

Transforming Seminary Education

A First Seminary Course

SM101-3

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

August, 2010

Description:

This interdisciplinary course provides a foundation for your seminary education. We believe theological study is a discipline of mind, body, and spirit. Honoring the diversity of students' experiences and traditions, the goal of the course is to deepen understandings of Christian vocation by placing them in the context of worship, community solidarity, and social action. Students will be engaged with congregational life, community formation, critical reading and reflection, and a variety of writing projects. Students should expect an intensive experience.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. An ability to demonstrate skills in critical theological reflection
2. An ability to name and discuss three or more ways in which being a diverse Seminary community shapes their experience of theological education
3. An ability to articulate in a beginning way what "participating in the redemptive ministry of Jesus Christ in the world" means for a global and ecumenical church in a world of religious difference, human suffering, ecological distress, and social oppression
4. A developing sense of vocation and of one's self as someone called to ministry and the disciplined life that it requires

Means of Evaluation

This course will be graded pass/fail. In order to receive a passing grade, students must participate fully in all activities of the course.

Attendance and participation:

- Prepared, thoughtful, and engaged attendance at all sessions of the course is expected.
- Students are expected to have completed reading and writing assignments prior to the classes for which they are intended.
- Class discussion is expected to reflect mutual respect for the experiences and views of one another, a willingness and ability to listen to one another and a willingness to express one's own thoughtfully and critically reflective perspectives.
- Participation in worship leadership

- If serious illness, a family emergency, or (in unusual circumstances, which must be discussed in advance) a prior commitment requires your absence, be in touch with one of the instructors as soon as possible—preferably before the class you will miss.
- More than one unexcused absence will result in a conference with the instructors and may result in a failing grade.

Class meetings:

Saturday **August 21**, 8:45 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and Saturday, **August 28**, 8:45-12:30 [visit to Synagogue]

Monday through Friday, **August 23-27**, 30-September 1, 8:45 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Note that Morning Prayer begins at 8:45 so that class can begin promptly at 9!

With its hopes for transformation, this course invites creative flexibility. The syllabus, then, is a plan but not a contract: while we will try to adhere to the schedule as we have described it, there may be changes along the way in response to the unique experience of this group. Students are responsible for learning about modifications in the class schedule, specifications of reading and writing assignments, etc., as they are given in class. An attitude of open collegiality will go far in helping this course provide a valuable—a “transforming”—experience for all participants.

Writing:

During the course you will be asked to keep a Portfolio of brief (1-2 page) papers responding to questions related to the daily readings you will be doing. These papers are intended to help you engage your reading and to provide substance for class room discussions, called “Table Talk.” The instructors will not collect these portfolios for review until the end of the course, at which point students may be asked that samples of the writings be turned in. More about the portfolios will be said in class. Your Portfolio will not be graded but completing the writing is required for a passing grade.

Books for purchase:

Boys, Mary. *Has God Only One Blessing: Judaism as a Source of Christian Self-Understanding*. New York: Paulist Press, 2000.

Patel, Eboo. *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2007.

Taylor, Barbara Brown. *An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith*. San Francisco: Harper, 2010.

hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Sacks, Jonathan. *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations*. London: Continuum, 2003.

On Reserve:

- Adeney, Frances and Arvind Sharma, eds. *Christianity and Human Rights: Influences and Issues*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007.
- An, Choi Hee and Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, eds. *Engaging the Bible: Critical Readings from Contemporary Women*. Fortress Press, 2006.
- Ashbrook, James. *Minding the Soul: Pastoral Counseling as Remembering*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.
- Bass, Dorothy C. and Craig Dykstra, eds. *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008.
- Ellison, Marvin and Judith Plaskow, eds. *Heterosexism in Contemporary World Religion: Problem and Prospect*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2007.
- Esposito, John L. *Islam: the Straight Path*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Gagne, Patricia and Richard Tewksbury, eds. *The Dynamics of Inequality: Gender, Class, and Sexuality in the United States*. New York: Prentice Hall, 2003.
- hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Solle, Dorothee. *Theology for Skeptics: Reflections on God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.
- .Van Wijk-Bos, Johanna. *Reimagining God: the Case for Scriptural Diversity*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995.
- Van Wolde, Ellen. *Stories of the Beginings: Genesis 1-11 and Other Creation Stories*. Ridgefield: Morehouse Publishing, 1996.
- West, Traci. *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006.
- Wren, Brian. *What Language Shall I Borrow?: God Talk in Worship: a Male Response to Feminist Theology*. New York: Crossroads, 1989

Most daily readings are available on the class CAMS site and may be downloaded from there. These are marked in the syllabus with a C. Hardcopies of their source books are also on Reserve in E.M. White Library. Those daily readings not on CAMS but available on Reserve in the library are marked R in the syllabus.

Tentative Schedule of Class Activities and Assignments

Please Note:

Readings and Portfolio entries are to be completed before the class for which they are assigned.

Friday, August 20th

7 pm, reception at David Hester's house, 2407 Stannye Road, (502) 409-9092

Living and Learning at LPTS: Shared Values and Expectations**Saturday, August 21st**

Topic: *The value of graduate theological education and an open classroom*
The value of living in a world of diversity and difference

Morning Prayer (Johanna and David)

Introductions and review of the syllabus

Graduate theological education and expectations; guidelines for class discussions

An introduction to “Doors to Dialogue” project

Reading: “Critical Thinking,” 3-26
 “Critical Reading,” 27-58
 “Critical Writing,” 133-187 in
 Barnet, Sylvan and Bedau, Hugo. *Current Issues and Enduring Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking and Argument, with Readings*. 6th ed. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002.
 hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress*, chs. 3, 6, 11

Note: Please read Barbara Brown Taylor's *An Altar in the World* during the time of the course, perhaps using it as a companion for daily meditation or reflection. We will talk about some of what you find there during class, August 25 and/or 26.

Sunday, August 22nd

Reading: Get a jump on your reading for next week

Monday, August 23rd

Topic: *The Power of Language: the value of inclusive language at LPTS*

Morning Prayer (team)

Discussion of readings and portfolio reflections

Reading:

Wren, Brian. *What Language Shall I Borrow?* Part II, pp. 63-110. C

Van Wijk-Bos, Johanna. *Reimagining God: The Case for Scriptural Diversity*, pp. ix-10 C

Soelle, Dorothee. *Theology for Skeptics: Reflections on God*, pp. 7-50. C

Tuesday, August 24th

Topic: *The Value of reading Scripture critically: different perspectives and different meanings*

Morning Prayer (team)

Discussion of readings and portfolio reflections

Reading:

Heyward, Carter. "A Path Wide Open: Toward a (Critical) Relationship with the Christian Bible," in *Engaging The Bible: Critical Readings from Contemporary Women*, pp. 105-25.. **C**

Irizarry—Fernandez, Aida."See—Judge—Act: A Different Approach to Bible Study" in *Engaging the Bible*, pp. 47-80. **C**

Van Wolde, Ellen. *Stories of the Beginning: Genesis 1-11 and Other Creation Stories*, pp. 34-73. **R**

Developing a Life in the Spirit: Vocation and Identity

Wednesday, August 25

Topic: *What are we doing in ministry?*

Morning Prayer (team)

Discussion of Reading

Video: "Weapons of the Spirit" insights into practicing life in the Spirit

Reading:

Bass, Dorothy C. "Ways of Life Abundant," in *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry*, pp. 21-40. **C**

Thursday, August 26th

Topic: *Different pastoral ministries*

Morning Prayer

Discussion of Readings

Reading:

Dykstra, Craig. "Pastoral and Ecclesial Imagination" in *For Life Abundant*, pp. 41-61 **C**

Ashbrook, James. *Minding the Soul: Pastoral Counseling as Remembering*, pp. 151-97. **C**

Redemptive Ministry in the World

Friday August 27th

Topic: *ministry in a multifaith world*

Morning Prayer (team)

Discussion of Readings

Readings:

Sacks, Jonathan. *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations*, pp. 45-66 **C**

Esposito, John L. *Islam: The Straight Path*, pp. 68-114; 253-271. **R**
 Boys, Mary. *Has God Only One Blessing*,” pp. 5-35. **C**

Note: If it can be arranged, we will visit a mosque, time to be arranged but it may be in the evening

Saturday, August 28

Discussion of reading for first part of the morning
 Visit to Temple Adath Israel (times to be confirmed)

Reading:

Boys, Mary C. “*Has God Only One Blessing?*” pp. 37-85.

Monday, August 30th

Topic: *Privilege: a common thread in multiple oppressions*
 Morning Prayer (Team)
 Discussion of readings

Reading:

Gagne, Patricia and Richard Tewksbury, eds. *The Dynamics of Inequality: Gender, Class, Race, and Sexuality in the United States*, pp. 89-142 **R**
 Ray, Stephen. “The End of Man: Human Rights, Christian Theology, and the Rights of Human Persons,” in *Christianity and Human Rights: Influences and Issues*, pp. 117-38. **R**

Tuesday, August 31st

Topic: *Racism and white privilege*
 Morning Prayer (team)
 Discussion of Readings
 Film: “Blood Done Sign My Name”

Reading:

West, Traci. *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women’s Lives Matter*, pp. 112-140 **C**

Wednesday, September 1

Topic: “Same-sex marriage is not the issue”
 Discussion of readings and portfolio reflections
 Final thoughts
 Course evaluation
 Closing worship

Reading:

Ellison, Marvin. “Beyond Same-Sex Marriage: Continuing the Reformation of Protestant Christianity,” in *Heterosexism in Contemporary World Religion*, pp. 37-68. (**R**)

Douglas, Kelly Brown. "Heterosexism and the Black American Church Community: A Complicated Reality" in *Heterosexism in Contemporary World Religion*, pp. 177-200. (R)

Other Expectations

Mutual Respect

During class, each person is required to respect her/his classmates and the instructor by arriving to class on time, listening attentively to the thoughts and opinions of others, providing constructive feedback to sermons of others, and turning off cell phones before class begins.

Written Assignments

1. All written assignments should be doubled-spaced.
2. Margins should all be 1-inch (left, right, top, bottom).
3. All ideas and thoughts that are not original should be footnoted. Each footnote should begin a new line, indented the same as amount at paragraphs.
4. Font should be Times New Roman, 12 point.
5. Spell check all assignments before submitting.

1. Attendance Policy: According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Two or more absences from class could result in a failing grade.

2. Use of Inclusive Language In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. For further assistance, see http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp.

3. Academic Honesty:

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes **plagiarism**, and may result in failure of the course. Multiple occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues relating to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support

Center. For the Seminary policy, see The Code of Student Conduct, 6.11; the Student Handbook, p. 19.

4. Special Accommodations: Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (kmapes@lpts.edu) during the first two weeks of a semester and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

5. Citation Policy:

Citations in your papers should follow the Seminary standard, which is based on these guides:

Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*,
7th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press,
2003.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.