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Systematic Theology
Tues and Thurs 1:30-2:50
Fall 2022

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. We look forward to our semester together!

All in-person sessions will be in Fellowship Hall, in the basement of the Chapel building.

The best way to get a hold of us is by email (amypauw@lpts.edu, scraigo-snell@lpts.edu). We will respond to your email in 24 hours. We are generally free for virtual office hours after class on Tuesdays. If that is not a convenient time 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. 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. One page 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:

McGrath, Alister E., *Theology: The Basics*. 4th ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2018. ISBN: 978-1119158080

Ellison, Marvin M and Kelly Brown Douglas, eds., *Sexuality and the Sacred: sources for theological reflection*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2010 (2nd ed.) ISBN 9780664233662

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. Delores Williams, "God-Talk and Black Liberation Theology." In *Sisters in the Wilderness*.
3. Michael Joseph Brown, "Hearing the Master's Voice" In *Engaging Biblical Authority*.
4. Shannon Craigo-Snell and Christopher Doucot, *No Innocent Bystanders*, 51-66.
5. Marcus A. Hong, "Prayer"
6. 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.
7. 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.

LPTS CLASSROOM POLICIES:

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. For more information see:

<http://lpts.libguides.com/content.php?pid=469569&sid=4083885>

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.

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. 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 more information, see The Code of Student Conduct, 6.11; the Student Handbook, p. 19.

Citation Policy

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

American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 6th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2010.

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*. 8th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

The Chicago Manual of Style. 16th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

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

Special Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (Beth Herrinton-Hodge, bherrintonhodge@lpts.edu) during the first two days of class (or, even better, before the class begins) 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 instructors.

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 instructors of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. If students are unable to attend their regular section in a given week, they are welcome to attend the other one, if possible. 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
- For information on Student Assistance Funds to help with costs associated with learning technology and access (\$300 maximum), contact Gina Kuzuoka at gkuzuoka@lpts.edu

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Module 1 Introduction to the Course

Thurs 9/8 (APP/SCS)

Module 2 Faith

Tues 9/13 Read: McGrath, ch. 1. Pay special attention to the creeds at the front of the book.
Write: your own "Gospel in 7 words" (assignment 1)(SCS)

Module 3 God, Spirit, Trinity

Thurs 9/15 Read: McGrath, ch. 2 (APP)

Tues 9/20 Read: McGrath, ch. 6 (SCS)

Thurs 9/22 Read: McGrath, ch. 7
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

Tues 9/27 Read: McGrath, ch. 3 (SCS)

Thurs 9/29 Read: Melanie Harris, Ecowomanism, 61-77 (133-140 optional)
Create: take an original photograph that speaks to you of creation, along with a two-sentence explanation (assignment 3) (APP)

Module 5 Jesus

Tues 10/4 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) (SCS)

Thurs 10/6 Read: Thurman, Jesus and the Disinherited, 36-88
Read: Williams, God-Talk (APP)

Tues 10/11 Read: Thurman, Jesus and the Disinherited, 89-112
Read: McGrath, ch. 4 (SCS)

Thurs 10/13 Create: identify two Christological hymns that give different pictures of Jesus.
Compare and contrast them, using the frameworks and terminology of the class.
(assignment 4) (APP)

OCTOBER 18-23: RESEARCH AND STUDY – NO CLASS

Module 6 Sin and Anti-Racism

Tues 10/25 Watch: car metaphor video
Watch: Holy Post—Race in America, Phil Vischer
Read: Craigo-Snell and Doucot, *No Innocent Bystanders*, 51-66. (SCS)

Thurs 10/27 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 5)

Module 7 Sin and Salvation

Tues 11/1 Read: Gutiérrez, Job, Introduction and Part I, The Wager
Read: McGrath, ch. 5 (APP)

Thurs 11/3 Read: Gutiérrez, Job, Part II, The Language of Prophecy

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

Tues 11/8 Create: 180-second (assignment 6)

Thurs 11/10 Read: Michael Joseph Brown, "Hearing the Master's Voice" (APP)
Watch: everyone's 180-second assignment

Module 8 Theological Anthropology

Tues 11/15 Read: Ellison and Douglas, chs. 1-5, pp. 3-77
Read: McGrath, ch. 8 (SCS)

Thurs 11/17 Read: Ellison and Douglas, chs. 6, 13, and 29, pp. 78-94, 197-204, and 412-436.
ALSO, read one chapter of your choosing from Part 4 of the book. (APP)

Tues 11/22 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. (SCS)

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)

Thurs 11/24 No class, Thanksgiving

Module 9 Eschatology

Tues 11/29 Read: Rambo, Resurrecting Wounds, 1-70
Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-OzdgHnXNQ>
The speaker is Shelly Rambo. Start watching at 23:59 (APP)

Thurs 12/1 Read: Rambo, 71-107
Read: McGrath, ch. 9-10 (SCS)

Tues 12/6 Read: Rambo, 109-153
Create: Eschatology is the study of last things. For your final 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. (assignment 8) (APP)

Thurs 12/8 Read: Marcus Hong, “Prayer” (note: this draft is not to be shared with anyone outside of this course), Marilyn McCord Adams, “Prayer as the Lifeline of Theology.” (SCS)
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)

Assignments:

1. Several years ago, 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 9/13 (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 9/22 (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 9/29 (5 points)
4. Identify two hymns from your tradition that convey Christological content. In one page, briefly explain the Christology of each hymn, using the terminology and framework of the course. Note which you prefer and why. The final product should include a copy of each hymn and a page of your own writing. Due 10/13 (10 points)
5. 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) Due 10/27 (15 points)

6. 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 11/8 (15 points)
7. 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. Due 11/22 (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 12/6 (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 12/8 (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 45-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. Exams will be held on December 14-15. (25 points)