

Religious Studies
Summer 2009
TESP 4
The Christian Tradition
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304 Kenna Hall
10:20- 12:30 Monday, Wednesday and Thursday

Course Description: Some of the sloppiest discourse of our time is about religion in general and the Christian tradition in particular. This course will provide the tools and skills for identifying coherent, theological discourse. We shall do this by inspecting the truth claims of the Christian tradition in dialogue with several intellectual partners. Our dialogue partners come from the "inside" that is, the theological tradition of critical reflection upon the experience of God, as well as from the "outside". By outside I mean the intellectual traditions of literature and history, both scientific and socio-political. The framework for the course is the Catholic intellectual tradition with particular attention to Ignatius and fellow Jesuits, Bernard Lonergan and Karl Rahner.

Texts:

The Christianity Reader, Mary Gerhart and Fabian E. Udoh, Eds., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). (Required)

The Poisonwood Bible, Barbara Kingsolver (New York: Harper-Collins, 2000). (Required)

The Class Period is also a central "text" for this course.

Course Objectives: This course meets the first level requirement for the Core Curriculum in the *Religious Studies Department* by inspecting the Christian tradition in its historical, ethical and theological roots. We will strive for university level discourse about the human experience of the presence of God using theological analysis, literature, intellectual history and the spiritual reflections of Ignatius Loyola. This is a foundations course in Christianity. It is also a course in the discipline of Theology. Theology is critical reflection upon the human experience of God. This course will make use of the same intellectual tools, as do all other courses at SCU. In addition, the course is animated by the vision of St. Ignatius Loyola who was convinced that when the human mind and imagination are at work, God is present.

Class Notes: Each lecture introduces material that is not in the texts; in this way each class functions as a text. The daily reading outside class will act as the frame for the material presented in class each day. The readings provide you material that we shall be placing in conversation with the material presented in class. In this way, each class day models the form of analysis that I will be asking you to use when you write your Critical Book Reports. Attendance in class is very important. The class is incomplete without the material presented each day.

Assignments:

Two Exams:

1. The first reading exam will be given on Monday August 3 to assess your reading of *The Poisonwood Bible*. The exam consists of fill-in-the-blanks sentences where you will be asked to identify events and characters in the novel. The exam is designed to test for careful reading with attention to detail. We will be using these characters and the events to engage in conversation about incoherent claims that are made using poor and even ignorant theological reflection. 20%

2. The second exam is given on the schedule exam date. This exam assesses the depth of the reading you did over the course of the 5 weeks on *The Christianity Reader* as well as the quality of your notes and attention to the class material each day.

While we shall surely discuss these readings in class, half of the questions on this exam are based upon your reading and your own preparation of these texts. I shall be assessing your knowledge of the topic that the author discusses, any historical or sociopolitical background that the text provides and the argument that the author makes. This exam includes fill-in-the blank, identification and short answer essays where

you will be asked to compare 2 or 3 authors and/or their arguments or insights. You will also be assessed on your understanding of the central theological arguments made each week. 30%

One Critical Book Report:

This assignment is a 7-9 page analysis of one aspect of *The Poisonwood Bible* in dialogue with a theological insight from the course. This analysis must display material from classroom sessions. 50%

Attendance and Participation:

Class is important. Your grade will be lowered for excessive absences.

The daily reading outside class will act as the frame for the material presented in class each day. The readings provide you material that we shall be placing in conversation with the material presented in class. In this way, each class day models the form of analysis that I will be asking you to use when you write your paper. Attendance in class is very important. The class is incomplete without the material presented each day. ***If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get the notes and to learn the material for the day you missed. The professor will not re-teach the material.*** If you are sick or unable to attend, please notify the professor. Notifying the professor of illness or necessary absence is both courteous and professional. I do not have a "policy" regarding "free absences." I do not expect you to miss class any more than your employer "expects" you to miss work. I do however, understand that things happen and illnesses strike us all. Attendance is assumed in this class, and the exams will be based not only on the readings, but also on the lectures. If you do not plan to attend class every class meeting, I suggest you drop the course. Attendance at all class meetings is expected. ***Attendance in class is your professional activity; part of your performance is careful, prepared attendance.***

Course Presuppositions:

I. Organizational Presuppositions

There are three background values that will be operative in this class, especially in the time we spend together. These values take the form of goals.

A. The first goal is to develop university level discourse. By this I mean that the questions and the formulation of arguments should consist of careful critical reflection.

B. The second goal is consistent and dependent upon the first; it is that this is a professional environment. All aspects of the class, from my performance to the student's performance, will reflect this standard.

---I expect students to be in class on time and ready to work when class starts. Tardiness is disruptive to the class.

---I expect students to have an email account that is checked daily. Please make sure your SCU email account is activated. This will be the major way that I communicate with students.

--- Please do not leave the room until class is over unless you have a personal emergency.

---If you use a laptop, it may be used only for notes. The only program that should be open is your word-processing program. If you use the laptop for any other purpose, I shall mark you absent for that class period. You are not fully present to the class if you are texting someone during class. In addition, your lack of attention to the professor and your academic colleagues is rude and distracting.

---Your phone or other devices should be turned off during class. My phone is; I expect yours to be too.

C. The third goal is that this class, and especially the time in the classroom, becomes a learning community. Both the vision and mission of Catholicism as a corporate community and the university embrace and affirm this value.

II. Theological Presuppositions

Theology is critical reflection upon faith. Because this class is a university class, the critical reflection, it will be even farther away from catechesis than any adult education or more advanced high school classes you may have attended. One of the hallmarks of Catholicism is how it has embraced and encouraged the

intellectual life. At the same time, this critical reflection has as its object the most personal and meaningful aspects of human life. It reflects upon our experience of the Living God and that God's personal presence in each person's inner life and in the corporate life of the community. Therefore, a constitutive part of the critical reflection is the respect for and attention to the various experiences of God that all of us will bring to this study. I shall work to achieve this standard and ask that you do so as well. While this course may indeed enhance and develop your own faith life, it is not materially about your faith life; it is materially concerned with critical reflection upon the meaning of human existence and God's existence. Wherever you as an individual person find yourself with regard to these questions of meaning, will in no way effect the grade you earn in this course. What will affect the grade you earn is how well you engage these questions at the university level.

Calendar

Week One: July 27, 29 and 30

Readings due July 29 and 30:

The Christianity Reader

pp. 780- 784 Ian Barbour "Myths, Models and Paradigms"

pp. 787- 791 Pope John Paul II "Faith Can Never Conflict with Reason: On Galileo"

pp. 784- 787 Nicholas Lash "Secularity and Godlessness"

pp. 618- 622 Bonaventure "On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology"

pp. 581- 585 Chapter 6 (Introduction) Mysticism, Philosophy, Theology: Demands on the Intellect"

pp. 591- 593 Bonaventure "On Contemplating God through His Image Stamped upon our Natural Powers"

pp. 585- 587 Pseudo- Dionysius "The Divine Names"

pp. 760- 765 World Council of Churches "The Role of the *Diakonia* of the Church in Contemporary Society"

pp. 128- 131 Albert Schweitzer "'Results' in the Quest for the Historical Jesus"

Week Two: August 3, 5 and 6

Monday August 3: *The Poisonwood Bible* is due. Read carefully and for detail. Prepare for a reading exam on this date. The exam is 40+ matching questions.

The Christianity Reader

pp. 161- 166 Chapter 2 (Introduction) Early Influences on Emerging Christianity

pp. 166- 167 Flavius Josephus "On Jewish Philosophies," Jewish Antiquities, xvii. 2-25

pp. 168- 173 The Dead Sea Scrolls (The Community Rule, The Damascus Document, and The Messianic Rule

pp. 176- 180 Philo Judaeus "On the Account of the World's Creation Given by Moses, Who is the Heir?, On the Posterity of Cain and His Exile"

pp. 180- 189 The Mishnah "The Passover Meal, The Day of Atonement, The Fathers"

pp. 189- 193 Genesis Rabbah "The Binding of Isaac"

pp. 139- 141 Brevard Childs "The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary"

pp. 152- 159 John P. Meier "Criteria: How Do We Decide What Comes from Jesus?"

pp. 141- 144 Paul Ricoeur "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation"

pp. 144- 148 Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza "In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins"

Week Three: August 10, 12 and 13

The Christianity Reader

pp. 613 Hildegard of Bingen "Scivias"

pp. 614- 618 Peter Abelard "The Christian Theology"

pp. 618- 622 Bonaventure "On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology"

pp. 622- 628 Aquinas "On What Sort of Teaching Christian Theology Is and What It Covers"

pp. 653- 655 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel "Need for the Reconciliation of Religion and Cognition"

pp. 661- 663 Paul Tillich "What Faith Is"

pp. 679- 682 Reinhold Niebuhr "Human Destiny and History"

pp. 682- 684 Karl Rahner "Nature and Grace"

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pp. Bernard J. F. Lonergan "The Functions of the Transcendental Method"
pp. 223- 235 Selections from "Jewish Christianity and Christian Apologetics and Proselytizing"

Week Four: August 17, 19 and 20

The Christianity Reader

pp. 343- 374 "The Rise of the Sacraments as the Central Focus of the Community"

Week Five: August 24, 26 and 27

The Christianity Reader

pp. Structures of Community and Questions of Ethics- Selected Readings

449- 495 and 551- 557 and 562- 568 and 574- 581

Disability Accommodation Policy:

The Office of Disabilities Resources has been designated by the University to ensure access for all students with disabilities to all academic programs and University resources. Types of disabilities include medical, physical, psychological, attention-deficit, and learning disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are provided to minimize the effects of a student's disability and to maximize the potential for success. Santa Clara University follows the law that states: "Professors cannot change essential course requirements."

Any accommodation must be arranged through the Office of Disabilities Resources. From Undergraduate Bulletin: "To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources (408) 554-4111; TTY (408) 554-5445. Students must register with Disabilities Resources and provide appropriate documentation to that office prior to receiving accommodations."

Please visit the Office's Website for more information.

<http://www.scu.edu/advising/learning/disabilities/>

Academic Integrity

Students need to be aware of and follow the university's academic integrity policy. See

<http://www.scu.edu/academics/bulletins/undergraduate/Academic-Integrity.cfm>.

Plagiarism will lower your grade and may result in an *F* for the course.

Grading Scale:

100- 98 outstanding

97- 94 exceptional

93- 90 excellent

89- 87 very good

86- 83 solid performance

82- 80 good

79- 76 average