Course Description

This course provides an introduction to many of the primary approaches, tasks, problems, and gifts related to systematic Christian theological reflection. Students survey the major doctrinal loci – e.g. creation, christology, ecclesiology – from a variety of theological perspectives and explore implications for faithful living, the church’s mission and witness, and critical issues facing the world’s peoples today.

Course Objectives

Knowing – To understand key themes and questions within the major doctrinal loci of the Christian faith and life, to grasp the interconnected nature of theological claims, and to comprehend the variety of approaches to theological reflection today.

Doing – To acquire basic skills in identifying, analyzing, and integrating theological claims, to gain competence articulating the practical implications of any particular theological affirmation, and to increase confidence participating in theological reflection at the levels of interpersonal conversation, ecclesial ministry, social criticism, and public discourse.

Being – To broaden one’s perspective on the complexity and promise of theological work, to nurture habits of prayerful discernment, self-critical humility, intellectual rigor, playful curiosity, and gracious hospitality necessary for theological engagement with others, and ultimately to deepen one’s love of God and neighbor and one’s faithfulness to God’s work of righteousness in and for the world.

Required Texts


Selected Readings (Available as PDF)


Cone, James H. *A Black Theology of Liberation*.

Barth, Karl. *Dogmatics in Outline*.

LaCugna, Catherine Mowry, *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective*.


Sölle, Dorothee, *Thinking About God: An Introduction to Theology*.


Hauerwas, Stanley, *After Christendom: How the Church Is to Behave If Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation Are Bad Ideas*.

Sugirtharajah, R.S., *Asian Faces of Jesus*.

Beattie, Tina and Gerard Loughlin, *Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body*

Course Requirements

A. Class Participation – 20%

B. Weekly Theology Journal (due Mondays by midnight, 2 pages single-spaced, cite page numbers from the readings) – 20%

1. List key questions that theologians seek to answer within this loci of theological reflection.
2. Summarize the key claims regarding this loci made by each of the theologians assigned for the week.
3. Identify the theological questions that are most compelling or important to you within this loci and explore your own provisional claims.

C. One Theological Reflection Presentation (sign up the first night of class for your week, 5-7 minutes, be creative, poetic, musical, visual, etc. with your mode of presentation) – 10%
Present a theological reflection to the class on a contemporary artifact from everyday life (e.g. a film, a painting, a building, a public policy, a technology, a mode of production, a form of consumption, a landscape, a fashion style, a neighborhood or city design, an object of sexuality, a tool of oppression, a garden, a seminary).

D. Three Theological Integration Papers (5 pages double-spaced, due weeks 5, 9, and 13) – 50%

Articulate a substantive theological position on an unresolved issue in the church or world (e.g. white privilege, climate change, economic inequality, the ordination of LGBTQ persons, evangelism/mission with the “nones”) that integrates 3 doctrinal loci in a coherent manner.

* All written work is to be submitted in Microsoft Word format, double-spaced, Times Roman font, 12pt type, 1 inch margins.

**Grading Criteria**

**Class Participation**
1. You attend every class period and are on time.
2. You demonstrate familiarity with the assigned readings for the day.
3. You listen carefully to the instructor and to your classmates.
4. You are an active participant in the class discussions.

**Journal**
1. You accurately understand and summarize the readings.
2. You demonstrate intellectual curiosity in your theological exploration.

**Presentation**
1. You engage your classmates with theological sincerity, creativity, and depth.

**Papers**
1. You accomplish what the assignment asks of you.
2. Your paper offers a clear thesis statement, follows a logical organization, is well developed, and is free of grammatical and spelling errors.
3. You enter into intelligent, critical conversation with the course texts and lectures.
4. You demonstrate a depth of insight in your theological claims.

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1: Introduction to Theological Reflection**

Morse, *Not Every Spirit*, Chapters 1-3
Placher, *Essentials of Christian Theology*, Introduction
Isazi-Díaz, Mujerista Theology, Chapter 4

Week 2: Theological Method
Morse, Not Every Spirit, Chapter 4
Cone, A Black Theology of Liberation, Chapters 1-2

Week 3: Revelation
Morse, Not Every Spirit, Chapters 5-6
Placher, Essentials of Christian Theology, Chapter 1
Barth, Dogmatics in Outline, Chapters 2-4

Week 4: God
Morse, Not Every Spirit, Chapter 7
Placher, Essentials of Christian Theology, Chapter 2
LaCugna, Freeing Theology, Chapter 4

Week 5: Creation
Morse, Not Every Spirit, Chapter 10
Placher, Essentials of Christian Theology, Chapter 3
Suchocki, God, Christ, Church, Chapter 5

Week 6: Anthropology
Morse, Not Every Spirit, Chapter 12
Placher, Essentials of Christian Theology, Chapter 4
Baker-Fletcher, My Sister, My Brother, Chapter 7

Week 7: Jesus Christ
Morse, Not Every Spirit, Chapter 8
Placher, Essentials of Christian Theology, Chapter 5
Sölle, Thinking About God, Chapters 10-11

Week 8: Holy Spirit
Morse, Not Every Spirit, Chapter 9
Placher, Essentials of Christian Theology, Chapter 7
Moltmann, The Source of Life, Chapter 2

Week 9: Salvation
Morse, Not Every Spirit, Chapter 11
Week 10: The Church
Morse, Not Every Spirit, Chapter 13
Placher, Essentials of Christian Theology, Chapter 6
Hauerwas, After Christendom, Chapter 1

Week 11: Christianity Among the Religions
Placher, Essentials of Christian Theology, Chapter 8
Samartha, Asian Faces of Jesus, Chapter 7

Week 12: Eschatology
Morse, Not Every Spirit, Chapter 14
Placher, Essentials of Christian Theology, Chapter 9
Beattie, Queer Theology, Chapter 20

Week 13: Concluding Thoughts on Theological Reflection