

Transforming Seminary Education

A First Seminary Course

SM101-3

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

August, 2011

Instructors: Carol J. Cook and Susan R. Garrett

Description:

This course will provide a foundation for your seminary education and provide an intensive introduction to the richness of the theologically reflective life. Students will engage in critical reading and reflection and a variety of short writing projects. You will be introduced to three theological topics that are at the center of current controversies about what it means to be a faithful Christian: creation, Christology, and homosexuality. Each topic will be approached from different disciplinary perspectives, including critical biblical study, systematic theology, and pastoral theology. The *multidisciplinary approach* will enable us to observe the dynamic character of all theological interpretation and reflection, while our engagement with *controversial issues* will underscore how crucial mutual understanding (if not mutual agreement) is for our life together in Christian community.

Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will have demonstrated ability to:

1. Use biblical knowledge and classic theological doctrines in critical engagement with contested issues in the church and in the culture;
2. Begin to communicate their understanding of “participation in the redemptive ministry of Jesus Christ in the world” for a global and ecumenical church in a world of religious difference; and
3. Listen generously and engage in respectful dialogue around differences, such as ways of reading the Bible, denominational identities, cultural/ethnic identities, and sexual orientation.

Assignments and 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, including several in-class assignments, and must complete several written assignments. These are described fully in an appendix at the end of the syllabus.

Attendance and participation:

1. Prepared, thoughtful, and engaged attendance at all sessions of the course is expected.
2. Students should complete reading and writing assignments prior to the classes for which they are intended.
3. Class discussion should reflect mutual respect for the experiences and views of other class members, a willingness and ability to listen to one another, and a willingness to express one’s own perspectives.

4. 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.
5. More than one unexcused absence will necessitate a conference with the instructors and may result in a failing grade.

Class meetings:

8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. **beginning Saturday, August 13 and ending Wednesday, August 24, except on Sundays.**

Note that there will be two additional meeting times, including a dessert reception at Dean David Hester's home on Friday, August 12 beginning at 7 p.m., and an optional trip to the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky, on Monday, August 15.

Books for purchase:

1. Stone, Howard W., and James O. Duke. *How to Think Theologically*. 2nd edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006.
2. Craigo-Snell, Shannon, and Shawnthea Monroe. *Living Christianity: A Pastoral Theology for Today*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009.

All other readings noted in the schedule will be available online, through the CAMS portal.

Schedule of Class Activities and Assignments

(subject to revision)

*Please Note: Readings are to be completed **before** the class for which they are assigned. Note also that due dates for written assignments will be strictly observed.*

Friday, August 12th

Reception

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

CREATION

Saturday, August 13th

Course Overview

- Opening prayer and introductions
- Review syllabus and assignments
- Biblical Interpretation in the Reformed tradition
- Why should we listen to those with whom we disagree?

Studying the Creation Narratives

- Reading the biblical creation narratives
- Guest lecturer: Dr. Steve Cook

Readings

- Gen 1:1-24a; Gen 2:4b-3:24 (esp. 2:4b-2:25); Psalm 74 (esp. 74:12-19); Proverbs 8 (esp. 8:22-31); Job 38-41. As you are reading these texts in preparation for class, ask three questions of each, making notes to bring to class: (1) How does God create? (2) What does God create? (3) What is the place of human beings in each of these texts?
- Tribble, Phyllis. “Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 41:1 (1973): 30-48.

****SUMMARY OF STONE & DUKE DUE IN CLASS****

Monday, August 15th

Introduction to Creationism

- What’s at stake for creationists?
- Departure for Creation Museum @ 10:30 a.m. (ETA 1:00 p.m.)
- Virtual tour of Creation Museum (for those not participating in field trip)

Readings

- Craigo-Snell, Shannon, and Shawnthea Monroe. *Living Christianity: A Pastoral Theology for Today*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009. Pp. vii-xix; 1-26.
- “No Adam, No Eve, No Gospel.” *Christianity Today* (June 2011): 61.
- Ostling, Richard N. “The Search for the Historical Adam.” *Christianity Today* (June 2011): 23-27.
- Byassee, Jason. “Dinosaurs in the Garden: A visit to the Creation Museum.” *Christian Century* (February 12, 2008): 22-26.
- Numbers, Ronald L. “Creationism Since 1859.” Pages 313-19 in *The History of Science and Religion in the Western Tradition: An Encyclopedia*. Edited by Gary B. Ferngren *et al.* New York: Garland Publishing. 2000.
- Van Till, Howard J. “Creationism.” Pages 186-90 in vol. 1 of *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*. Edited by J. Wentzel Vrede van Huyssteen. New York: Macmillan Reference, 2003. Vol. 1, pp. 187-190.

Tuesday, August 16th

Creationism: Wrap-Up

- Discussion of participants’ experiences at the Creation Museum

Big Bang, Evolution, and Theology

- Guest Lecturer: Dr. Loren Townsend

Readings

- Throntveit, Mark A., and Alan G. Padgett. “Reading the Bible after Darwin.” *Word & World* 29:1 (2009): 39-46.
- Rolston, Holmes. *Three Big Bangs: Matter-Energy, Life, Mind*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010. Pp. 48-86. *This work argues that there have been three major developments of complexity in the history of the cosmos: the emergence of matter-energy (= the first “big bang”), of life, and of intelligence (especially human intelligence). This excerpt is from the chapter on the emergence of life. In your reading, focus on*

Rolston's interpretive comments and on gaining an overall impression of the scientific evidence he presents; do not get bogged down in detail.

- Polkinghorne, John. *Science and Theology: An Introduction*. Minneapolis: SPCK/Fortress, 1998. Pp. 4-24, 128-133.

CHRISTOLOGY

Wednesday, August 17th

The historical Adam and the historical Jesus

Jesus and the Bible

Readings

- Romans 5
- Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco. Pp. 29-56.
- Martin, Dale B. *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation*. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 2006. Pp. 91-102.
- *Recommended*: Garrett, Susan R. "What Really Happened in the Life of Jesus?"

****SECOND ASSIGNMENT DUE IN CLASS (SEE APPENDIX)****

Thursday, August 18th

Systematic Christology

- Guest Lecturers: Dr. Shannon Craigo-Snell; Dr. Michael Jenkins

Readings

- Craigo-Snell and Monroe, *Living Christianity*, pp. 27-68.
- Jenkins, Michael. *Invitation to Theology*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2001. Pp. 94-123.

Friday August 19th

Theological writing

- Guest lecturer: Angela Morris, Head of Public Services, LPTS Library

Contemporary Discussions of Christology

Readings

- Bediako, Kwame. "Jesus in African Culture." In *Voices in Global Christian Theology*. Edited by William A. Dyrness. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994). Pp. 93-121.
- Braxton, Brad R. "'Every time I feel the Spirit': African American Christology for a pluralistic world." In *Radical Christian Voices and practice: Essays in Honor of Christopher Rowland*. New York: Oxford University Press, Forthcoming 2012.

****THIRD ASSIGNMENT DUE IN CLASS (SEE APPENDIX)****

Saturday, August 20th

Imaging God

Readings:

- Neuger, Christie Cozad. “Image and Imagination: Why Inclusive Language Matters.” In *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World*. Edited by Linda Day and Carolyn Pressler. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006. Pp. 153-65.
- Wren, Brian. *What Language Shall I Borrow? God Talk in Worship: a Male Response to Feminist Theology*. New York: Crossroads, 1989. Pp. 75-83; 102-110; 241-48 (required; remainder optional).
- Garrett, Susan R. “The New Testament and Inclusive Language.”
- van Wijk-Bos, Johanna . *Reimagining God: The Case for Scriptural Diversity*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995. Pp. 23-34.
- Smith, Peter. “Church Decision to Replace Reference to God as ‘Father’ Stirs Debate. Courier-Journal, July 16, 2011. Online: <http://www.courier-journal.com/article/20110715/NEWS01/307160023/Church-decision-replace-reference-God-Father-stirs-debate>

HOMOSEXUALITY

Monday, August 22nd

The Bible and Homosexuality

- Guest lecturer: Dr. Lewis Brogdon

Readings

- Garrett, Susan R. “Homosexuality and the Bible,” from www.thethoughtfulchristian.com.
- Miller, Patrick. “What does Genesis 1–3 teach about sexuality, and how should we live in response?” in *Frequently Asked Questions about Sexuality, the Bible, & the Church* (ed. Ted A. Smith; San Francisco: Covenant Network of Presbyterians, 2006), 10-15. Online: <http://www.covenantnetwork.org/FAQ-pdfs/Miller.pdf>.
- Siker, Jeffrey. “Since the Bible seems only to condemn same-sex relations, how can some Christians argue that the church should affirm same-sex marriage or the ordination of openly gay and lesbian Christians? Where is there any support for this approach in the Bible?” 40-45 in *Frequently Asked Questions about Sexuality, the Bible, & the Church* (ed. Ted A. Smith; San Francisco: Covenant Network of Presbyterians, 2006), 10-15. <http://www.covenantnetwork.org/FAQ-pdfs/Siker.pdf>
- Grenz, Stanley. *Welcoming But Not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, Pp. 35-62 and 167-71.
- Douglas, Kelly Brown. “Heterosexism and the Black American Church Community.” In *Heterosexism in Contemporary World Religion: Problem and Prospect*. Edited by Marvin M. Ellison and Judith Plaskow. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2007. Pp. 177-200.

Tuesday, August 23rd

Churches Respond to Changing Views of Homosexuality

- Guest lecturer: Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick

Readings

- Linzey, Andrew. “Mistakes of the Creator.” In *Gays and the Future of Anglicanism*. Edited by Andrew Linzey and Richard Kirker. (New York: Winchester UK, 2005. Pp. xix-xxxviii
- Rogers, Jack. *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009. Pp. 8-16 and 137-145.
- Philip Jenkins, “The Next Christianity.” *Atlantic Monthly*, October 2002. Online: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2002/10/the-next-christianity/2591/>.
- Henry Greene, “An Appeal for the Word: Voting on Amendment ‘A’”. Online: <http://www.pfrenwal.org/issues/387-an-appeal-for-the-word?tmpl=component&print=1>
- Ken Bailey, “A Tale of Elephants and the Mouse: Presbyterians, 10-A, and the World Church.” Online: <http://www.pfrenwal.org/issues/398-dr-ken-bailey-on-pcusa-ordination-standards-and-the-world-church>
- *The Covenant Connection* (summer 2011). Online: <http://covnetpres.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/CovNet-newsltr-summer-11.pdf>. (Summer 2011 issue can be downloaded from this site.)
- *Recommended*: Viefhues-Bailey, Ludger. *Between a Man and a Woman? Why Conservatives Oppose Same-Sex Marriage*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010. Pp. 4-16.

Wednesday, August 24th

Wrap-Up: Significant Learnings

Living in Community in the midst of difference

Closing Worship

Readings

- Farley, Margaret A. *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics*. New York: Continuum, 2008. Pp. 207-44.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *A Testament to Freedom: The Essential Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. Edited by Geffrey B. Kelly and F. Burton Nelson. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990. Pp. 340-58.

****FOURTH ASSIGNMENT DUE IN CLASS (SEE APPENDIX)****

APPENDIX 1 – DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

First assignment: On thinking theologically. *The purpose of this assignment is to introduce you to key elements of theological reflection and to invite you to examine your own embedded theological premises. Due on the first day of class.*

Read Howard W. Stone and James O. Duke, *How to Think Theologically* (2nd edition; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006). Take notes on key concepts presented, to help you remember them, and reflect on questions or issues that the book raises for you with regard to your own theology, to help us know you better. (The notes should be no more than five single-spaced typed pages in total, and will be collected at the beginning of the class.)

Second assignment: On creation and creationism. *The purpose of this assignment is for you to use biblical knowledge and classic theological doctrines in critical engagement with contested issues in the church and in the culture. Due in class Wednesday, August 17 (bring hard copy).*

Write an essay responding to one of the following prompts. Be sure to draw on assigned readings as relevant. Maximum length: 1000 words, including notes.

- 1- Some creationists argue that if a literal reading of the story of Adam's transgression is abandoned, the Christian doctrine of salvation will collapse. In your paper, describe the major points in this creationist insistence on a literal reading of the Adam account. Also offer counters to the argument, drawing on the readings and class discussion.
- 2- Describe the rise of "creation science" and explain the underlying epistemological assumptions that make this sort of response seem appropriate and necessary to some Christians. You may want to distinguish between the interpretive views of old earth and new earth creationists. Then describe at least one other model for making theological sense of Genesis in light of the theory of evolution.
- 3- Imagine yourself in conversation with a church member whose embedded theology around the topic of creation is radically different from your own. Summarize key elements in the other person's point of view, and then explain those aspects of your own view that you would most want your conversation partner to understand, even if you doubt that he or she will ever come to agree with you.

Third assignment: On Christology. *The purpose of this assignment is for you to reflect on the implications of your own participation in the redemptive ministry of Jesus Christ in the world for a global and ecumenical church in a world of religious difference. Due in class on Friday, August 19 (bring hard copy).*

Analyze one of the assigned articles on Christology (by Kwami Bediako or Brad Braxton). In your analysis, use the categories provided either in the atonement-theory typology in Craig-Snell and Monroe, *Living Christianity*, 27-68, or in the discussion of the historic Christological debates in Michael Jenkins' *Invitation to Theology*, 106-16. Address the following questions: (a) How does Braxton's or Bediako's Christology address the needs of the author's particular cultural context as he understands it? (b) What resources does the author draw upon to develop his Christology? (c) Which of the atonement-theory or Christological categories described in Craig-Snell/Monroe or

Jenkins is most fully reflected in Bediako's/Braxton's work? (d) What do you find helpful or problematic in Bediako's or Braxton's approach?

Fourth Assignment: On Homosexuality. *The purpose of this assignment is to listen generously and engage in respectful dialogue around differences, such as ways of reading the Bible, denominational identities, cultural/ethnic identities, and sexual orientation.*

This assignment will follow up on an in-class exercise. In 400 words or less, assess the usefulness of this classroom experience, in which you were asked to articulate and listen to perspectives on a controversial issue, some of which were likely different from your own views. ***Due in class on Wednesday, August 24 (bring hardcopy).***

Appendix 2 – Course Policies

1. **Computers and Cell phones.** All cell phones must be turned off in class except under exceptional circumstances, cleared with the instructors ahead of a given class session. Computers may be used in class; however, email and social networking programs must be turned off at all times.
2. **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.
3. **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.
4. **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 will be handled in accordance with the Seminary policy. Repeated 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.

5. **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) at the beginning of the course and should speak with the instructors 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.
6. **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.