

**TESP 4 The Christian Tradition (51251)**  
**Jean Molesky-Poz, Fall 2009**

**Religious Studies, Santa Clara University**  
**MWF 9:15-10:20 Kenna Hall 212**  
**Kenna 307 Office Hours: MW 11:40-12:40**  
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**This foundation course in Christianity, examines humanity's quest for the living God, within the Christian tradition. While many students at Santa Clara University self-identify as Christians, the objective in this course is to examine Christianity not from a faith-perspective, but as a *subject of intellectual inquiry.***

**Our approach will be both anthropological and theological. Anthropology concerns itself with understanding human experience. Theology is a critical reflection upon the human experience of God. Theological anthropology looks at human experience with a view to catching glimpses of God's glory, the glory of God's purpose for humanity. In this course, we are going to approach the question from diverse cultural, socio-political, gender, and evolutionary contexts, that is, examining frontiers in the Theology of God.**

**TEXT**

**Johnson, Elizabeth. 2007 *A Quest for the Living God*. New York: Continuum.**

**Susan Rakoczy. 2006. *Great Mystics and Social Justice: Walking on the Two Feet of Love*. New York: Paulist Press**

**E-RES password: horizon**

**Course Goals:**

Where is the living God to be found? How have contemporary Christian theologies been seeking and finding the living God in ways coherent with our changing times? At the end of this introductory course, students should be able to:

1. Explain from the field of Theological Anthropology, the human person as subject and author, transcendent, free and responsible;
2. See, articulate, and apply the relation of lived-experience (transcendental dimension of the human person) to reflection, inquiry, language, symbol and conceptual knowledge;
3. Express a critical understanding of the theological underpinnings of Christianity;
4. Compare and contrast, within Christianity, diverse contemporary cultural, socio-historical, gender, and intellectual communities in which people inquire into and express and interpret their experience of Christianity;
5. Describe and evaluate the place of Christianity, Catholicism in particular, within the diversity of religious pluralism.

**Department Goals**

1. Students question and probe religion for what it reveals about human beings, their diverse societies, traditions, convictions and aspirations;
2. Students use diverse materials and demonstrate formal postures of inquiry into religion and in order to go beyond simple description of religion to a reflective engagement with it;
3. Students propose and investigate the "big questions" – that is, the meta-reflective questions that ask how and why we ask the questions that we do about religion.

### **Core Curriculum Learning Goals and Objectives**

*This course fulfills Santa Clara's Core Requirement for RTC 1.*

- 1a. Students will be able to describe and compare the central religious ideas and practices from several traditions or within one, and form at least two globally distinct regions. (Knowledge of Global Cultures; Complexity; Ambiguity)
- 1b. Students will be able to use critical approaches to reflect on their own beliefs and the religious dimensions of human existence (Critical thinking; Complexity; Reflection)

### **Assessment and Grading.**

*All assignments will assess fulfillment of learning goals 1a and 1b:*

1. Students will complete three two-page papers on theological ideas of the text. They will be evaluated according to conceptual accuracy (empathetic understanding of the content of resources); critical thinking that provides appropriate specific evidence for conclusions; perceptiveness, that is creativity that moves beyond reporting some one else's ideas; and writing quality. Choose of paper option topics (30% of the final grade, 10% each)
2. Midterm exam, consisting of matching, short answer and essay questions. This exam assesses the students' knowledge of the material in the first half of the course. (20% of the final grade)
3. Individuals will create research groups of four, in which they will select one of the tendencies within Christianity in which they want to deepen their understanding. The research can include 1) visits to communities; 2) interviews with community members or experts in particular; 3) textual research, visual arts, Church architecture, with suggested foundational texts by instructor; and 4) presentation in class. Students will receive a group grade. (15% of final grade)
4. A final essay exam that demonstrates a comprehensive, integrative and reflective understanding of religious experience and the diverse expressions of the Christian tradition (20% of final grade)

### **Policies**

**Attendance** at all class meetings, on-time completion of assignments, and full participation in the experiential learning component of this class. University level discourse, critical reflection, and designated in-class facilitating of course materials are required in this course. Preparation of required reading/participation in class sessions is essential and required. Student teams will facilitate selected classes (\*). There will be a quiz each week of the first five weeks of class, and then intermittently. Three unexcused absences during the semester will result in the drop of one letter grade. Three tardy classes equal one absence. 15%

**Incompletes, Plagiarism and Cheating.** Late papers, make-up exams, or incompletes are not acceptable except under unusual circumstances and with prior permission. Please speak with me in anticipation of a problem. In accordance with the Student Handbook, plagiarism and cheating of any kind are a serious breach of morality and can lead to expulsion.

**Disability Accommodation:** To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in Benson Center, (408) 554 4111; TTY (408) 554 5445.

**Academic Integrity:** Please see the universities policy regarding academic integrity.  
<http://www.scu.edu/academics/bulletins/undergraduate/Academic-Integrity.cfm>.

**Week One**

- M** Introduction. What are we looking for?
- W** Ground Rules for the Journey; How does Wisdom arise from local communities?  
Johnson, "Introduction," 1-5; "Ancient Story, New Chapter, 7-24.
- F** Johnson, "Gracious Mystery, Every Greater, Ever Nearer, 25-48.

**Week Two** How do we experience the Mystery of God?

- M** Rakoczy. "Prayer or Action," 1-6; "Mystical Experience," 7-20.
- W** Schreiter, "What is Local Theology," from *Constructing Local Theologies*, 1-21. E-RES.
- F** Personal Reflection: the experience of Mystery in our lives
- First Reflection Paper: *How do we experience, reflect on, articulate and conceptualize the Mystery of God? (Complexity of content as well as method)*

**Week Three** Where is the presence of the living God in suffering, lament and human anguish?

- M** Suffering: God of Pathos  
Johnson, "The Crucified God of Compassion," 49-69.
- W** Ellacuria, "The Crucified People," in Ignacio Ellacuria and Jon Sobrino, eds., *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 580-603, E-RES
- F** Rakoczy, Dorothy Day: Prophet of Poverty, 135-155

**Week Four** How is theology experienced as liberating?

- M** Johnson, "Liberating God of Life," 70-89.
- W** Joh Sobrino "The Experience of God in the Church of the Poor," in *The True Church and the Poor* (Orbis, 1984), 125-59, E-RES.
- F** Susan Rakoczy *Great Mystics and Social Justice: Walking on the Two Feet of Love*, 21-41.
- Second Reflection Paper: *What is the experience of God in the suffering community? (Knowledge of Global Cultures; Complexity of content as well as method; Ambiguity)*

**Week Five** How does female naming of the Holy produce one more fragment of the truth of the graciousness and hospitality of the Mystery?

- M** Midterm *This in-class exam will imbed assessment of learning goals.*
- W** Johnson, "God Acting Womanish," 90-112.

Hilkert, "Cry Beloved Image: Rethinking the Image of God," in *In the Embrace of God: Feminist Approaches to Theological Anthropology*, (NY; Orbis, 1995) 190-205, E-RES.

F Rakoczy, Mary and Martha, 71-97

Third Reflection Paper: *What do women bring to the table when they speak of the Mystery of God? (Knowledge of Global Cultures; Complexity of content as well as method; Ambiguity)*

**Week Six** How do Black theologies and Latina/o theologies embed distinct histories, identities and theological renderings?

M Johnson "God Who Breaks Chains," 113-132.  
SD: Black Spirituals: Raboteau and Cone E-RES

W Johnson, "Accompanying God of Fiesta," 133-152.

F Rakoczy, "Be Reconciled: Four South African Voices," 157-185.

**Week Seven** What glimpse of God emerges in inter-religious dialogue?

M Johnson, "Generous God of Religion," 153-180

W Students in fishbowl exercise to discuss their *own beliefs and their understandings of the religious dimensions of human existence*

Nov Thursday night, Jon Sobrino, 7:30

F No class

**Week Eight** What are the implications for humanity if we understand the Creator Spirit as one who creates, indwells, compassionately loves and empowers the world

M Rakoczy, *Mysticism, Suffering and Political Love*, 191-206.  
Students in fishbowl exercise to discuss their *own beliefs and their understandings of the religious dimensions of human existence, and response to Jon Sobrino, reading, and inquiries into God's presence in suffering and/or Liberation Theology.*

Fourth Reflection Paper: *What contributions do Black and Latino/a theologies make to the Christian community? (Knowledge of Global Cultures; Complexity of content as well as method; Ambiguity)*

W Johnson, "Creator Spirit in the Evolving World," 181-202.

F Rakoczy, Evelyn Underhill, 99-116.

**Week Nine** How to understand the Trinity in our contemporary world?

M Johnson, "Trinity, The Living God of Love," 201-225.

W Rakoczy, Thomas Merton, 117-131

Students in groups of four to apply their theological inquiry to a particular question that addresses *the religious dimension of human existence as articulated in Christianity.*

**F** Rakoczy, Ignatius of Loyola, 43-65.

**Week Ten**

**M** Students in groups of four to apply their theological inquiry to a particular question that addresses *the religious dimension of human existence as articulated in Christianity.*

**W** Students in groups of four to apply their theological inquiry to a particular question that addresses *the religious dimension of human existence as articulated in Christianity.*

**F** Students in groups of four to apply their theological inquiry to a particular question that addresses *the religious dimension of human existence as articulated in Christianity.*