

North Park Theological Seminary

Fall 2012

Liberation Theologies

Prof. Mary Veeneman, Ph.D.

Office: Caroline Hall, 3rd Floor

mveeneman@northpark.edu

Course Description

This course will cover the broad sweep of various political theologies in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It will specifically examine the body of documents comprising the Catholic Social Thought tradition, theologies coming from the Latin American and African American contexts and various feminist theologies from both the western and non-western worlds. It will seek to acquaint the student with major texts of liberation and feminist theologies and to expose the student to the critiques of classical theology that come from these contexts.

Required Readings

Required readings will be drawn from the books listed below, with additional readings available on Turnitin. Students need to bring the assigned readings to class each day. Failure to do so will negatively impact the participation grade.

Brady, *Essential Catholic Social Thought*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008.

Cone, James, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011.

Cone, James, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1986.

Gutierrez, Gustavo, *A Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988.

LaCugna, Catherine Mowry ed., *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective*, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993.

Pui-lan, Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.

Additional readings will be made available on Wordpress (see end of syllabus for access instructions).

Course Objectives for Students

1. To engage in the critical analysis of theological texts.
2. To reflect on the impact of social location in the theological task.
3. To become conversant with the cross-cultural dialogue among various political theologies.
4. To understand liberation and feminist theologies as distinctive approaches/methods, both as they seek to articulate classical formulations of Christian doctrine and as they seek to address contemporary questions.
5. To understand the ways in which feminist and liberation approaches have been used to consider questions of religious pluralism, ecology, and ethics.
6. To consider what political theologies demand of their readers.
7. To consider the ways in which these demands can be put into practice, particularly on the community level.

Grading

All grades will be calculated on a 100-point scale:

93	A Excellent. Demonstrates outstanding, honors-level work.
90	A- Excellent work.
87	B+ Very Good. Demonstrates a high level of performance.
83	B Good. Demonstrates above average level of performance.
80	B- Good. Still above average
77	C+ Demonstrates competence. Average level of performance.
73	C Satisfactory. Demonstrates acceptable level of performance.
70	C- Minimally acceptable performance.
60	D Passing but unsatisfactory. Below average performance.
59-0	F Failure. Demonstrates incompetence: inferior performance.

The following grading standards provide further guidance for your written work.

“A” work: (1) Responds fully to the assignment; (2) Expresses its purpose clearly and convincingly; (3) Is directed toward and meets the needs of a defined audience; (4) Begins and ends effectively; (5) Provides adequate supporting arguments, evidence, examples, and details; (6) Is well-organized and unified; (7) Uses appropriate, direct language; (8) Correctly acknowledges and documents sources; (9) Is free of errors in grammar, punctuation, word choice, spelling, and format; and (10) Maintains a level of excellence throughout and shows originality and creativity in realizing (1) through (7)

“B” work: Realizes (1) through (9) fully and completely—and demonstrates overall technical excellence—but often shows little or no original insight or creativity.

“C” work: Realizes (1) through (9) adequately—and demonstrates overall competence—but contains a few, relatively minor errors or flaws. A “C” paper may show great capacity and originality, but those qualities don’t make up for poor or careless writing. A “C” paper usually looks and reads like it would benefit from some additional drafts or research.

“D” work: Fails to realize some elements of (1) through (9) adequately—and contains many serious errors or flaws, and usually many minor ones, as well. A “D” paper often looks and reads like a first or second draft.

“F” work: Fails to realize several elements of (1) through (9) adequately—and contains many serious errors or flaws, and usually many minor ones, as well. An “F” paper looks and reads like a first draft written the day before the paper was due.

WARNINGS, THREATS & INFORMATION...

Course Grade

1. Discussion Leading (15%)
2. Midterm (25%)
3. Paper (25%)
4. Presentation (10%)
5. Final exam (25%)

Academic Honesty

North Park Theological Seminary’s policies on academic integrity regarding issues of plagiarism and cheating will be strictly enforced. All written assignments (other than papers) must be submitted electronically via email. All papers must be submitted digitally via Turnitin. Please note that any instance of

plagiarism of cheating is sufficient reason for a grade of “F” for the course. Plagiarism is most likely to occur when you do not understand the assignment, do not understand research methodology, or do not have an argument of your own. If that is the case – do NOT risk your academic career or your own ethos or credibility by plagiarizing or handing in less than honest work. Instead, come see me. Tell me what your difficulty is. I can help you. That is my job.

Disability Statement

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Center for Academic Services at 773-244-5737, advising@northpark.edu or stop by the office located on the 2nd floor of the Student Services Building. 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

Paper

One 12-14 page research paper will be required for the course. Your paper is to be double-spaced, using 12-point font, with regular 1-inch margins on the top, bottom and sides. Citations are to follow the Chicago Manual of Style. Students will give a 10-15 minute presentation to the class on their presentation. A thesis statement and bibliography will be due on the day of the presentation as a separate document via email. A textual analysis will also be due the same day and will be submitted via Turnitin.

Examinations

As preparation for the midterm and the final exam, students should review all reading assignments and lectures. The final exam is comprehensive, though its emphasis will be on the material studied after the midterm.

Communication

Students are strongly encouraged to be in communication with me regarding any questions or concerns about the course. Please do this early! It is much easier to address concerns about a grade early in the semester than it is to do so late in the semester. By late in the semester, much of the grade is already determined. For your own privacy, please do not make inquiries about your grade after class, but rather email me or come see me in the office.

Please make sure you consult this syllabus before sending an email. Please note that emails asking questions covered in the syllabus will not receive a response.

Elements of Your Participation Grade

Your participation grade is based on two key things:

- Active involvement in class discussion (both as one who speaks and one who listens)

Preparing to lead discussion

1-2 students will be assigned to open the discussion. Students assigned to lead discussion will write a one page single-spaced interaction with one of the readings for the assigned day. Students will first analyze the chosen reading following the guidelines titled, “How to Critically Read a Text” at the end of this syllabus. They will conclude by posing four questions for discussion. Your discussion should be closely tied to the text. The way to do this is to find two assertions or claims made by the author of your text and to analyze those claims and show how the author offers support for them (In other words, how does the author back up what he or she says?). Your analysis will not receive a grade higher than a D if the text does not form the basis for what you have written. Your opinion is important, but this should be expressed in the questions you ask, not in your textual analysis. You should post this material to Turnitin’s discussion forums at least 24 hours before class so that other students can review it before discussion.

Political Theologies Papers

This paper must articulate a debatable thesis about a topic related to the course.

Thesis examples:

1. Catholic Social Teaching's principle of subsidiarity means X for contemporary life.
2. Gutierrez's understanding of the role of the church in liberation is y.

Note that the thesis must be debatable and cannot be irrefutable facts.

Examples of statements that are not debatable theses:

1. World War II ended in 1945.
2. Pope John Paul II loved acting.

You will sign up in class for a presentation date and commit to an area for your first paper topic. If you choose to write on Catholic Social Teaching, it is suggested that you either write the first paper on one of the eight major principles of Catholic Social Teaching or that you write the first paper on a specific document from the corpus of CST.

If you choose to write on either feminist theology or liberation/black theology, it is suggested that you choose 2 figures (which can either both be feminist, both be liberation/black theology or be comprised of 1 feminist and 1 liberation/black theologian) and write on either the understanding of ethics/praxis of those thinkers or the way in which your thinkers address a particular Christian doctrine for the first paper.

If you would like to defend a thesis that falls outside of the suggestions in the above two paragraphs, come see me first to ensure that your thesis will work and will be something which can be defended in the space allotted.

Presentation and Textual Analysis

You will give a 10-minute presentation on your topic to the class. In the course of this presentation, you should give a short overview of your work, stating the general topic, the question or questions you are researching, your tentative thesis and your research methodology. Note that you do not have to have fully completed your paper by the date of your presentation, but you should have completed significant work on your paper and that should be apparent in your presentation. The sign-up sheet for topics and presentations will be posted on Wordpress, should you forget the date you chose.

Second Paper (8 pages)

The second paper will seek to discuss the ways in which the theological issue discussed in the first paper informs thought on a particular contemporary issue. The first four pages of this paper will describe a contemporary issue or problem (see examples below). To complete this part of the paper, you should undertake some research on your problem. For this section only, you may make use of the internet sources as long as they are reliable. Reliable sources include mainstream media organizations (i.e. *The New York Times*, CNN, the BBC), governmental agencies (i.e. the US State Department, the FBI), and non-profit and NGOs (World Vision, the Red Crescent). If a website that you want to use falls outside of these parameters, you must have it approved by me before you use it. If you fail to do this, you will lose two letter grades on this portion of the assignment. As always, if you use Wikipedia, you will fail this assignment.

*NB: Please also see the "Paper Guidelines" for information about due dates, number of sources and documentation of sources.

The Care and Feeding of a Research Paper

Bibliography

- The quality of a paper is most frequently determined by the sources used. As mentioned before, you should consult a variety of sources. Bible Dictionaries or Bible Encyclopedias are a good place to start to get an overview of a topic. Commentaries, specialized books, and journal articles can help you zero in on specific information with which to support your thesis.
- Remember that you cannot use popular sources. This includes publications like *Christianity Today* or *The Covenant Companion*.
- Again, you must use recent sources. Do not use anything that is more than 30 years old.

Use of Sources

- Footnotes are critical to research writing. You must cite quotations, but also ideas even if they are not quoted.
- When you use quotations, you can have two potential problems:
 - Using too many quotations—it is always better to state ideas in your own words (but still footnote the sources of those ideas).
 - Letting your quotations make your argument—this is the Tarzan approach that swings from one quotation to the next (like swinging from one vine to the next) without doing anything substantial in between. When you use quotations, you need to respond to them and say substantial things from your own thinking about them.
- Often, you only need to summarize a scholar's ideas, saving quotations for only rare occasions in your paper. Do not use a quotation without responding to it. You should be using the work of others in order to support the point *you* are trying to make.
- **Footnotes are required whenever a person's ideas or data are used, not just for quotations.**
- You will lose five points on this assignment if you use any form of citation other than footnotes. You could potentially fail this assignment if you do not properly document your sources as a failure to document your sources constitutes plagiarism/academic dishonesty.
- Make sure you give a page number with every citation. The reader of your paper should not have to browse an entire book to check your sources.

Claims in Your Paper

- The claims you make in your paper must be supported by your research. You should be arguing for a particular reading of the biblical passage you are examining, but you should not make any claims that are not supported by the research you have done.
- You can and should draw conclusions from the sum of your claims at the end of your paper, but your claims must be grounded in solid research.

Introducing Your Topic

- When you write the introduction to your paper, you want to get the attention of your reader; however, you should avoid writing an introduction that simply moves from a broad idea to a narrower one, as these introductions are usually not effective. Examples of these introductions start with statements like, "Since the beginning of time," "Many people say," or "Throughout history." Do not use these constructions for your introduction.

Some Ideas for Getting Started...

- Pick your topic and determine what passage of scripture is relevant.

- Get 2-3 commentaries and photocopy the relevant pages and bibliography for that passage.
- Go to the library's website and enter your scripture passage as a "Scripture Citation" in the ATLA religion database.
- Start making a bibliography from the commentaries, the references they cite, and other articles you find on ATLA.
- Look at Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopedias for important terms in your passage.
- Ask questions about your passage and look for answers in the sources you are using.
- Go to the library and talk with the reference librarians if you are having trouble. They can help you use the tools at your disposal in the library to find additional sources. Do not be afraid to ask them for help. They are paid to help you.

A Guide for Reading Articles or Books

- These are some ideas to help you as you read books, commentaries or articles for your paper, as well as reading assignments for the class.
- Summarize in a short paragraph the main point of what you have read without looking at it. If you can't do this, go back to the beginning and look for the thesis statement. In order to evaluate the article, you must have the main argument in mind.
- Where is the author coming from? Make a short list of what you can tell about the author from the content of the article. In order to evaluate the claims of a particular author, you need to know what that author's assumptions are.
- What evidence does the author use to support his or her main point? As you read, write down these points as you come to them.
- What do you think? Does the evidence given in the article support the thesis statement? In your opinion, are the arguments weak or strong? What conclusions can you make about the issue discussed in the article? What evidence do you have to support your own conclusions?

How to Critically Read a Text
(Based on Mortimer Adler's How to Read a Book)

Part I – Interpretive Reading

1. Summarize: Briefly state what the whole work is about. This statement should indicate how the argument moves from beginning to middle to an end. Label each part. (This is a statement of the work's unity; it reveals the thread that runs through the whole and relates all parts to each other.)
2. Define the problem(s) the author is trying to solve. (Each problem represents a question and should therefore be written in question form.) For each question you list, you should present at least one argument that answers it.
3. Basic Words: Come to terms with the author by interpreting his/her basic words. (Basic words are words that are crucial to the argument). Define words that have special significance for the author and for the argument in the way the author defines them.
4. Leading Propositions: Grasp the author's leading propositions (views which he/she puts forward) through dealing with the most important sentences. Translate them into your own words to show you have grasped the propositions.
5. Conclusions: Find the conclusion in which the propositions lead. (The propositions plus their conclusions equals an argument).

State #4 and #5 in a sentence outline:

Proposition One: X is true.

Propositions Two: Y is true.

Proposition Three: Z is true.

Therefore, because of Propositions X, Y and Z, _____ must be true.

When you have enumerated all the propositions and their conclusions, you must present a summary of the whole in which you repeat the conclusion of the entire work toward which these conclusions point. In other words each conclusion of the work's argument has become a proposition of the central argument of the work. You will write that like:

Conclusion 1=X

Conclusion 2=Y

Conclusion 3=Z

Therefore, the overall conclusion of the work = XYZ

6. Analyze: Determine which of the problems the author solved and which she/he did not; and of the latter, decide which the author knew she/he failed to solve.

Part II – Critical Reading

1. General Maxims

- a. Do not begin criticism until you have completed analysis and interpretation. (Do not say you agree or disagree until you can say that you understand)
- b. Do not disagree disputatiously or contentiously.
- c. Respect the difference between knowledge and opinion by having reasons for any critical judgment you make.

2. Specific Criteria for Points of Criticism

- a. Show where the author is informed or uninformed.
- b. Show where the author is correct or misinformed.
- c. Show where the author is logical or illogical.

d. Show where the author's analysis or account is complete or incomplete.

Turnitin Course Registration

You will submit assignments and participate in discussion forums at Turnitin.com

1. Go to www.turnitin.com
2. Look at the top right hand corner of the page and click “create account.”
3. Turnitin will ask for a class id and enrollment password.
 - a. Class id: 4328710
 - b. Enrollment password: NPD3000
4. For course content (readings, assignment sheets, etc.) visit mveeneman.wordpress.com and click on the link for our course on the upper right-hand corner of the page. The password for the page is NPUBTS.