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Systematic Theology
Tues and Thurs 1:30-3:20pm
Schlegel Hall 122
Fall 2024

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Systematic Theology is an introduction to doctrinal thinking in traditional and contemporary theology. It is a foundational course that prepares students for further work, particularly in the framework of Wisdom and Witness.

This course is intended to help students move with agility between the varied faith claims of Christian communities and the demanding needs of our current contexts. Students will learn to identify theological doctrines as they are invoked, manipulated, or relied upon in contemporary life. They will learn how to use doctrine to critique current issues and look for solutions, as well as how to use current issues to critique doctrinal claims. Furthermore, the course encourages students to think self-critically about their own theological commitments.

You will notice that the assignments for this class include visual and oral components, in addition to written work. The goal is to let the work for this course play to different strengths you may have and help you connect theology with daily life. We encourage you not to view theology as merely a head game, but to let it speak to the deep places in our lives. I look forward to our semester together!

The best way to get a hold of us is by email (amypauw@lpts.edu and sraigo-snell@lpts.edu). We will respond to your email in 24 hours. Amy is generally free for office hours after class on Tuesdays. Shannon is generally free for office hours on Wednesdays between 10:00am and 2:00pm. If these are not convenient times for you, please contact us and we can find another time.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Students from a variety of programs enroll in this course. The work of the course has been designed to contribute to the following program-specific Student Learning Outcomes:

MDIV

SLO 3: Students will be able to think theologically and ethically in relation to particular traditions and contemporary needs.

SLO 4: Students will demonstrate the ability to reflect critically and self-critically on relationships between Christian faith and various forms of systemic injustice.

MAR

SLO3: Students will demonstrate an understanding of multiple theological perspectives, historical and contemporary

SLO4: Students will demonstrate the ability to think theologically, strategically, imaginatively, and contextually about ethical issues

MAMFT

SLO 5: Graduating students will be able to use a theologically informed and clinically appropriate framework to integrate religious and spiritual factors into the practice of Marriage and Family Therapy.

MFT Developmental Competency Component 4: Awareness, knowledge and skill to responsibly serve diverse Communities.

Antiracism QEP/SLO (all degree programs):

Students can describe strategies, grounded in their practice, for working toward racial justice appropriate to their particular vocational settings. Students can demonstrate competence with this SLO in many ways including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Defining and using key terms in ways informed by an understanding of systemic racism.
2. Identifying racism in its many manifestations (structural, personal, communal, etc.)
3. Critical reflection on the history and current contexts regarding race, racism, and antiracism
4. Critical reflection on racist and antiracist practices and theologies
5. Developing and implementing antiracist policies, practices, and theologies

REQUIREMENTS:

The most basic requirements of the course are attendance, keeping up with the reading, and informed participation in class discussions. Your final grade will also reflect your class attendance and participation. The assignments below are described in more detail later in the syllabus:

1. "The gospel in seven words" (5 points)
2. What is your image of God? (5 points)
3. Creation photograph (5 points)
4. Two-page (double-spaced) compare and contrast of two Christological hymns (10 points)
5. Sin and anti-racism reflection (15 points)
6. 180-second piece engaging a doctrine about which your theology has changed (15 points)
7. Letter on Abortion (10 points)
8. Visual image engaging doctrine of eschatology with explanatory paragraph (5 points)
9. Revisiting "the gospel in seven words" (5 points)

10. Group oral exam (25 points)

All assignments are (except the final oral exam) to be submitted on Canvas by midnight of the due date.

All written work for the course will follow the conventions of academic writing. We highly recommend that you take advantage of the services of the Academic Support Center in preparing your written assignments for this course.

In unusual circumstances, requests for extensions may be made at least 24 hours in advance. Late assignments without extension will not be accepted.

TEXTS REQUIRED FOR EVERYONE:

Williams, Rowan. *Tokens of Trust: An Introduction to Christian Belief*, reprint edition. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010. ISBN-10: 0664236995

Gutiérrez, Gustavo. *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*, tr. Matthew J. O'Connell. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987. ISBN: 0883445522.

Rambo, Shelly. *Resurrecting Wounds: Living in the Afterlife of Trauma*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017. ISBN 9781481306799

Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited*, reprint edition. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996. ISBN: 0807010294.

READINGS ON CANVAS:

1. Melanie L. Harris, *Ecowomanism: African American Women and Earth-Honoring Faiths* (Orbis, 2017), 61-77.
2. Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding* (Eerdmans, 4th ed., 2023), 68-88
3. Delores Williams, "God-Talk and Black Liberation Theology." In *Sisters in the Wilderness*.
4. Michael Joseph Brown, "Hearing the Master's Voice" In *Engaging Biblical Authority*.
5. Shannon Craigo-Snell and Christopher Doucot, *No Innocent Bystanders*, 51-66.
6. Margaret Farley, *Just Love*, 207-244.
7. Marcus A. Hong, "Prayer"
8. Margaret D. Kamitsuka, "Gestational Hospitality and the Parable of the Good Samaritan," ch. 6 in *Abortion and the Christian Tradition: A Pro-Choice Theological Ethic*, p. 155-191.
9. Marilyn McCord Adams, "Prayer as the Lifeline of Theology."

Please have available your own copy of these readings on the day they are discussed in class.

School Policies

From the Dean's Office

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. More discussion about inclusive language can be accessed from the Academic Support Center and from the section of the LPTS web site with information for current students.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: All work turned in to the instructor 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 [including A.I. chatbots] 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. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues related to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For the Seminary policy, see the Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

A special form of plagiarism is self-plagiarism or "double-dipping": reusing an assignment written for another course (whether at LPTS or elsewhere) or incorporating a substantial portion of work submitted for another course in an assignment submission.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS: Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center during the first two weeks of a semester (or before the semester begins) 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 Seminary standards, which are based on these guides:

American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 7th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2020.
Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 9th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020.
The Chicago Manual of Style. 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center. See also the library's citation help page: <https://lpts.libguides.com/digitalresources/citingsources>

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. Six or more absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.

Other Items Relating to Fall Instruction, Learning, and Technology at LPTS

- To access the library and its resources, visit: <https://lpts.edu/library/>
- To request a library laptop loan, contact library@lpts.edu
- For general help with campus network access, Outlook (email), contact support@lpts.edu
- For help with Canvas credentials, contact Carolyn Cardwell at ccardwell@lpts.edu

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Module 1 Introduction to the Course

Tues 9/10 **(SNC and APP)**

Module 2 Faith

Thurs 9/12 Read: Williams, vii-xiii. Pay special attention to the creeds at the front of the book.
Watch: Video Intro to “The Gospel in Seven Words” CANVAS
Read: Christian Century CANVAS
Write: your own “Gospel in 7 words” (assignment 1) (APP)

Module 3 God, Spirit, Trinity

Tues 9/17 Read: Williams, 3-20
Read: Migliore, 68-88 CANVAS (SNC)

Thurs 9/19 Read: Williams, 20-28 (SNC)

Tues 9/24 Read: Williams, 57-78, 105-138
Watch: Hyung Kyung Chung (2 min.)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwFBK1kPbLE&feature=relmfu>
Create: What is your image of God? (assignment 2) (APP)

Module 4 Creation

Thurs 9/26 Read: Williams, 31-55 (APP)

Tues 10/1 Read: Melanie Harris, Ecowomanism, 61-77 (133-140 optional) CANVAS
Create: take an original photograph that speaks to you of creation, along with a two-sentence explanation (assignment 3) (SNC)

Module 5 Jesus

Thurs 10/3 Read: Williams, 81-102
Read: Thurman, Jesus and the Disinherited, 1-35
Watch: Excerpt, Backs Against the Wall : The Howard Thurman Story,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdjLforZ7Jo> (9mins) (APP)

Tues 10/8 Read: Thurman, Jesus and the Disinherited, 36-88
Read: Delores Williams, God-Talk CANVAS (SNC)

Thurs 10/10 Read: Thurman, Jesus and the Disinherited, 89-112 (APP)

OCTOBER 14-18: NO CLASS: RESEARCH AND STUDY

Tues 10/22 Create: Pick one hymn from Group A and one hymn from Group B. In 2 double-spaced pages, compare and contrast their depictions of **how Jesus saves**, using the frameworks and terminology of the class. Note which you prefer and why. All hymns are taken from the online resource Hymnary.org (assignment 4) (SNC)

Group A

[And Can It Be, That I Should Gain? | Hymnary.org](#)
[Power in the Blood | Hymnary.org](#)
[Ah, holy Jesus, how hast thou offended | Hymnary.org](#)
[Praise for the Fountain opened | Hymnary.org](#)

Group B

[Jesus Lives, and So Shall I | Hymnary.org](#)
[Away in a Manger | Hymnary.org](#)
[Jesus, Thou Divine Companion | Hymnary.org](#)
[We Meet You, O Christ | Hymnary.org](#)

Module 6 Sin and Salvation

Thurs 10/24 Read: Gutiérrez, Job, Introduction and Part I, The Wager (APP)

Tues 10/29 Read: Gutiérrez, Job, Part II, The Language of Prophecy

Read: Gutiérrez, Job, Part III, The Language of Contemplation (SNC)

Thurs 10/31 Read: Michael Joseph Brown, "Hearing the Master's Voice" CANVAS
Create: 180-second (assignment 5)
Watch everyone's 180-second assignment (APP)

Module 7 Sin and Anti-Racism

Tue 11/5 Watch: 3 short videos CANVAS
Watch: Holy Post—Race in America, Phil Vischer CANVAS
Read: Craigo-Snell and Doucot, *No Innocent Bystanders*, 51-66. CANVAS (APP)

Thurs 11/7 Write: Below are some common views of racism by white American Christians. Choose one and respond to it theologically in 2-3 double-spaced pages, drawing on your readings of Thurman, Harris, Williams, and/or Gutiérrez. In your response 1) show the theological inadequacy of the view you are responding to, and 2) explain your own theological understanding of the sin of racism.

I'm not racist: I treat everyone the same.

I'm not privileged: I've worked hard for everything I have.

Talking about race is all about making white people feel bad about themselves.

Slavery ended a long time ago. It's time to move on.

All lives matter. (assignment 6) (SNC)

Module 8 Theological Anthropology

Tues 11/12 Read: Farley, pp. 207-244 CANVAS (APP)

Thurs 11/14 Read: Farley, pp. 207-44 CANVAS (continued) (SNC)

Tues 11/19 Read: SisterSong, "What is Reproductive Justice?"

<https://www.sistersong.net/reproductive-justice>

Read: Margaret D. Kamitsuka, "Gestational Hospitality and the Parable of the Good Samaritan," ch. 6 in *Abortion and the Christian Tradition: A Pro-Choice Theological Ethic*, p. 155-191. CANVAS

Write: Letter on abortion

Students will write a letter (at least 250 words) addressing the topic of abortion in conversation with one or more class readings. Students may choose whom to address in this letter: a newspaper editor, a friend or family member, a client, a religious congregation, etc. Students should be prepared to talk about their letter in class, but will not be required to share the text of their letter with classmates. (assignment 7) (APP)

Module 9 Eschatology

- Thurs 11/21 Read: Rambo, Resurrecting Wounds, 1-70
 Watch: Introduction to the Concept of Trauma
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-OzdgHnXNQ>
 The speaker is Shelly Rambo. Start watching at 23:59 (SNC)
- Tues 11/26 Read: Rambo, 71-107
 Read: Williams, pp. 135-159 (SNC)
- Thurs 11/28 NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING
- Tues 12/3 Read: Rambo, 109-153
 Create: Eschatology is the study of last things. Create a visual image (using photography, drawing, collage, etc.) that depicts (in concrete, abstract, or evocative ways) your understanding of eschatology—of last things. Provide one paragraph explaining what this image means to you, drawing on the frameworks and language used in the course. All images must be original. (assignment 8) (APP)
- Thurs 12/5 Read: Marcus Hong, “Prayer” (note: this draft is not to be shared with anyone outside of this course) CANVAS
 Read: Marilyn McCord Adams, “Prayer as the Lifeline of Theology.” CANVAS
 Write: Look back to your seven-word gospel from the beginning of the semester. In no more than a page, reflect on what you’ve written, if you see anything new in it when viewed through the lenses of this course, if you might alter anything, and so on. Feel free to write a new seven-word gospel. (assignment 9) (SNC)

Assignments:

1. Some years back, the Christian Century asked several theologians to write the gospel in seven words. These brief statements reveal the particular theological emphasis and perspective of each writer, including which doctrines are central to their theologies. Please write your own “gospel in seven words.” Due 9/12 (5 points)
2. Carefully consider your own image of God—what image was taught to you, what image comes to mind when you first think “God,” what you intellectually would choose for your image of God, and what image or images of God you find most powerful. Write a brief (one page or less) description of your image of God OR record a brief (one-two minute) video describing your image of God. Due 9/24 (5 points)
3. Take a photograph that speaks to you specifically of creation. Describe it in two sentences using the framework and terminology of the class. Due 10/1 (5 points)

- Pick one hymn from Group A and one hymn from Group B (see links below).

Group A

[And Can It Be, That I Should Gain? | Hymnary.org](#)

[Power in the Blood | Hymnary.org](#)

[Ah, holy Jesus, how hast thou offended | Hymnary.org](#)

[Praise for the Fountain opened | Hymnary.org](#)

Group B

[Jesus Lives, and So Shall I | Hymnary.org](#)

[Away in a Manger | Hymnary.org](#)

[Jesus, Thou Divine Companion | Hymnary.org](#)

[We Meet You, O Christ | Hymnary.org](#)

In two double-spaced pages, compare and contrast their depictions of **how Jesus saves**, using the frameworks and terminology of the class. Note which you prefer and why. All hymns are taken from the online resource Hymnary.org Due 10/22 (10 points)

- In *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*, Gutierrez narrates how Job's theology changed in response to his own experiences, his expanded awareness of systemic harm to others, and his experience with God. In this assignment, you have 180 seconds to communicate with the class about a theological position you once held that changed, and why. Be sure to use the frameworks and terminology of the class. This assignment has a time limit rather than a format—this is an invitation to be creative! Due 10/31 (15 points)
- Below are some common views of racism by white American Christians. Choose one and respond to it theologically in 2-3 double-spaced pages, drawing on your readings of Thurman, Harris, Williams, and/or Gutiérrez. In your response 1) show the theological inadequacy of the view you are responding to, and 2) explain your own theological understanding of the sin of racism.

I'm not racist: I treat everyone the same.

I'm not privileged: I've worked hard for everything I have.

Talking about race is all about making white people feel bad about themselves.

Slavery ended a long time ago. It's time to move on.

All lives matter. Due 11/7 (15 points)

7. Write a letter (at least 250 words) addressing the topic of abortion in conversation with one or more class readings. Students may choose whom to address in this letter: a newspaper editor, a friend or family member, a client, a religious congregation, etc. Students should be prepared to talk about their letter in class, but will not be required to share the text of their letter with classmates. Due 11/19 (10 points)
8. Eschatology is the study of last things. For this assignment, create a visual image (using photography, drawing, collage, etc.) that depicts (in concrete, abstract, or evocative ways) your understanding of eschatology—of last things. Provide one paragraph explaining what this image means to you, drawing on the frameworks and language used in the course. All images must be original. Due 12/3 (5 points)
9. Look back to your seven-word gospel from the beginning of the semester. In no more than a page, reflect on what you've written, if you see anything new in it when viewed through the lenses of this course, if you might alter anything, and so on. Feel free to write a new seven-word gospel. Due 12/5 (5 points)
10. The final examination will be in a group oral format. This is an exercise in collaborative theology. The class will be divided into small groups. Each group will be assigned a 30-minute time slot during the days for final exams. All students will be given a list of study questions before the end of classes. During a group's exam session, the students and professor will begin with those questions and discuss the work of the semester. This is a collaborative, not a competitive, exercise. It is an opportunity to learn and work together, to help one another, to communicate in oral rather than written form, and to experience theology as a team sport. The groups will be scheduled during fall exam days, December 11-12. (25 points)