

THEO 6330 Christian Theology

Required Core for MACM, MACF, MDiv, MATS

North Park Theological Seminary

Fall, 2008

Section 1 - Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8-9:15 am

Section 2 - Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2-3:15 pm

D. Brent Laytham, Instructor

Instructor Information

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Course Description

An introduction to the doctrines, methods and tasks of Christian theology, seeking active appropriation of Christian faith in the context of the church and in engagement with the world. (Prerequisite: If you have not completed your history requirement, you will need instructor permission to take this course.)

Course Objectives

- To acquaint students with basic Christian doctrine in its historical development and systematic embodiment, thereby developing a survey knowledge of the Christian tradition and knowing one's own place within it
- To acquaint students with the tools, texts and tasks of Christian theology, to the end of living and working under Scripture's authority by knowing the Bible in English and engaging responsibly in the interpretation and application of its teaching
- To engage in both formal and informal theological conversation, allowing students to explore and deepen their participation in the faith of the church
- To understand clearly the necessity of theology to the life, ministry and mission of the church, and to grasp the theological dimension of students' various callings
- To investigate the relationship of theology and culture, including clarification of the way cultural processes of production and meaning affect Christian identity
- To deepen knowledge and love of God, to empower faithful service, and to articulate hopeful witness

Course Texts

The following authors will be our fellow disciples and conversation partners this semester.

Donald Frisk, *Covenant Affirmations* (Covenant Press).

Roger Olson, *The Mosaic of Christian Beliefs: Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity* (InterVarsity Press, 2002) ISBN 0830826955

Justo González, *Mañana* (Abingdon Press, 1990). ISBN 978-0687230679

Clemens Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology: A Guide for Artisans of a New Humanity* (Faith and Cultures Series) (Orbis, 2002). ISBN 978-1570754524.

[Please note that Sedmak replaces John Parrat, *A Guide to Doing Theology* [International Study Guide 35] (SPCK 1996). ISBN 9780281049837 Chapters 6-8 are optional. If you've already purchased Parrat, please read that text. If not, please plan to use Sedmak. Reading 2 different texts on the same topic will enrich our classroom conversation.]

Denise L. Carmody, *Christian Feminist Theology: A Constructive Interpretation* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1996) ISBN 978-1-55786-587-8

Supplemental readings as listed in the course calendar. These will be available on Blackboard.

Course Requirements

Class Participation (poor participation will lower your course grade by a full letter)

Class participation includes

- Preparation. Complete all assigned readings before class. You will submit your reading completion form at the midterm and again at the end of the semester.
- Presence. Come to class (on time and stay for the entire session).
- Participation. This includes listening attentively, taking notes, thinking hard, asking questions, entering the conversation.
- (Post-mortem. Just as athletes talk about a game afterwards, so students should continue the classroom conversation after class. You won't be graded on this one, but it is one of the key outcomes the course seeks to foster.)

Short Papers (75% of final grade)

- Five short papers are required (4-5 pages each), each worth 15% of the total course grade.
- Six papers are assigned for the semester. Students must write five of these: the first paper, and four of the last five. Any student who writes all six papers will have the lowest grade dropped automatically.
- **Alternative** (subject to instructor approval): a 20-25 page research paper.

Final Exam or Project (25% of final grade)

- There will be a comprehensive final examination, which will consist of two essays. There will be reference to this exam throughout the semester. A study guide will be distributed at least 10 days before the final.
- Alternatively, students may prepare a final project rooted in and oriented toward ministry. This might be a substantial sermon on a doctrine, a worship service (with annotation), a piece of worship art (with interpretation), a catechism or confirmation material, a theological interpretation of visual, graphic or musical art for a church context (e.g., an exposition of the anthropology of Michaelangelo's "Creation of Man," a critique of the Christology of Warner Sallman's "Head of Christ," etc.). Students will have freedom to design their project in consultation with the instructor.

Grading and Other Policies

Grading in this course will follow the standards of the *Student Academic Handbook*, which sets A as the mark for exceptional or excellent work, B as the mark for meritorious or above average work, C as the mark for "work that is without marked merit or marked defect" in fulfilling the assignment, D as the mark for deficient work that nonetheless partially fulfills the assignment, and F as the mark for no work or for work that does not even partially fulfill the assignment

Absences. Absences beyond the third will lower your course grade. Students who miss more than six class sessions should not expect to pass the course. Make every effort to notify me ahead of time about any absence. Being habitually late is both discourteous and poor training for ministry. Students who are consistently tardy will receive a grade penalty.

Late Papers. Students may have a one week extension on one paper without grade penalty. All other late papers will be reduced one letter grade per week or portion thereof.

Other Policies and procedures

Inclusive Language

The *Student Academic Handbook* guides us to write in ways that “use gender inclusive language when referring to people. Such courtesy and sensitivity to audience should be presumed.” Students who continue to use non-inclusive language for humankind will be assigned a 3 page theological essay justifying their practice. Failure to complete this additional assignment will lead to a letter grade penalty on all papers that use non-inclusive language.

Collaboration

I encourage collaboration in the following ways:

- Study together for tests. Discuss class readings together. Discuss class content and lectures together.
- Discuss your writing with others. You may allow another person to read your written work and suggest ways of improving it. They may make suggestions regarding your paper’s form (the academic style and layout on the page), mechanics (grammar, spelling and punctuation) and especially its argument. In every case, you must discuss the paper with your reader; written comments alone are not acceptable.
- In no case may another person edit, correct, write or rewrite your paper in whole or in part. Such action will be considered cheating (see academic dishonesty policy above).

Academic Dishonesty

- Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, doing work for others, others doing your work, plagiarism or other misuse of source material, copying, and lying to the instructor. Such dishonorable behavior will produce failure on a given assignment or failure of the entire course. Academic dishonesty also includes destroying, defacing or stealing library materials. This includes marking in a library book with pen, pencil or by folding down pages. Such moral failure may be cause for failure of the entire course.
- Please consult the Student Handbook for materials on Academic Dishonesty. Please note that submitting the same work or paper in two classes requires the permission of both instructors.

Academic Encouragement

- It is my intent to encourage you in your studies. Therefore, if you are having difficulty understanding or completing a particular assignment, please talk with me about it.

In my class, it is better to ask for permission than for forgiveness. That is to say, negotiate changes or exceptions to the syllabus in advance. Notify me of absences or other exceptional circumstances in advance.

Accommodations. Students with a disability who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Academic Services. Please do so as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely manner. If needed, appointments can be relocated. For further information please review the following website:

www.northpark.edu/Home/index.cfm?northpark=ada.ada_main

Certain accommodations can also be made for students whose first language is not English.