

Faculty:

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FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING
TF 102-3
FALL 2011

T/TH, 6:00 pm – 7:20 pm
Schlegel Hall, 122

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Faith Seeking Understanding (FQI) is a team-taught, interdisciplinary course in theology and ethics that is usually taken in the fall semester of the first year. FQI is designed to follow the summer course for entering students, Transforming Seminary Education (TSE), and to anticipate the two-semester course History of Christian Experience (HCE1 and HCE2). The purpose of FQI is to help students gain greater confidence and competence in thinking theologically and ethically. The course intends to prepare students for this task by providing an introduction to systematic theology and ethical method. Students will reflect on the interplay between belief and behavior, as they wrestle with traditional doctrines and contemporary issues in theology and ethics. They will gain skill in reading theological texts and thinking doctrinally. Furthermore, the course encourages students to think self-critically about their own ethical and theological commitments.

Requirements:

1. Attendance and informed participation.

2. Three reflection papers (50%)

Students will prepare three brief papers (3 pages) based on the assigned question in the syllabus. These are due on 10/11, 11/15, and 12/8. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date. You should strive to write as a learning theologian, both open to instruction from others in the Christian conversation and eager to enter into that conversation yourself.

The first paper will focus on a self-critical analysis of your own theology. Identify a theological stance or assumption that has been challenged by one of the readings for the class. Articulate the major steps of the author's argument and explain the weakness or limitation this illuminates in your own position.

The second paper will focus on a self-critical analysis of your own ethics. Identify an ethical stance or assumption that has been challenged by one of the readings for the class. Articulate the major steps of the author's argument and explain the weakness or limitation this illuminates in your own position.

The third paper will focus on connections and disconnections between your theological and ethical commitments. Identify an area of tension or conflict between your ethical and theological beliefs that has been illuminated by the readings in the course.

In these papers, students should demonstrate both a clear understanding of the assigned readings and a critical engagement with the arguments and themes expressed. Please adhere to the page requirement.

All papers must be submitted at the beginning of class on the day they are due. We advise you to start working on your papers well ahead of the deadline. *Late papers will be penalized a half-letter grade for every day past the due date.*

2. Take-Home Midterm (25%)

In this exam you will draw together the themes of the course. You will answer three questions, writing about two pages, double-spaced, per question, for a total of 6-8 pages. Questions will be distributed October 20. Exams are due on November 1. You are free to discuss these questions with your classmates, but your writing for the exam must be your own. You may use your books and notes in preparing for and writing the exam; any quotations or paraphrases from written materials must be properly referenced.

3. Final In-Class Examination (25%)

In this exam you will draw together the themes of the second half of the course. Study questions will be distributed on December 8.

We highly recommend that you take advantage of the services of the Academic Support Center, located on the first floor of Schlegel Hall, in preparing your written assignments for this course.

Required Texts:

Lovin, Robin W. *Christian Ethics: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000) ISBN: 0687054621 (*Lovin* in the syllabus)

Placher, William C. *Essentials of Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003) ISBN: 0664223958 (*Placher* in the syllabus)

Library Reserves (please make your own copy of the recommended reading):

De La Torre, Miguel A. *Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004) (*De La Torre* in the syllabus)

Evans, James H. Jr. *We Have Been Believers: An African American Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) (*Evans* in the syllabus)

Jones, Serene and Paul Lakeland, eds. *Constructive Theology: A Contemporary Approach to Classical Themes* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005) (*Jones and Lakeland* in the syllabus)

LPTS Classroom Policies:

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. See for further assistance,

http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp.

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.

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.

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.

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 one of the instructors of their absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Missing 4 or more sessions of the course puts you in danger of failing the course.

Schedule of classes and assignments**Date****Subject/Assignment**

TH (9/8) Orientation to the course and to theological education

T (9/13) Orientation to theological and ethical reflection

Lovin, chapter 1

Placher, introduction

Plato, *Crito* (CAMS—Hyperlink)

Recommended:

De La Torre, chapter 1 (CAMS—Hyperlink)

- TH (9/15) Goals**
 Lovin, chapter 2
 Aristotle, *The Nichomachean Ethics*, Book 1 (CAMS—Hyperlink)
 Augustine, *City of God* (CAMS—Hyperlink)
 Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” (CAMS—Hyperlink)
Recommended:
 De La Torre, chapter 2 (Library Reserve)
- T (9/20) Epistemology and Revelation**
 Placher, chapter 1
Recommended:
 Evans, chapter 2 (Library Reserve)
- TH (9/22) Goals**
 Jeremy Bentham, Utilitarianism (CAMS—Hyperlink)
 John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (CAMS—Hyperlink)
Recommended:
 De La Torre, chapter 3 (Library Reserve)
- T (9/27) God**
 Placher, chapter 2
- TH (9/29) Rules**
 Lovin, chapter 3
 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals* (CAMS—Hyperlink)
 “Introduction to Deontology” (CAMS—Hyperlink)
 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (CAMS—Hyperlink)
- T (10/4) God**
 Placher, chapter 3
Recommended:
 Evans, chapter 3 (Library Reserve)
- TH (10/6) Rules**
 Benedict, *Rule of St. Benedict* (CAMS—Hyperlink)
 John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (CAMS—Hyperlink)
 Bartolome de Las Casas, *Brief Account of the Devastation...* (CAMS—Hyperlink)
- T (10/11) Pop Culture Theology and Ethics**
First Paper Due at the Beginning of Class
- TH (10/13) Virtues**
 Lovin, chapter 4
 Aristotle, *The Nichomachean Ethics*, Book 2 (CAMS—Hyperlink)
 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (CAMS—Hyperlink)

Matthew 5:1-12 NKJV (CAMS—Hyperlink)

T (10/18) Theological Anthropology

Placher, chapter 4

Recommended:

Evans, chapter 5 (Library Reserve)

TH (10/20) Virtues

Stanley Hauerwas “Christological Pacifism” (CAMS—Hyperlink)

Virginia Held, “Care and Justice in the Global Context” (CAMS—Hyperlink)

10/24-10/28 Research and Study Week

T (11/1) Jesus

Placher, chapter 5

Midterm Due at the Beginning of Class

TH (11/3) Society

Lovin, chapter 6 and Conclusion

Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (CAMS—Hyperlink)

T (11/8) Jesus

Evans, chapter 4 (Library Reserve)

TH (11/10) Society

Josiah Priest, *Bible Defence of Slavery* (CAMS—Hyperlink)

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (CAMS—Hyperlink)

T (11/15) Pop Culture Ethics and Theology

Second Paper Due at the Beginning of Class

TH (11/17) Church

Lovin, chapter 5

Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio* (CAMS—Hyperlink)

The Barmen Declaration (CAMS—Hyperlink)

Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology of the Social Gospel* (CAMS—Hyperlink)

T (11/22) Church

Placher, chapter 6

11/24-25 Thanksgiving Break

T (11/29) Holy Spirit

Jones and Lakeland, chapter 6 (Library Reserve)

TH (12/1) Pop Culture Theology and Ethics

T (12/6) Eschatology and Hope
Placher, chapter 9

TH (12/8) Conclusion
Third Paper Due at the Beginning of Class