief system. This assignment will fulfill objective 2.

Assignment #4

A. Based on your reading of Ronald Modras description of either 1) Matteo Ricci translation of Christianity into classical Chinese culture or 2) Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's understanding of Christianity and science, show how two central Christian concepts (e.g. charity, grace, forgiveness, salvation) were translated from the biblical understanding (that is, the meaning of those concepts as learned in the first part of this course) into a different cultural setting (that is, either classical Chinese culture or modern science).

B. How would you translate the biblical understandings of salvation and charity into your own twenty-first U.S. culture?

Reading Assignments

September 21 Introduction to class
September 23 Intro to Gospels
September 25 Gospel of Luke chapters 1-8
September 28 Gospel of Luke chapters 9-17
September 30 Gospel of Luke chapters 18-24
October 2 Gospel of John chapters 1-7
October 5 Gospel of John chapters 8-15
October 7 October 9 Gospel of John chapters 16-21
 11:45 Class will not meet: Mass of the Holy Spirit
October 12 Summary of Gospels
October 14 **Exam and paper on Gospels due**
October 16 (No class)
October 19 Julian ** Long Text: chapters 1-10
October 21 Julian chapters 11-20
October 23 Julian 21-30
October 26 Julian 31-40
October 28 Julian 41-50
October 30 Julian 51-60
November 2 Julian 61-70
November 4 Julian 71-83
November 6 **Exam and paper on Julian due**
November 9 Modras chapters 1 and 2
November 11 Modras chapter 3
November 13 Modras chapter 4
November 16 Modras chapter 5
November 18 Modras chapter 6
November 20 Modras chapter 7
November 30 Modras chapter 8 and **paper on Jesuits due**
December 2 TBA
December 4 TBA

December 7 Final Exam for Sect 18 1:30 – 4:30
December 9 Final Exam for Sect 22 6:30 – 9:30