

Seminar III      Theological Reflection in the Context of Ministry

January 2013

Shannon Craig-Snell ([scraig-snell@lpts.edu](mailto:scraig-snell@lpts.edu))

Ann Laird Jones ([annlairdj@bellsouth.net](mailto:annlairdj@bellsouth.net))

**Course Objective:** The primary goal of this course is to help students learn to articulate their own theological beliefs and to engage them self-critically in relation to church tradition and current social realities.

**Course Description:** To facilitate this, we will explore three theological conversations happening in America today, focused on the topics of empire, polydomy, and race. Contemporary constructive theologians will provide both models and challenges to our own theological work.

**Requirements:**

1. Read texts closely.
2. Actively participate in all class discussions and activities. This will require bringing something to share to class each day. Read the syllabus in advance and be prepared.
3. In collaboration with a small group, present three readings to the class, offering both a clear summary of the text and thoughtful questions for discussion. Assignments of groups and readings to follow.
4. Write one six-page paper analyzing a reading for the course and interpreting it in light of your ministerial context. **Due November 12, 2012.** More detailed instructions to follow.
5. Write one ten-page paper offering a self-critical articulation of your own constructive theological proposal. **Due December 17, 2012.** More detailed instructions to follow.
6. In addition, there are participatory exercises every day in class that require forethought. Read the syllabus and prepare ahead of time.

**Required Readings:**

1. Pui-lan, Kwok, Don Compier, and Joerg Rieger, eds. *Empire and the Christian Tradition: New Readings of Classical Theologians*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007. 1-45, 123-138, 153-200, 215-270, 337-352, 439-486.

In these readings, pay close attention to both the sources used (the historical author engaged) and the creative perspective of the constructive theologian (the author of the chapter). Feel free to read other chapters, as well!

2. Keller, Catherine and Laurel Schneider, eds. *Polydoxy: Theology of Multiplicity and Relationality*. New York: Routledge, 2011. 1-35, 81-125, 167-257.
3. Jennings, Willie. *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. 1-116, 207-294.

In addition, this text might be a useful reference. It provides some historical background to doctrines and notes how they are being used in contemporary theology.

Jones, Serene and Paul Lakeland, eds. *Constructive Theology: A Contemporary Approach to Classic Themes*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005.

Schedule:

January 7

9:00 Gathering Worship

9:15 Introductions

10:00 Letty Russell's Spiral Methodology for Constructive Theology

Break

10:30 Thinking Systematically: Doctrines and Sources

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Evidence of Empire. For this exercise, please bring to class something (object, image, etc.) that points to the existence of empire in our current society. Be prepared to explain your thinking. Try to be original!

1:45 Presentation 1: Pui-Lan 1-45, 123-138; Group A

3:00 Break

3:20 Presentation 2: Pui-Lan 153-200; Group B

January 8

9:00 Gathering Worship

9:15 Presentation 3: Pui-Lan 215-270; Group C

10:30 Break

11:00 Thinking Self-Critically: The Monster under the Bed

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Empire in Our Ministry. For this exercise, please bring to class an example of how our participation in empire affects the shape or content of your ministry. Be prepared to explain your thinking. Try to be original!

1:45 Presentation 4: Pui-Lan 337-352, 439-486; Group D

3:00 Break

3:20 Presentation 5: Keller and Schneider 1-35: Group A

January 9

9:00 Gathering Worship

9:15 Presentation 6: Keller and Schneider 81-125; Group B

10:30 Break

10:45 Research Skills and Sources with Angela Morris in the Library

12:15 Lunch

1:00 Polydoxy in Ministry. For this exercise, please bring to class a story of how a specific instance of multiplicity, open-endedness, and relationship played either a positive or a negative role in your ministry.

1:45 Presentation 7: Keller and Schneider 167-216; Group C

3:00 Break

3:20 Presentation 8: Keller and Schneider 217-257; Group D

January 10

9:00 Gathering Worship

9:15 Presentation 9: Jennings 1-64; Group A

10:30 Break

11:00 Thinking Responsibly: First Do No Harm

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Race and Place. For this exercise, please bring to class a map that addresses Jennings' discussion of the historical and ongoing connections between race and geography. Be creative and come prepared to explain your map to the class.

- 1:45 Presentation 10: Jennings 65-116; Group B
- 3:00 Break
- 3:20 Presentation 11: Jennings 207-249; Group C

#### January 11

- 9:00 Gathering Worship
- 9:15 Presentation 12: Jennings 250-294; Group D
- 10:30 Break
- 11:00 Thinking Hopefully: Hurrying and Tarrying
- 12:00 Lunch
- 1:45 Students present their second papers, as well as how they would revise them in light of the class
- 3:00 Break
- 3:20 Students' presentation of second papers continue.
- 4:00 Concluding reflections and prayer.