

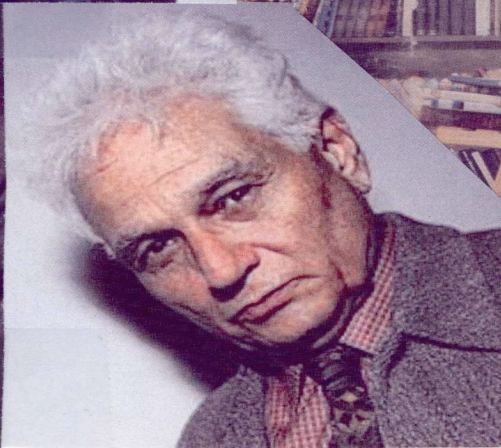
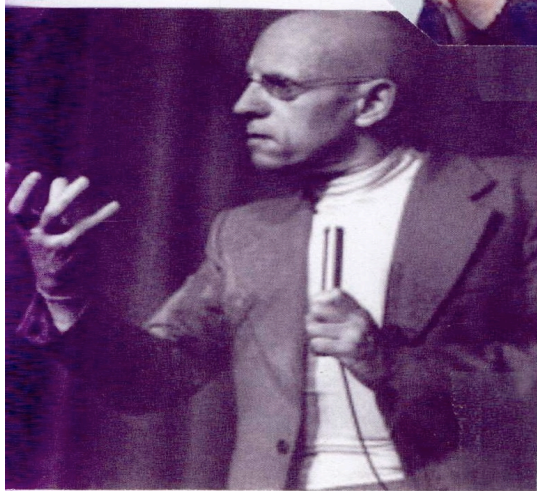
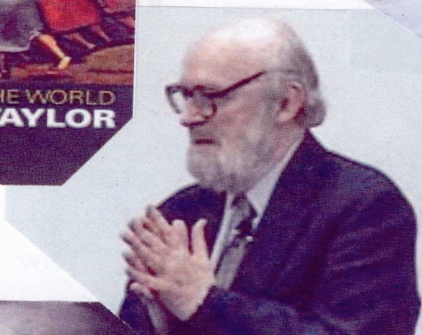
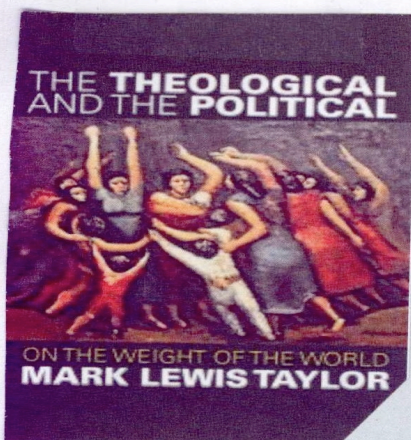
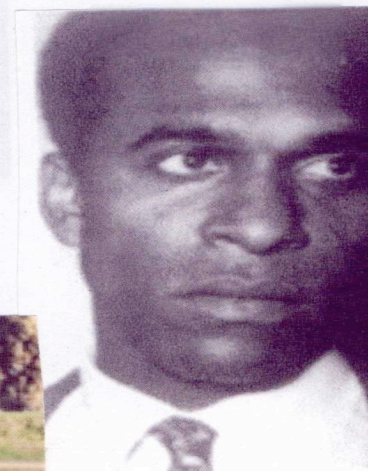
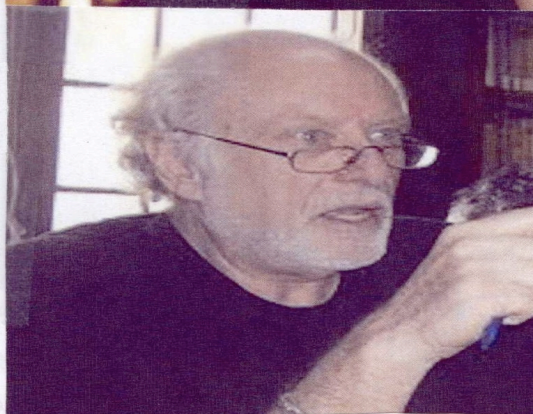
**METHODS IN RELIGIOUS
AND THEOLOGICAL
STUDIES**

TH9011

Doctoral Seminar, Fall 2012

MARK LEWIS TAYLOR

Syllabus



METHODS IN RELIGIOUS AND THEOLOGICAL STUDIES



Mural in the Dheisheh Refugee Camp, Palestine. © Mark Lewis Taylor *

A DOCTORAL SEMINAR TH9011

Princeton Theological Seminary

Theology Dept. & Religion and Society Committee

Thursday 2:00 – 4:50 p.m.

Fall Semester 2012

Professor Mark Lewis Taylor

Office: Hodge 115

Phone: 497-7918

PURPOSES

- 1) To examine *major intellectual currents* setting the context(s) for contemporary theological methods. This is no mere survey course, but as my rationale statements under “Agenda” suggest, it seeks to explore the theoretical matrix within which theologians are working today.
- 2) To explore different conceptions of *how theological methods are related to theories in religious studies*. Thus, thinking this purpose statement in relation to the first one, we are situating theological method (a) against the background of major intellectual currents today, and (b) in relation to religious studies. Put in still other terms, the seminar will encourage participants to ask continually four questions: What is theology? How is theology in conversation with key intellectual currents of the day? What is “religion?” What is theology’s relation to religious life and practice?
- 3) In relation to the above purposes, to attend also to the issues and crises emerging within a *transnational and world consciousness*. In fact, as the course Agenda shows, current re-thinking of knowledge production in “the West” in this seminar is situated alongside two other exercises of critical re-thinking: (a) a rethinking of theological method in light of tricontinental worlds of the Americas, Africa and Asia (Part I of our Agenda), and (b) a rethinking of theological method as decolonizing and de-imperializing.

SEMINAR PROCEDURES

The seminar meets once a week. There will be NO weekly seminar papers prepared by participants. Instead, the emphasis each week will be on every member completing the assigned reading and submitting questions for discussion and reflection. Here is how I propose working.

Each seminar day will be planned by a CONVERSANT. Conversants have the primary responsibility of planning discussion for the seminar. They will formulate these plans on the basis of their own reading of the material and after studying questions submitted that week by all the other seminar members. Conversants will study these questions, looking for ways to include them in the seminar by ordering and combining them in various relations. In other words, the seminar discussion is to be constructed out of materials provided by seminar members' questions.

At the seminar itself, conversants may make brief introductory remarks to set the stage for our conversation. In fact, I encourage conversant to offer, in these introductory remarks, some brief orienting thoughts about how seminar members interrogated and assessed the week's readings. Nevertheless, long discourses or summaries by conversants should be avoided. The aim at each seminar is well-orchestrated conversation, deliberately exploring key questions and issues. Always presume that seminar members have done the readings and hence do not need summaries. I will serve as moderator for each seminar, and periodically provide short lectures (especially the first week).

All seminar members will post their own QUESTIONS to the "Discussion Board" at the Blackboard site for this course, by noon, the day before the seminar (Wednesday noon). The conversant of the week will, then, gather these questions the day before the seminar, study them carefully, then sometime before the seminar create an agenda for our seminar discussion. It is usually helpful for the conversants to bring a one to two page outline of the discussion as they envision it. Usually it is helpful to include your seminar members' questions within the outlined agenda you have constructed.

The questions submitted by each seminar member, however many in number, should take up no more than 1 ½ pages in length. Aim for brief, crisp, clearly articulated questions. If you develop your question in paragraph form, make sure your question has a clear, crisp, "sharp" edge to it. Ideally, your set of questions will be about 3 or 4 in number, and show that you have done careful reading of the reading for that week. (Remember, I'm freeing us all from seminary papers throughout the term, in order to enhance opportunities for careful and extensive reading.

You may formulate your questions out of your sense that the author is unclear on a matter, because of your bafflement concerning an issue, or simply because you want to hear the seminar examine a particular theme or topic related to the reading. (Go ahead and risk asking the simple questions, e.g. "What does Tracy mean by "classic," or Chen by "deimperialization, or Spivak by "feminism," or Silva when using "the white racial").

Here are further examples of the kinds of questions seminar members may ask:

- 1) Clarification - seeking greater clarity about the nature of a given writer's position, about connections between readings, or about issues that continue from seminar to seminar.
- 2) Critique - identifying and briefly developing weaknesses you perceive in an assigned text.
- 3) Implication - exploring the implications for cultural critique, theology or something else, which you see generated by the assigned reading of the week.

SPECIAL ADMONITION: Your questions are the material from which the conversants will shape the seminar dialogue of the week. **So complete your reading as quickly as possible, and please submit questions regularly and on time by noon, Wednesday.**

TEXTS

All of these are on Reserve in the Library, and in the PTS bookstore. Books with an (*) are the ones I suspect you most will want to buy, since the larger segments of reading are taken from them. A few items listed on our AGENDA (see next section), are available only electronically or as disseminated in the seminar.

BUTLER, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. 2006 edition, with Butler's 1999 preface. Routledge, 1990.

*_____. *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*. Columbia University Press, 2012.

*CHEN, Kuan-Hsing. *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization*. Duke University Press, 2010.

*DERRIDA, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*. Translated by Peggy Kamuf. Routledge, 1994.

*FANON, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. 1963. A new translation by Richard Philcox. Foreword by Homi Bhabha. Grove Press, 2004

*FOUCAULT, Michel. *The Essential Foucault*. Edited by Paul Rabinow, and P. Rose. The New Press, 2003.

*MIGNOLO, Walter D. *The Darker Side of Modernity*. Duke University Press, 2011.

PUAR, Jasbir K. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Duke University Press, 2007. (selected chapters).

*SEREQUEBERHAN, Tsenay. *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse*. Routledge, 1994. (selected chapters)

*SILVA, Denise Ferreira da. *Toward a Global Idea of Race*. University of Minnesota Press. 2007.

*SPIVAK, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (Harvard University Press, 1999.

*TAYLOR, Mark Lewis. *The Theological and the Political: On the Weight of the World*.

Fortress Press, 2011.

*TRACY, David. *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*. Crossroad, 1981.

REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Completing all required reading on time. Try to get started on a week's reading early, so that you can keep up and have time to develop questions for each week's seminar. (If you can post your questions early at Blackboard's "Discussion Board," that will give the conversants extra time to plan the seminar agenda of the week.)
- 2) Serve as a Conversant for at least one of the seminars. Instructions for Conversants are also given above, under "Seminar Procedures."
- 4) Submission by term-time of a substantive paper on a topic that treats some aspect of the four purposes given on this syllabus and in relation to some author(s) read for this class. I am open to a paper on other authors not read for this class, whom you sense warrant examination and research in light of the issues pertaining to the seminar, especially if the author(s) is crucial for your comprehensive exams preparation.

AGENDA

PART I

METHOD AND METHODS IN RELIGIOUS AND THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

"Method" in theology or other scholarship can be defined this way (to start with): "a set of statements of the theoretical approach a scholar uses to develop her/his subject matter." At its best, a method is able to state also how it relates to other theoretical approaches. In this sense "having a method" suggests a level of critical consciousness about what one is doing in one's theoretical work. In theological discourse, this means being able to state how one's own theories work among various other theological approaches and among those of other disciplines. The terms "theory" and "theoretical," in theology, refer to thinking that reflects upon, usually in an ordered manner, human experiences in their multi-dimensional complexity, in their temporal and spatial registers. Theory at its best – and I stress this mindful of theory in theological discourse - respects the extra-cognitive work performed by notions we call beliefs, ideas, dreams, myths, the arts (popular and "fine"), and so on. By "extra-cognitive work," I mean the functions of these notions in shaping human action and practices (which include ethos and affect), as well as theory.

Part I begins with a presentation of David Tracy's rigorous thinking about methods ("interpretation") in religious and Christian theological studies. Tracy's methodological statement clarifies his own approach, offering one way to order the fields of religious and theological interpretation. At the same time, Tracy makes clear how all theological thinking is mediated by its settings ("contexts," or "publics"). Because of this, theology, especially at the level of method, but also in its constructive symbolic or doctrinal offerings, must necessarily engage problems that are also philosophical, social, cultural, psychological, economic and political. Consequently, constructs of gender, sexuality, race, nation, imperial locus, and class are usually unavoidable dimensions of theological theory, as of all theory. (Throughout this course, consider each reading to be pertinent to those constructs, whether or not the constructs are explicitly named.)

Sept 6 – Introducing David Tracy and “Hermeneutics”



Eugene Kennedy, “A Dissenting Voice: Catholic Theologian David Tracy,” *The New York Times Magazine*, November 9, 1986, 20-27.

“David Tracy: Our Erasmus,” by Professor Stephen H. Webb, Wabash College
<http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/2009/04/david-tracy-our-erasmus>

“An Interview with David Tracy” with Professor Lois Malcolm, Luther Seminary, St. Paul
<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2269>
<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2269>

Sept 13 – Theological Method I: The Publicness of Theology & Religion

David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, “Part I: Publicness in Systematic Theology,” xi-xiv, 3-229.

Sept 20 – Theological Method II: Ordering Christian Theological Options

David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, “Part II: Interpreting the Christian Classic,” 231-456.

PART II

DECOLONIZING RUPTURE AND “LIBERATION” – RE-THINKING KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION IN THE WEST

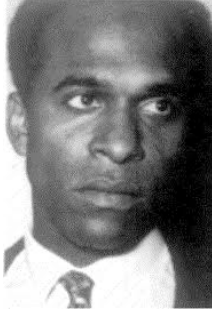
European theorists, and theologians among them, particularly in the last half of the 20th and early 21st centuries, have been involved in considerable re-thinking of what knowledge is and how it is produced, often due to the suspicions and resistance of non-European thinkers and their communities. (Signs of this are clearly evident in Tracy’s theology.) Here, in Part II, our seminar turns, in its next four sessions, to the “re-thinking of knowledge production in the West” as it has been prompted by several influential thinkers. In a first move, here, we turn to Frantz Fanon of the 1950s-1960s, and as Fanon’s work was interpreted hermeneutically in the 1990s through the philosophy of Tsenay Serequeberhan. The thinking here, from amid struggle in Africa and the Maghreb is an engagement with, and a major rupture of, Western modernity/coloniality, placing liberating struggle of subaltern groups on philosophical agendas.

In a second move, we turn to one of the major colonizing state powers, France, taking up two of its thinkers, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, still influential theorists in the U.S. of “poststructural” and “postmodern” turns - Foucault as articulator of the relations between Western knowledge and forms of power (power/knowledge), Derrida as thinker in “deconstruction,” tracing the de-stabilizing fault-lines of modernity/coloniality.

In a third move, turning to a fourth thinker in this Part, we turn to Duke University professor of Literature and Cultural Anthropologist, Walter Dignolo. He consolidates current decolonial thinking and “subaltern knowledge,” largely from Latin America, but also from thinkers across the tricontinental global South of Latin America, Africa and Asia.

So many other theorists could have been chosen here! I select these because (1) they take cognizance of political, cultural and intellectual issues raised by Tracy in Part I, above (often because of their own marginal or subordinated positions in the West), and (2) over the past several years these thinkers have entered and influenced religious and theological studies in enduring ways, and yet are not often treated at this seminary. I do not mean to imply that these “re-thinkers” in the West, singly or as a group, have been adequate to the theoretical challenges put to the West.

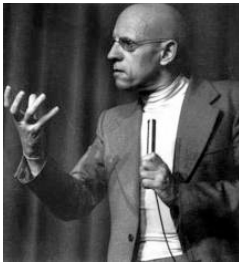
Sept 27 – Frantz Fanon: Reclaiming the Historicity of Colonized Existence



Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1-239.

Tsenay Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy*, 1-121.

Oct 4 – Michel Foucault: Discourse and Power, and Power/Knowledge

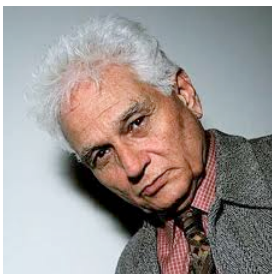


Michel Foucault, *The Essential Foucault* (Introduction, 1-5, 25-42, 43-57, 58-63, 126-44, 202-07, 246-58, 300-18, 351-69, 377-91).

Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976*, Picador reprint edition, 2003 (only chapters 3 and 4, 43-86).

Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, “Foucault in Tunisia,” 395-410.

Oct 11 – Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction, Traces, Hauntings, “Ghosts”



Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. (entirety)

Young, “Subjectivity in History: Derrida in Algeria,” in *Postcolonialism*, 411-26.

Interlocutor: David Bedggood “St. Jacques and the Ghosts of Marxism.” Bedggood is a sociologist from New Zealand, who is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Auckland University.

Oct 18 – Walter Mignolo: The “Darker Side” of Modernity/Coloniality



Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Modernity*, xi-xxxvii, 1-336.



[Fall Reading Period]

PART III

AMID AND BEYOND
THE RUINS OF MODERNITY/COLONIALITY

Each of the three figures treated in Part III of the seminar consolidate the deconstruction and critique of modernity and coloniality.

The first thinker here, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, once self-identifying as a “feminist deconstructionist thinker,” enables us to consolidate the problematic of Western modernity through her deconstruction of the triad of Kant, Hegel and Marx. We will also be introduced to her distinctive intellectual project, a feminism situating intercultural theories of gender and sexuality within a socialism that complexly engages capitalism while presuming socialist norms that coordinate desire and aesthetic education.

Kuan-Hsing Chen, a social and cultural studies scholar from Taiwan, publishing in Chinese, Korean, and English, enables the seminar to turn most forthrightly to the questions of imperialism as challenge to knowledge and method. More particularly, we

engage a scholar retrieving Fanon's enduring decolonizing project, while proposing "Asia as Method," a knowledge that exposes and criticizes "the U.S. imperial" and its imperial proxy-states. To keep foregrounded the problematic of sexuality and gender in relation to imperialism, I include here, very importantly, Jasbir Puar's work on "U.S. Sexual Exceptionalism." Wonhee Anne Joh's essay situates some of Chen's key insights in a postcolonial and decolonial Asian-American perspective.

Denise Ferreira da Silva, a sociologist and ethnic studies professor, offers a complex philosophical work that foregrounds the significant roles played by "race," or a "racial analytic," as a cultural-political signifier in Western modernity. Themes of gender, sexuality, coloniality, nation-state ideologies, and imperial violence will carry over throughout this week's reading of Silva, who is a Brazilian national, a permanent resident of the United States, and professor in both the UK and the US.

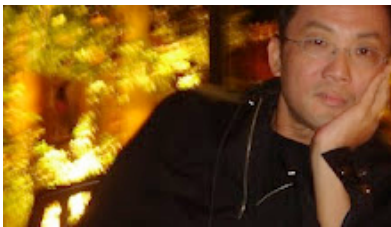
Nov 1 – Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: Feminist Deconstruction & Aesthetic Education



Spivak, *The Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, ix-xiii, 1-111.

Spivak, "Culture: Situating Feminism," and "Imperative to Reimagine the Planet," in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. Harvard University Press, 2012, 119-36, 335-50.

Nov 8 – Kuan-Hsing Chen: From Decolonization to Contemporary Deimperialization



Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization*, vii-xix, 1-268.

Jasbir Puar, "Introduction: Homonationalism and Biopolitics," "The Sexuality of Terrorism," and "Abu-Ghraib and U.S. Sexual Exceptionalism," in Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Duke University Press, 2007. Pages 1-36, and 79-113.

Wonhee Anne Joh, “Postcolonialism in Fugue: Contrapuntality of Asian-American Experience,” in Eleazar Fernandez, *New Overtures: Asian North American Theology in the 21st Century*. Essays in Honor of Fumitaka Matsuoka. Available online at [The Journal of Race, Ethnicity and Religion](#).

Nov 15 – Denise Ferreira da Silva: Western Modernity’s White Racial Analytic



Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, xi-xli, 1-90, 93-5, 171-267.



[Break for AAR/SBL, Fall Festivals, & U.S. Modernity’s “Thanksgiving”] PART IV

“THE RELIGIOUS” AND “THE THEOLOGICAL” – RE-ENGAGING THEOLOGICAL DISCOURSES

In this final Part of the seminar, we re-engage the meaning of these recent theorizations and critiques of Western modernity/coloniality for religious and theological studies. Judith Butler’s work is a program of performative critique in light of modernity’s patterns of compulsory heterosexuality and the imperial projects of global dominance that presume a primacy for the U.S-Israeli axis of power and interest (through not only Jewish but also Christian Zionism). In so doing, Butler returns us to some of the key issues of religious and theological interpretation we broached in the Tracy readings, especially as she examines the hermeneutics of Jewish religion and culture.

My book is introduced in the last week as one proposal for re-situating the meaning of “the theological,” as distinct from “Theology.” In The Theological and the Political I join Foucault’s critique of power/knowledge to a version of Derrida’s “hauntology,” by way of a social site ontology of agonistic being, yielding a discourse that privileges symbols and images – especially, as the popular arts in movements and practices of liberation. The theorizing of diverse antagonisms, spawned by different structures of imposed social suffering, prompt a discourse that is less a “systematic theology” as

preoccupying much of guild Theology, and more a fragmentary, image-oriented theological discourse of liberating struggle. I invite critical reflection on my book, not only as to its own merits and failings, but also, especially, in light of the thematics broached earlier in the seminar by other thinkers.

Nov 29 – Judith Butler: Performing Gender & Critique in *Pax Americana/Israelica*

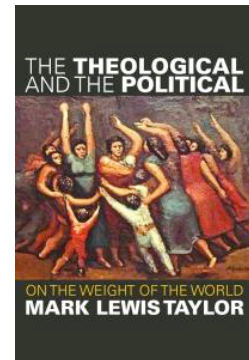


Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, the Prefaces 1999 and 1990 (vii. ff),” “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire” (1-22), and “From Parody to Politics” (194-204).

Judith Butler, *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*, 1-150, 181-224.

Dec 6 – Mark Lewis Taylor: Theological Studies amid Antagonism and Hope of Being

Mark Lewis Taylor, *The Theological and the Political*, 1-232



***Photo art on first page of syllabus.** Photograph by Mark Lewis Taylor, Palestine. Dheisheh Refugee Camp, November 2006. Comment at *99 Brattle* blog: [“But Is *That* Theological?”](#)