

Theology 6330: Christian Theology

North Park Theological Seminary

Stephen Bilynskyj, Instructor

Fall Semester Intensive/On-line

Course dates: 8/27/12 – 12/14/12, Intensive Class Session 10/24/12-10/26/12

Instructor Contact Information:

steveb@valleycovenant.org; 541-345-0055, generally available Tu-Fr, 9 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

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.

Course Objectives

- To acquaint students with basic Christian doctrine in its historical development and systematic embodiment
- To acquaint students with the tools, texts and tasks of Christian theology
- 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 explore the relationship between theology and culture, learning how cultural differences shape theologies
- To deepen knowledge and love of God, to empower faithful service, and to articulate hopeful witness

Course Texts

The following authors will be our discussion partners during this course.

1. Bible, any good modern translation like NRSV, NIV, TNIV, etc.
2. Donald Frisk, *Covenant Affirmations* (Covenant Press).
3. Roger Olson, *The Mosaic of Christian Beliefs: Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity* (InterVarsity Press, 2002) ISBN 0830826955
4. Justo González and Zaida Maldonado Pérez, *An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Abingdon Press, 2002). ISBN 0687095735
5. Miroslav Volf, *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace* (Zondervan, 2006) ISBN 0310265746
6. Thabiti M. Anyabwile, *The Decline of African American Theology: From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* (InterVarsity Press, 2007) ISBN 0830828273
7. Catherine LaCugna, ed. *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective* (Harper San Francisco, 1993). ISBN 0060649356
8. A few supplemental readings (Posted on Moodle in the week they are assigned.)

Course Requirements

1. On-line Participation and Discussion.

Involvement in on-line discussions and completion of on-line tasks, including reading the weekly lecture. Discussions will be asynchronous (class members do not need to be on-line at the same time).

A. Read each week's reading assignment from texts, as well as supplemental readings posted on-line for each week.

B. Read weekly "lecture" from instructor: Each lecture is a short introduction to the topic, generally through sermons. These will be posted for each week.

C. Discussion Forums: You will discuss and respond to weekly discussion questions. **Note:** Participation in these discussions is vital to the learning that goes on in this course. Theology does not revolve primarily around one's own personal faith but is an activity of the church together. It is a discipline that reflects on faith statements, confessions, and liturgical expressions that happen in groups of people. Theology is ongoing discussion, one in which you are a part and can make a contribution. These discussions will help you do better theology.

Each person is responsible for responding to the posted question in about 100-200 words. You will then respond to two other classmates' original responses (see #2 below). To be courteous (and to avoid a late penalty), please post your original response to my question by 5 p.m. PDT on Wednesday each week, so as to give other students time to respond to you. Your responses to other students are due by 5 p.m. PDT on Friday each week. Your responses should *incorporate the readings* (this is one way you demonstrate you've read the assigned readings) and major themes of that week. They are not to be mere opinions, but thoughtful statements backed up by the readings and perhaps a well-constructed argument. Please keep your responses clear and organized. You are also responsible for reading all comments by other group members, in other words the whole content of your discussion board.

Grading for on-line discussion: Weekly participation is marked as "0, 1, 2 or 3." If you participate (which means do readings, post and respond adequately) on time, you will receive a 2. If you participate only in part or are late, you will receive a 1. If your response is thoughtful, insightful or creative you will receive a 3, but merely writing extra will not give you a better grade and may hurt you. Postings beyond 1 week late (without *prior* approval) will receive a 0 for the week.

2. Reflections

I will assign 4 longer reflection assignments, with several questions from which to choose. These papers will include analysis, interpretation and evaluation of the major themes in the course and the readings. These reflections are *in addition* to the weekly online discussion questions. They are approximately 3 pages (700-900 words). Questions for each essay will be posted in Moodle for the week due.

Due dates for essays (submit by 11 p.m. Pacific Time on due date):

Essay 1: September 17

Essay 2: October 8

Essay 3: November 5

Essay 4: December 3

3. Intensive Face-to-Face Class Session, October 24-26, Seattle, WA area

As the center of our course we will gather as a learning community in an intensive classroom session. The aim of this in-person interaction will be to make application of theological ideas to your own life and ministry context. Our on-line presence prior to and after the intensive will augment this face-to-face course. Being completely up-to-date with the reading is a necessity for there to be fruitful discussion during the intensive time.

The schedule for the intensive is as follows:

Wednesday, October 24, 9 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 25, 9 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. with evening informal interaction

Friday, March 16, 9 a.m. – noon

Please contact our host church for information about lodging, meals, etc.

4. Final Exam

Exam will be essay questions completed online. I will give you a study guide for the final exam.

Due: Friday, December 14, 11 p.m. Pacific Time.

Grading

Grading breakdown is as follows:

On-line Participation: 25%

Reflections: 40% (10% each)

Intensive Participation 20%

Final Exam: 15%

Computer Requirements:

In order to effectively participate in and successfully complete this course, each participant will need to have access to a computer and a high-speed internet connection. Please visit contact North Park computer services if you have specific questions or problems regarding your on-line connection.

Academic Honesty:

In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park University is committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion.

Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Plagiarism – the use of another’s work as one’s own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the internet.
2. Copying another’s answers on an examination.
3. Deliberately allowing another to copy one’s answers or work.
4. Posting work on-line in the name of another student.

For further information on this subject you may refer to the Academic Dishonesty section of the University’s online catalog.

Support Services:

Please see the Course Information button in your course in Blackboard for the Student Support document if you need assistance during your course.

Disabilities Accommodations

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the program's office. Please do so as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely manner. For further information please review the following website: <http://www.northpark.edu/ada>

Calendar of readings and assignments:

Week 1: 8/27-8/31 – **Introductions and Orientation**

Week 2: 9/4-9/7 – **What and Why Is Theology?**

Reading: Frisk, 1-14; Olson, 11-27; Gonzalez & Perez, 9-31, LaCugna, 5-25

Week 3: 9/10-9/14 – **Who Is God?**

Reading: Frisk, 33-47; Olson, 111-132; Gonzalez & Perez, 33-46; Anyabwile, 63-99,

Week 4: 9/17-9/21 – **The Trinity**

Reading: Olson, 133-154; Gonzalez & Perez, 49-53; LaCugna, 83-108

Reflection paper #1 due Monday, September 17, 11 p.m. PST

Week 5: 9/24-9/28 – **Revelation and the Word of God**

Reading: Frisk, 15-31; Olson, 71-109; Gonzalez & Perez, 47-48; Anyabwile, 23-62, LaCugna, 31-51

Week 6: 10/1-10/5 – **Creation**

Reading: Frisk, 49-52; Olson, 155-174; Gonzalez & Perez, 55-63;

Week 7: 10/8-10/12 – **Humankind**

Reading: Frisk, 52-62; Olson, 199-222; Gonzalez & Perez, 64-69; Anyabwile, 100-135, LaCugna, 139-157

Reflection paper #2 due Monday, October 8, 11 p.m. PST

Week 8: 10/15-10/19 – **Sin, Death and the Devil**

Reading: Frisk, 63-74; Gonzalez & Perez, 69-74; Volf, 89-100

Week 9: 10/22-26 – **Intensive Class Session in Seattle, October 24-26**

Monday:

9 a.m. – noon – **Natural Theology**

1:30 – 5:30 p.m. – **Trinity, Atonement**

Tuesday:

9 a.m. – noon – **Problem of Evil,**

1:30 – 5:30 p.m. **Miracles**

Wednesday:

9 a.m. – noon – **Eschatology**

Week 10: 10/29-11/2 – **Jesus Christ**

Reading: Frisk, 75-88; Olson, 223-242; Gonzalez & Perez, 77-83; Anyabwile, 136-171; LaCugna 115-134

Week 11: 11/5-11/9 – **Atonement**

Reading: Frisk, 89-106; Olson, 243-263; Gonzalez & Perez, 83-90; Anyabwile, 172-213; Volf, 121-156

Reflection paper #3 due Monday, November 5, 11 p.m. PDT

Week 12: 11/12- 11/16- **Church**

Reading: Frisk, 123-133, 159-175; Olson, 287-305; Gonzalez & Perez, 97-118; LaCugna 161-178

Week 13: 11/19-11/22 – **Sacraments** (Because of Thanksgiving, discussion due Monday and responses by Wednesday)

Reading: Frisk, 134-40; Gonzalez & Perez, 119-137; LaCugna, 185-207

Week 14: 11/27-11/31 – **Philosophical Theology**

Reading: Assigned readings will be posted on Moodle

Week 15: 12/3-12/7 – **Last Things**

Reading: Frisk, 141-157; Olson, 307-357; Gonzalez & Perez, 139-158;

Reflection paper #4 due Monday, December 3, 11 p.m. PDT

Week 16: 12/10-12/14 – **Finals Week**

On-line essay exam due December 14, 11 p.m. PST.