

Theo 7350: Doctrinal Topic
Christology
Online Spring 2012
3 Credits

***NOTE: This is not the final syllabus, the final one will be posted mid-December.**

North Park Theological Seminary
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Office Hours (N-6): Tues. and Thurs. mornings or by appointment

Catalogue Description: An in depth study of a selected doctrine or theological theme in its historical and systematic context. This course may be repeated with different doctrines.

Additional Description:

Doctrines represent what we believe, teach and confess on the basis of scripture and the Christian tradition. They are central to the life of the Christian body. As such, doctrines are more than what we affirm; they also guide our work in the world.

Beginning with an historic and biblical overview, we will examine a variety of doctrinal themes within Christology, including incarnation, atonement, suffering and resurrection. While these are large topics, we will narrow our study of these topics to work of theologians on the margins especially as contemporary Christologies add to our history rich insights into the person and work of Jesus Christ. We will focus on Jesus' question "Who do you say that I am?" through the theologies of women and scholars of color. Much of this includes envisioning who Christ is and how Christ is present as good news to communities who deal with the realities of oppression in bodily ways. Texts written amidst such realities—including war, threats, conflict and persecution—have much to offer to a faith in a God who *came to us in the flesh*.

Course Objectives:

The primary objective of this course is to deepen the student's understanding of the doctrine of Christ through the interrelated themes of incarnation, suffering, cross, and liberation, with an eye toward connecting these doctrines to more traditional ones such as the atonement and resurrection. The course seeks to do this in the context of the gospel witness and the Christian tradition, as exists in the texts and liturgical life of the church. Students will become familiar with the historical development of Christology and learn to reflect critically and theologically on how the doctrine of Christ has been/is expressed particularly in terms of diverse, global Christologies.

Students will develop and show proficiency in:

- Historical and biblical Christological development, including contemporary responses to historical claims

- Close readings of difficult texts
- Theological reflection on doctrines interconnected within Christology, namely incarnation and suffering, cross and liberation
- Theological analysis of Christology through the perspectives of feminist, womanist and liberation theologians and how these Christologies relate to historical doctrines
- Understanding how this doctrine affects Christian faith, life, the church and one's vocation

Required Texts:

1. Bible, NRSV

2. Jacquelyn Grant. *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus*. (Oxford University Press: 1989, 1555403034).

3. Luke Timothy Johnson. *Living Jesus: Learning the Heart of the Gospel*. (Harper San Francisco: 1999, 0060642831).

4. Deanna Thompson. *Crossing the Divide: Luther, Feminism and the Cross*. (Fortress: 2004, 0800636384).

5. Jon Sobrino. *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*. (Orbis: 1993, 0883449307).

6. R. Schreiter, ed., *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (Orbis: 1991, 0883447681)

7. Michael Amaladoss, S.J., *The Asian Jesus* (Orbis: 2006, 978157075661).

Recommended Text:

Gerald O'Collins. *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ*. (Oxford: 1995, 0198755023)

Course Requirements

1. Weekly Discussions.

This includes involvement in on-line discussions and completion of on-line tasks, including reading the weekly lecture. Discussions will take place in small groups or large groups and will be asynchronous (class members do not need to be on-line at the same time). ***Note:** The days I will be active in the course are Fridays. Please allow 24 hrs for me to respond to your emails if they are sent Monday-Friday morning. I am not available to response to emails on weekends.

A. Reading weekly outline or background information: This information will be posted in "Assignments." Each week will have a separate file dated for that week. I will try to keep them short, as you have enough reading, and use them mainly to introduce difficult material or to clarify issues or problems that came up in the previous week's discussion groups. Some weeks will be presentation by class members.

B. Discussion Forums: In these groups, you will discuss and respond to the weekly discussion questions that I post for that week as a forum under your group discussion board, numbered according to the week.

Due: Wednesdays and Fridays of specified weeks.

2. Class Presentations (2)

a. historical issue

Prepare a presentation for the class on an issue/event of historical significance, such as a church council (e.g., Nicaea) or theological controversy (e.g., the two natures of Christ). The purpose of this assignment is for you to engage in an historical issue within Christology, to understand the critical issues, players and questions involved, and to become familiar with the history of the doctrine of Christ. In your presentation, focus on the Christological issues involved (as there is not time to go into all the historical details). The five topic areas include: Arius/Apollinarius, Nicaea I, Constantinople I, Ephesus and Chalcedon. In your presentation, you should present a brief historical background, the critical questions and thinkers involved, and the content of the resolution. be aware of the other topics so as not to cross-over too much. For example, if you have Nicaea, you can assume that the person with Arius/Apollinarius will sufficiently explain Arianism.

Length should not exceed 1200 words. Feel free to use outlines, PowerPoint, or video presentation (for the technologically advanced) as you are comfortable, as long as the information is presented in a clear, accessible manner and you have covered the essential information. As a seminar course, this assignment invites a collaborative way of teaching and participation. The class will respond to presentations in small groups.

b. book presentation

Critical Review: Critically review a book for class. Your review should include a brief summary (2-3 paragraphs – NO MORE) of the book, an analysis of the author's arguments, critical reflection on the author's conclusions and how the book responds to the major discussion issues/themes in the course. The purpose of this assignment is to become familiar with a text of your interest outside the required reading list and to offer your review to others. In the end, we will have a nice set of book reviews by one another that can serve as resources for the class as a whole. There is a list of possible texts on the last page of the syllabus. You may also negotiate other texts. ALL books must be approved by me. The review should be around 800-950 words. You will be graded on the accuracy of your summary (including your brevity), your critical analysis of the book itself, and the depth with which you relate the book to the course content. Reviews will be available for the whole class.

3. Final Project:

Come up with a focused question within the doctrine of Christ (question to be approved by me – we will also brainstorm with you as a group). The question could be in any area of the incarnation, suffering, atonement, Jesus' ministry, resurrection, divine/human nature, etc. In an 8-10 page paper, you will formulate an answer to your question that is

theologically sound and historically/biblically engaged. Provide a brief explanation at some point in your essay as to its relevance and importance for the church. This is not a research paper; however, you should engage at least 5 sources outside those in our course (I highly recommend using your book review as one). Further, one source must be written by a female and one by a theologian of color. The purpose of the assignment is for you to come up with a good question that addresses something in more depth than this course has addressed. It is also for you to learn to make a solid argument and analysis of a particular issue, and answering a good question is one way to do this. In this way, it is an exercise in clear, focused thinking and writing. It is also an opportunity for you to explore something about which you might be particularly passionate.

Grading

Grading breakdown is as follows:

Class Participation: 25%

Presentations: 35% (15/20 respectively)

Final Project: 40%