

Theology in a World of Differences

TH614

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PURPOSE

As pastoral leaders and public theologians, in a global community marked by great differences, we find ourselves often in conversations that matter greatly. To be respectful and to articulate our views clearly are challenges we all face, whether the conversation is in a coffee shop, from a pulpit/lectern or on social media. Recognizing the ambiguity and pluralism of our time in which not all voices in conversation are equal and some cultures dominate, our confidence needs to be strong in offering theological clarity and meaning in respectful and helpful ways.

The purpose of this course is to further the student's competence and encourage theological reflection across lines of difference by deepening understandings of contextuality, unity and diversity, postcolonialism, interculturalism and religious pluralism. Students will be challenged into conversation with a variety of texts, theologies and worldviews in order to more carefully articulate their own understandings.

COMPETENCY OBJECTIVES

In completing this course, the student will:

1. Develop an understanding of contextual theology and its relevance for engaging the diversity of contemporary culture.
2. Probe into at least three 'areas of difference' and engage them conversationally.
3. Acquire fluency in different theological approaches, and demonstrate an ability to converse with them in a world of pluralism.

FORMAT

The class meets once a week for three hours during the Fall term. In keeping with the course's theme, and in addition to lectures, video presentations and invited guests, conversation will feature strongly, emerging from a list of weekly required readings and the students' own experiences across differences.

REQUIRED READING

- Douglas John Hall, *Why Christian? For Those on the Edge of Faith*. Augsburg, 1998.
- Stephen B. Bevans, *Models Of Contextual Theology*. Revised and Expanded Ed. Orbis, 2002 (1992).
- Letty M. Russell, *Just Hospitality: God's Welcome in a World of Difference*. Shannon Clarkson and Kate M. Ott, eds. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009.
- Walter Brueggemann, ed. *Hope for the World: Mission in a Global Context*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.
- S. Mark Heim, *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995.

Additional readings will be assigned and available on Moodle.

PRE-REQUISITE

TH500 Constructive Theology I

ASSIGNMENTS

- **Class presentations:** two presentations in which the student is, for example, responsible for hosting “the conversation starter” (further details in syllabus).
- **Three brief written assignments (maximum 2 pages):** various approaches that may include an analysis of a particular challenge in theological difference, or an analysis of a contextual issue (further details in syllabus).
- **Final integrative paper (12-15 pages):** in which the student demonstrates the ability to analyze and articulate conversant approaches to a variety of theological texts and contexts in a world of differences. *Research depth:* 10-20 entries beyond course texts for final paper as applicable (further details in syllabus).

Selected Bibliography

- Adams, Michael. *Unlikely Utopia: The Surprising Triumph of Canadian Pluralism*. Toronto: Viking Canada 2007.
- Bevans, Stephen B. *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004.
- _____. *Models of Contextual Theology*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992.
- _____ and Roger P. Shroeder. *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011.
- Bosch, David J. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992.
- _____. *Witness to the World: the Christian Mission in Theological Perspective*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1980.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Mandate to Difference: An Invitation to the Contemporary Church*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.
- _____ and George W. Stroup, eds. *Many Voices One God: Being Faithful in a Pluralistic World*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.
- _____, ed. *Hope for the World: Mission in a Global Context*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.
- Burnham, Frederic B., ed. *Postmodern Theology: Christian Faith in a Pluralist World*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers Inc., 1989.
- Cobb, John B., Jr., and David Ray Griffin. *Process Theology: an Introductory Exposition*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976.
- Copeland, Shawn. "The Power of Difference: Understanding, Appreciating, Critiquing Difference." *The Ecumenist* 43, no.2 (Spring 2006): 1-10.
- Dupuis, Jacques. *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997.
- _____. *Christianity and the Religions: from Confrontation to Dialogue*. Translated by Phillip Berryman. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2003.
- Guder, Darrell L., ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998.
- Hall, Douglas John. *Bound and Free: A Theologian's Journey*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005.

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_____, ed. *Grounds for Understanding: Ecumenical Resources for Responses to Religious Pluralism*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998.

Huber, Mary Taylor and Nancy C. Lutkehaus, eds. *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999.

Jenkins, Philip. *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Jones, W Paul. *Theological Worlds: Understanding the Alternative Rhythms of Christian Belief*. Nashville: Abington, 1989.

Johnson, Allan G. *Privilege, Power, and Difference*. 2nd ed. McGraw Hill, 2006.

Knitter, Paul. *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985.

Kwok, Pui-lan. *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*. Louisville: John Knox Press, 2005.

Lakeland, Paul. *Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997.

McCormack, Bruce L. and Kimlyn J. Bender, eds. *Theology as Conversation: The Significance of Dialogue in Historical and Contemporary Theology: A Festschrift for Daniel L. Migliore*. William B. Eerdmans, 2009.

McLaren, Brian D. *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper and Row, 1951.

Petersen, Rodney L., and Nancy M. Rourke, eds. *Theological Literacy for the Twenty-First Century*. Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002.

Placher, William C. *Narratives of a Vulnerable God: Christ, Theology, and Scripture*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994.

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Sanneh, Lamin. *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West*. Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003.

Stassen, Glen H., D. M. Yeager and John Howard Yoder. *Authentic Transformation: A New Vision of Christ and Culture*. Nashville: Abington Press, 1996.

Stewart, Robert B., ed. *The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N.T. Wright in Dialogue*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006.

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Tickle, Phyllis. *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008.

Tracy, David. *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989.

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Minneapolis: Winston-Seabury, 1975.

Volf, Miroslav, and Dorothy C. Bass, eds. *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*. Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002.

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