

T-624-625: Systematic Theology

Christian Theological Seminary
2000-2001
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The purpose of this course of two consecutive semesters is to develop the student's understanding of the content and coherence of Christian faith, culminating in a constructive statement by each student of her/his own understanding of the content of Christian faith. This statement, the Credo, will be no more than 30 pages long and will be due at the end of the second semester. (See attached "Explanation of Credo Assignment.")

The course is structured around basic topics in systematic theology, following the order presented in *Way of Blessing, Way of Life: A Christian Theology*. The instructor will address each topic, and there will be weekly small group discussions. We hope that a constructive, collegial conversation will take place among all participants in the course.

ASSIGNMENTS

Readings:

Each student is expected to read and reflect on the assigned scheduled readings in the following required texts:

Clark Williamson, *Way of Blessing, Way of Life*, 1999 (hereafter abbreviated as **WB**)

Christopher Morse, *Not Every Spirit: A Dogmatics of Disbelief*, 1994 (hereafter abbreviated as **NES**)

Each student is required to select **ONE** of the following texts in systematic theology, keying such readings to the course schedule of topics:

- 1) Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols., 1951-63.
- 2) Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 1991, and Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*, 1994
- 3) Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuria, eds., *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, 1996.
- 4) John Cobb, Jr., and David Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*, 1976, and Marjorie Suchocki, *God-Christ-Church: A Practical Guide to Process Theology* (new revised edition), 1997.

- 5) Catherine Mowry LaCugna, ed., *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective*, 1993, and Rita Nakashima Brock, Claudia Camp and Serene Jones, eds., *Setting the Table: Women in Theological Conversation*, 1995.
- 6) James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 1990, and *God of the Oppressed*, 1975.
- 7) Joe Jones, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, 2 vols. (privately printed, available in the CTS bookstore).

Topical Essays

Each student will write five essays on the major topics of each semester. Based on a careful reading of the assigned **required texts** for the topic, of the alternative text, and on lectures and class discussion, an essay should:

- 1) **identify and state clearly one or two issues which the student judges as important for systematic theological reflection;**
- 2) **analyze why the issue(s) are important with reference to readings and/or lectures;**
- 3) **indicate, with reasons, how the student herself is inclined to address the issue(s);**
- 4) **discuss how the issue affects the discourse or practice of the church and/or how it affects your role as a pastor-teacher.**

The essay should not try to be a summary of the topic itself. For example, when the topic is “God,” the student should not try to write a doctrine of God in four pages. Rather, the task is to learn how to think critically and constructively about Christian faith.

The essays should be no more than 1000 words apiece, should be double-spaced, and will be due in class on dates indicated in the following class schedule. *Late essays will be penalized.*

There are six topics each semester. Each student may choose to write on all six and drop the lowest grade, or the student may choose to write on only five.

Note: Topics VII and VIII (the first two topics [Christology] in the second semester) may be written by the student either as two essays of 1000 words each or as one essay of no more than 2000 words.

Class Participation

Roughly the last 45-50 minutes of each week’s class session will be given to class discussion, either in smaller discussion groups or plenary sessions. Students are asked to come to class each week with a **written** question or comment on the readings for the week (these comments to be handed in at the end of the session). Alternatively, students may post their questions and comments on the class website discussion group (noted above). The

advantage of using the website is that it will enable members of the class, along with the instructor and teaching assistant, to generate a conversation about theological issues.

These comments/questions will be taken into account in determining the grade for class participation.

Attendance

Attendance is critically important if we are to develop and maintain conversation among ourselves. Each student will be allowed one [1] absence from class each semester (one class equals one week's attendance). For each subsequent absence, the final grade for the semester will be reduced 0.6 points (the class is graded on a 4.0 scale). **Missing more than three full classes will result in an F in the course.**

Examinations

There will be two examinations in the first semester taken in class at the scheduled times. For each exam, the student will be responsible for demonstrating critical comprehension of the positions and issues represented in a) lectures; b) assigned required texts; c) alternative readings; and d) class discussions for articulating the student's own developing judgments concerning these matters.

Mid-Term—Oct. 26 (on topics I-IV).

Final Exam—Dec. 14, at the usual class time.

There will be no exams the second semester; the eschaton is, instead, the Credo.

Grading

First Semester:

Each of five topical essays—	10% (x 5 = 50%)
Mid-term exam-----	20%
Final exam-----	20%
Class participation-----	10%
Total-----	100%

Second Semester:

Each of five topical essays—	10% (x 5 = 50%)
Credo-----	40%.
Class participation-----	10%
Total-----	100%.

Each student who completes the first semester will receive a letter grade for that semester. However, this grade will be changed to W (withdrawal) if the student fails to complete the second semester of the course. Both semesters of the course must be completed if academic credit is to be received. Further, a student cannot pass the second semester nor get credit for the year, if he or she does not pass the Credo.

FIRST SEMESTER CLASS AND READING SCHEDULE

Aug. 31 Orientation to Course

Topic I: Thinking Theologically Read: WB, 1-44; NES, 3-85

Sept. 7 and 14—Lecture/discussion

Topic II: Revelation Read: WB, 45-72; NES, 86-112

Sept. 21 and 28—Lecture/discussion; essay on Topic I due Sept. 21.

Topic III: Scripture and Tradition Read: WB, 73-97; NES, 86-112

Oct. 5 and 12—Lecture/discussion; essay on Topic II due Oct. 5.

Topic IV: The Doctrine of God Read: WB, 99-130; NES, 113-138

Oct. 19—Lecture/discussion; essay on Topic III due Oct. 19.

Oct. 26—Lecture/discussion/**mid-term exam**

Topic V: Creation, Providence and Evil Read: WB, 131-156; NES, 198-224

Nov. 9 and 16—Lecture/discussion; essay on Topic IV due Nov. 9.

Topic VI: Humanity Read: WB, 157-184; NES, 256-287

Nov. 30/Dec. 7—Lecture/discussion; essay on Topic V due Nov. 30.

Dec. 12—essay on Topic VI due [there is no class meeting on this date]

Dec. 14--**Final Exam: regular class meeting time.**

SECOND SEMESTER CLASS AND READING SCHEDULE

Topics VII-VIII: Christology Read: WB, 185-226; NES, 139-170;
225-255

Jan. 18 , 25, Feb. 1 and 8—Lecture/discussion

Topic IX: The Holy Spirit

Read: WB, 227-250; NES, 171-197

Feb. 15 and 22—Lecture/discussion; essay on Topics VII-VIII due Feb. 15.

Topic X: The Church

Read: WB, 251-276; NES, 288-317

March 1 and 8—Lecture/discussion; essay on Topic IX due March 1.

Topic XI: Preaching, Sacraments, Ministry

Read: WB, 277-296; NES, nada.

March 15 and 22—Lecture/discussion; essay on Topic X due March 15.

Topic XII: Eschatology

Read: WB, 297-318; NES, 318-346.

March 29, April 19—Lecture/discussion; essay on Topic XI due March 29.

April 26—Plenary session; essay on Topic XII due April 26.

May 3, 11:00 A.M.: Credo Due. Explanation of the Credo assignment is attached.