

(21-505) INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGY

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Location: Main Building, 205
Time: Tuesdays, 6:30-9:30pm

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

Morse, Christopher. *Not Every Spirit: A Dogmatics of Christian Disbelief, 2nd Edition*. T & T Clark, 2009 (ISBN: 9780567027436, Price \$36.43 at www.barnesandnoble.com).

Placher, William C., ed. *Essentials of Christian Theology*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2003 (ISBN: 9780664223953, Price \$26.24 at www.barnesandnoble.com).

Selected Readings (Available as PDF)

Isasi-Díaz, Ada María. *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century*.

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*.

Suchocki, Marjorie Hewitt, *God, Christ, Church: A Practical Guide to Process Theology*.

Baker-Fletcher, Karen and Garth KASIMU, *My Sister, My Brother: Womanist and Xodus God-Talk*.

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

Moltmann, Jürgen, *The Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life*.

Gutierrez, Gustavo, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*.

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

Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Chapter 9

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