

Preliminary Syllabus

THEO 6332: Thought of Wendell Berry

North Park Theological Seminary
Elective for MATS, MACF, MACM / Interdisciplinary Elective for MDiv
January 11-15, 2010
8 a.m.-12; 1-4:30 p.m.

I. Instructor Information:

Jay Phelan, Professor of Biblical Literature
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D. Brent Laytham, Professor of Theology and Ethics
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II. Course Description:

An exploration of Berry's wisdom through representative reading in his fiction, poetry and essays. The course engages key Berrian themes and explores the compatibility and contribution of Berry's vision to contemporary Christian life and thought. Three hours credit.

III. Textbooks:

Wendell Berry, *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry*, ed. Norman Wirzba (Counterpoint, 2003). Read all.

Wendell Berry, *Citizenship Papers* (Counterpoint, 2005). Omit pp. 63-76, 113-26 (these 2 essays are in the text above). Read all the rest.

Wendell Berry, *That Distant Land: The Collected Stories* (Counterpoint, 2004). Try to read all, but omit pp. 124-44, 164-95, 210-49 if you must.

Wendell Berry, *A Timbered Choir: The Sabbath Poems 1979-97* (Counterpoint, 1998). Read all.

Shuman, Joel and Roger Owens, eds., *Wendell Berry and Religion* (University of Kentucky Press, 2009). Read all. ISBN 978-0-8131-2555-8

IV. Requirements:

Course requirements are threefold: before, during and after the week of class.

Before Class

1. Read all assigned pages from textbooks listed above. (If it becomes clear that you cannot do this, be sure to contact one of the instructors immediately.)
2. Submit an initial response to your encounter with Berry (2 typewritten pages, double-spaced). This response will indicate your impression of Berry, identify key issues and themes you find in his work, pose questions that you hope to investigate or answer during the class. Due via email to both instructors no later than January 8. This assignment is pass/fail.

During Class

1. Attend and participate in class. **10%**

2. Read less than 100 pages of additional material as assigned on Blackboard or distributed during the course. (Some of this will be posted on Blackboard so that it can be read before the course if students wish. It will be used as a basis for class discussion.)
3. Each student will be asked to lead discussion of one topic by explaining the issues and questions involved and suggesting a direction for our conversation. This is not a presentation, but a 'closer reading' of one essay. (A list of topics will be posted on Blackboard in mid-November) **10%**

After Class

1. In consultation with the instructors, students will read an additional book by or about Wendell Berry. In most cases, this will be a collection of essays or a novel. This additional reading, along with assigned course reading and class discussions, will be the source of the two course papers, due dates to be announced.
2. Write a 10 page paper pursuing a key theme in Berry's writing. **45%**
3. Write a 5 page reflection on a) the significance of Berry for your vocation/ministry goal, or b) the contribution Berry can make to the church. **35%**

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.