

SM101-3: Transforming Seminary Education

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

August 16-29, 2012

Instructors: Carol J. Cook and Susan R. Garrett

Description:

This course will provide a foundation for your seminary education and an intensive introduction to the richness of the theologically reflective life. You will engage in critical reading and reflection and a variety of short writing projects, and 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 facilitate observation of the dynamic character of all theological interpretation and reflection, while the engagement with *controversial issues* will underscore how crucial mutual understanding (if not mutual agreement) is for 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 12:00 p.m. weekdays, beginning Thursday, August 16 and ending Wednesday, August 29.

*Note that an ice cream social will be held for all class members on **Tuesday, August 14** behind the Winn Center. Note also that on **Friday, August 17** the class will be taking a field trip to the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky; our estimated time of arrival time at the museum is 10:00 a.m. with return to Louisville between 4:00 and 5:00 p.m. (departing museum between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m.). Finally, on **Wednesday, August 22** there will be a barbecue at President Michael Jenkins' home, beginning at 5:30; families of students are also invited to attend.*

Books suggested for purchase:

1. Craigo-Snell, Shannon, and Shawnthea Monroe. *Living Christianity: A Pastoral Theology for Today*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009. (Focus will be on the first two chapters.)
2. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Living Jesus: Learning the Heart of the Gospel* (HarperOne, 2000).

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

A hope for the course is for all participants to learn to listen generously and engage in respectful dialogue around differences, including differences of race and ethnicity, ways of reading the Bible, denominational identities, and sexual orientation. As a way of helping to start the conversation, you are encouraged to read (or listen to) an interview with Professor Richard Mouw, a Christian philosopher who is President of Fuller Theological Seminary and author of the book *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World*. (The interview encapsulates key themes from the book.) That interview (in PDF, podcast, and MP3 formats) is available at the following URLs:

<http://being.publicradio.org/programs/2010/restoring-civility/transcript.shtml> and
<http://being.publicradio.org/programs/2010/restoring-civility/>.

Finally, as an introduction to the richness of the theologically reflective life, you are encouraged to listen to or read the Convocation Address to the Seminary given by our President, Michael Jenkins, in September of 2010. That address, entitled “The Life of the Mind in the Service of God: Why a Thinking Faith Still Matters,” available at the following URL:

http://caldwellchapel.blogspot.com/2010_09_01_archive.html

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.*

CREATION

Thursday, August 16th

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

- Controversy over study of the biblical creation accounts
- *Readings:*
 - Craig-Snell, Shannon, and Shawnthea Monroe. *Living Christianity: A Pastoral Theology for Today*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009. Pages 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.
 - 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, Pages 187-190.

Reading the biblical creation narratives

- Guest lecturer: Dr. Tyler Mayfield
- *Readings*
 - Genesis 1–3
 - Robert S. Kawashima, “Sources and Redaction.” Pages 47-70 in *Reading Genesis: Ten Methods*. Edited by Ronald Hendel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. *Pay special attention to pages 47-51 (reviewing one aspect of critical biblical scholarship), pages 51-56 (dealing with the creation stories), and pages 61-66 (dealing with the creation stories again). Note the theological and literary differences between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2–3 that warrant scholarly theories about different authorship and compositional date as well as ways in which the accounts can be read together.*

****THREE-PAGE ESSAY ON LIVING JESUS DUE IN CLASS****

Friday, August 17th

Field Trip to Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky

- Estimated time of departure from Louisville 8:00 a.m.; arrival at Museum 10:00 a.m.
- Estimated time of departure from Museum 3:00 p.m.; arrival in Louisville 5:00 p.m.

Monday, August 20th

Creationism: Wrap-Up

- Discussion of participants' experiences at the Creation Museum. Guest speaker: Dr. Debra Mumford

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

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

CHRISTOLOGY

Tuesday, August 21st

The historical Adam and the historical Jesus

- *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. Pages 29-56.
 - Martin, Dale B. *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation*. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 2006. Pages 91-102.

Wednesday, August 22nd

Systematic Christology

- Guest Lecturers: Dr. Shannon Craigo-Snell; Dr. Michael Jenkins
- *Readings:*
 - Craigo-Snell and Monroe, *Living Christianity*, pages 27-68.
 - Jenkins, Michael. *Invitation to Theology*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2001. Pages 94-123.
 - Richard Mouw. “Why *Christus Victor* Is Not Enough.” *Christianity Today* (May 2012): 28-31.

Thursday, August 23rd

Contemporary Discussions of Christology

- *Readings:*
 - Bediako, Kwame. “Jesus in African Culture.” Pages 93-121 in *Voices in Global Christian Theology*. Edited by William A. Dyrness. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994).
 - 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 WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE IN CLASS (SEE APPENDIX)****

Friday, August 24th

Theological writing

- Guest lecturer: Angela Morris, Acting Director of Library Services

Imaging God

- *Readings:*
 - Neuger, Christie Cozad. “Image and Imagination: Why Inclusive Language Matters.” Pages 153-65I in *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World*. Edited by Linda Day and Carolyn Pressler. 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. Pages 75-83; 102-110; 241-48
 - 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. Pages 23-34.

HOMOSEXUALITY

Monday, August 27th

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>
 - 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. Pages 177-200.
 - “Gay Marriage: Broken or Blessed? Two Evangelical Views.” Interview of Drs. Richard Mouw and Virginia Ramey Mollencott, from “On Being, with Krista Tippett,” on NPR. Online: <http://being.publicradio.org/programs/gaymarriage/transcript.shtml>.
It is recommended that you listen to the audio. Note that a transcript of the interview is also included on the site. Pay special attention to assumptions that the interviewees make about how to interpret the Bible on this issue and suggestions they make about how to dialog across painful differences.

Tuesday, August 28th

Churches Respond to Changing Views of Homosexuality

- Guest lecturer: Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick
- *Readings:*
 - Bailey, Ken. “A Tale of Elephants and the Mouse: Presbyterians, 10-A, and the World Church.” Online: <http://www.pfrenewal.org/issues/398-dr-ken-bailey-on-pcusa-ordination-standards-and-the-world-church>
 - Jenkins, Philip. “The Next Christianity.” *Atlantic Monthly*, October 2002. Online: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2002/10/the-next-christianity/2591/>.
 - 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. Pages xix-xxxviii.

- Rogers, Jack. *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009. Pages 8-16 and 137-145.
- Scanlon, Leslie. Link: [Mexican Presbyterian Church votes to end 139-year-old relationship with PC\(USA\)](#).
- See these links for a comprehensive description of the wide variety of Christian positions on homosexuality:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_denominational_positions_on_homosexuality#cite_note-startribune.com-25 and
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexuality_and_Christianity

Wednesday, August 29th

Wrap-Up: Significant Learnings

Living in Community in the midst of difference

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

Closing Worship

*****FOURTH WRITING 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 biblical interpretation and to invite you to re-examine your own theological premises. Due on the first day of class, Thursday, August 16th.*

Please prepare a three-page essay on Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Living Jesus*. The first half should be a summary of key points. The remainder of the paper should offer your own reflections on the work: for example, what especially appealed to you about Johnson's way of discussing the risen Jesus? Was some aspect of his discussion problematic for you, and why? You may think of other questions in response to this open invitation to engage this reading.

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 Monday, August 20th (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 Thursday, August 23rd (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 Jinkins' *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 Jinkins 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, describe what you learned from the in-class exercise about articulating and listening to perspectives on a controversial issue – both those which you shared and those that differed from your own views.

Due in class on Wednesday, August 29 (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.