TH A-100.27
Theological Foundations

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the dynamics of theological reflection in an academic setting. Working largely within the Judeo-Christian tradition, students will critically engage a variety of classic texts and themes from the Bible and subsequent church history—not only within their own cultural-historical settings, but as they continue to find important and diverse appropriations in our own time. Some of the most important issues to be explored in this course include: the nature and function of religious symbols and narratives; historical-critical interpretations of ancient religious texts; the identity of Jesus of Nazareth and his significance today; the historical evolution of the church; dimensions of spiritual experience; the problem of evil and suffering; economic and social justice; and the challenge of pluralism.

As an introductory course within a diverse university setting, this offering neither presupposes prior religious instruction nor a particular faith-commitment. Although the questions and conversation generated by this course will allow students to explore their own world-views, these need not be Catholic, Christian or even specifically religious to find a welcome voice in, and provide exceptional value to this course.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class Participation: Each student is expected to attend class regularly and punctually. Three unexcused absences are permitted. More than three absences and/or excessive tardiness will result in the lowering of a student’s grade—one letter grade for every absence beyond those allotted. While many class sessions will include lecture, the time devoted to classroom discussion is key for the overall success of the course.

Short Written Reflections: To help stimulate classroom discussion, as well as aid the students’ synthesis of the readings and lectures, short one-page written reflections will be assigned periodically. One-page reflections will be announced in class one session prior to their due dates. Students who miss class on days of the announcement are still responsible for the originally scheduled dates of submission.

Short Quizzes: Occasional quizzes will be administered to encourage students to keep on top of important ideas and terms. Quizzes will be announced in class one session prior to their administration.

Examinations: There will be a mid-term exam and a cumulative final.

Movie Review: In the first half of the semester, students will view one of two films (The Mission or Romero) and write a 4-5 page review of the film, integrating the movie’s theme(s) with class material. Further specifications will be distributed later in the semester.

Service-Learning Project: For their final project, students will undertake a service-learning project. This will involve 8 hours of social justice service in the local community and a 4-5 page reflection paper in which each student will integrate their service experience with one of the themes/texts of the course. Further specifications for this project will be distributed later in the semester.
REQUIRED TEXTS


Course Packet to be distributed in class.

GRADING

Class participation ..............................................10%
Short written reflections ......................................10%
Quizzes ...................................................................10%
Examinations
   Midterm .......................................................15%
   Final ........................................................20%
Movie Review ....................................................15%
Service-Learning Project .................................20%

GRADING SCALE

A 100-90
B+ 89-87
B 86-80
C+ 79-77
C 76-70
D 69-60
F 59-0

STATEMENT OF ACADEMIC HONESTY

The following is a statement of the university regarding academic honesty:

“Students are expected to be honest in their academic work. The University reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic conduct at any time is, in its judgment, detrimental to the University. Such conduct shall include cases of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or receiving or offering or soliciting information in examinations, or the use of previously prepared material in examinations or quizzes. Violations should be reported to your course instructor, who will investigate and adjudicate them according to the Policy on Academic Honesty of the College of Arts and Sciences. If the charges are found to be true, the student may be liable for academic or disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion by the University.”

[For further information on the university’s policy, see “Policy on Academic Honesty,”
http://www.slu.edu/colleges/AS/academichonesty/html.]
ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION

M  Aug. 25  Introduction to the Course

~~~  Aug. 27  No Class – Mass of the Holy Spirit

FAITH, TRADITION THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

F  Aug. 29  Questions of Faith
  •  James W. Fowler, “Human Faith”; and “Faith, Religion, and Belief” [Course Packet]

~~~  Sept. 1  No Class – Labor Day Holiday

W  Sept. 3  Thinking Theologically
  •  Richard P. McBrien, “Faith and Its Outcomes” [CP]

F  Sept. 5  Revelation and Story: Reading the Bible
  •  McBrien, “Faith and Its Outcomes” [CP]
  •  Dei Verbum, Vatican Council II [CP]

THE HEBREW BIBLE:
  SALVATION IN THE MAKING

M  Sept. 8  Creation and Fall I: Exploring the Narratives
  •  Genesis 1:1-3:24

W  Sept. 10  Creation and Fall II: Roundtable Discussion
  •  Carefully re-read Genesis 1:1-3:24
  •  Bill Moyers, et. Al., “In God’s Image,” and “Temptation” [CP]

F  Sept. 12  Exodus and Covenant I: Exploring the Narratives

M  Sept. 15  Exodus and Covenant II: Salvation in Human History
  •  Guest Presentation: Service Learning Projects
  •  “Go Down, Moses” [CP]
  •  Gustavo Gueiruez, “History is One” and “God Liberates: God is Life” [CP]

W  Sept. 17  The Prophets I: Amos
  •  Amos 1:1-9:15

F  Sept. 19  The Prophets II: Isaiah

M  Sept. 22  A Modern Day Prophet: Martin Luther King, Jr.
  •  Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” [CP, 83-100]
# THE NEW TESTAMENT:  
**SALVATION AND CHRISTOLOGY**

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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Sept. 24</td>
<td>The World and Literature of the New Testament</td>
<td>(No reading)</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Sept. 26</td>
<td>Introducing Christology</td>
<td>Elizabeth Johnson, <em>Consider Jesus</em>, pp. 1-18</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Sept. 29</td>
<td>The Humanity of Jesus</td>
<td>Philippians 2:5-11; Johnson, pp. 19-34</td>
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**Viewing of Movie (Monday or Tuesday Evening)**

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**Movie Review Due Today (Monday, Oct. 6)**

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<th>Day</th>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Oct. 8</td>
<td>Paul: Apostle, Theologian</td>
<td>Romans 1:1-8:39</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Oct. 10</td>
<td>Classical Christology: Towards Nicca</td>
<td>Selections from <em>Documents of the Christian Church</em> [CP]; Johnson, pp. 67-81</td>
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**Mid-Term Examination**

### CONVERSION AND THE EMERGING CHURCH

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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Oct. 17</td>
<td>The Church in Antiquity: From Persecution to Christendom</td>
<td>(No reading)</td>
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*** Fall Break (October 19-21)***

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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Oct. 24</td>
<td><em>The Confessions</em></td>
<td>Books 3-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Oct. 27</td>
<td><em>The Confessions</em></td>
<td>Books 5-6</td>
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<td>Oct. 29</td>
<td><em>The Confessions</em></td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Oct. 31</td>
<td><em>The Confessions</em></td>
<td>Books 7-8</td>
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<td><strong>ENCOUNTERING GOD:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>SACRAMENTALITY AND PRAYER</strong></td>
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| M   | Nov. 3     | Sacramentality                         | McBrien, “What is Catholicism?” [CP]  
|     |            |                                        | Andre Dubus, “Epilogue: Sacraments” [CP]  
| W   | Nov. 5     | Dimensions of Prayer I                  | Margaret R. Miles, “An Appetite for Prayer: Meditation and Contemplation” [CP]  
| F   | Nov. 7     | Dimensions of Prayer II                 | Thomas Merton, from “The Inner Experience” [CP]  
|     |            |                                        |                      |
|     |            | **CHRISTIANITY IN THE MODERN WORLD**    |                      |
| M   | Nov. 10    | The Church in the Modern World          | *Gaudium et Spes* (“Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” Vatican Council II) [CP]  
| W   | Nov. 12    | Liberation Theology and Economic Justice for the Poor | Johnson, *Consider Jesus*, pp. 83-95  
| F   | Nov. 14    | The Contribution of Feminism            | Johnson, *Consider Jesus*, pp. 97-113  
| M   | Nov. 17    | Christianity and the World Religions    | Nostra Aetate (“Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,” Vatican Council II) [CP]  
| W   | Nov. 19    | Our Ecological Crisis, Our Response    | U.S. Bishops, “Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on the Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching” [CP]  
| F   | Nov. 21    | Facing the Holocaust I                  | Elie Wiesel, *Night*, pp. 1-32  
|     | Nov. 24    | No Class                               | Continue to read *Night*, pp. 32-66  
| *** | Thanksgiving Break | *** | ***  
| M   | Dec. 1     | Facing the Holocaust II                | *Night*, pp. 67-109  
| W   | Dec. 3     | God and the Cross                      |                      |
• Jon Sobrino, “The Death of Jesus: The Crucified God,” from Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View [CP]
• Skim: Johnson, “God and the Cross,” pp. 115-28

F Dec. 5 A Theology of Hope
• Karl Rahner, “Easter: A Faith that Loves the Earth,” from The Great Church Year: The Best of Karl Rahner’s Homilies, Sermons and Meditations [CP]

M Dec. 8 Discussion and Review Day

**Service-Learning Projects Due In Class (Dec. 8)**

**Monday, Dec. 15** FINAL EXAM (12:00 – 1:50 PM)