

HIS/NT6/701

**Space, Time & Practice in the New Testament and the Early Church
Spring 2018**

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Purpose

“We start by building houses and end with houses building us.”

What do space and time have to do with religion in general and Christianity in particular? How does attention to spatio-temporality furnish resources for an understanding for the practices of faith? What might the insights of spatial study offer to contemporary practices of ministry? How does attention to space and time help to nurture thoughtful, engaged and generous Christian faith? Traditionally space and time have been conceived as an acultural backdrop or inert receptacle against or in which things take place and unfold. More recent considerations of space and time conceive of them as culturally and socially constructed dynamic phenomena that are brought about by practices and imagination – often in conventional ways, but sometimes also in daring and creative ones. Such considerations are entirely consistent with a theological framing of the world and in fact are at home in the premodern world in which the religious imagination of the world’s major faith traditions took form. Faith, worship, and confession enchant the world and invite us to consider ourselves as intentional practitioners of time and space. Attention to space and time provide valuable resources for understanding how faith promotes particular space-timescapes, expressed in certain kinds of practices. This includes the ways we imagine the world, the ways we organize worship spaces, and the ways we construct time (liturgical calendars, festivals; commemorations; etc.). As Christianity in particular and religion in general become ever more marginalized in a secular society and where there is often a tacit domination of the practices of consumerism as the only space and time to be lived, usually with terrible consequences for the environment and communal life, an alternative means of imagining space and living time becomes more critical than ever. The aim of this course is to introduce students to the discipline of spatiality and to offer a means to explore its importance for understanding biblical and early Christian texts and their relevance for contemporary ministry, and for those who are not Christians, to explore dimensions of space and time specific to other religious and philosophical traditions, and to help students become intentional and conscious of their own space time practices and beliefs as well as those of their faith communities.

Spatiality as a discipline refers to the ways in which humans create space and time through imagination and action. The phrase “the spatial turn” describes ways in which the social geographical disciplines of spatial study have been applied across a wide array of disciplines with often-dramatic results and reconfiguration of ways of thinking about and researching various phenomena. Spatiality asks us to

consider the social world around us as comprised of multiple space-time configurations that invite certain kinds of practices. Conversely, it notices how practices create space and time. This is particularly relevant for communities of faith because as believers/religious practitioners gather together they make space and time, and structures of belief place them within spatial temporal configurations and modalities for action. For example, a congregation who gathers for Sunday worship inhabits and practices a peculiar space-time construction of Easter and is invited in worship to continue to practice that spatio-temporal formulation in daily life.

This course explores the various ways in which early believers constructed spatio-temporal worlds and how those formulations were created in the midst of other and often competing space-time conceptions (imperial, civic, Greco-Roman religious, and so on). The course aims to equip students to recognize the ways the secular configures different modalities of space and time and to consider ways in which religious leaders are called upon to be conscientious in their own practices and creations of space and time both as inheritors of traditions and as proclaimers of received wisdom. The course looks in particular at New Testament (Pauline and Johannine literature, Hebrews, 1 Peter, James, Revelation) and other early Christian texts of the first two centuries (the “Apostolic Fathers,” the Apologists, Irenaeus, “Gnostics”, martyrology, Eusebius of Caesarea). As such it seeks to extend beyond a restricted focus on the New Testament canon to consider a wider body of early Christian texts and practices.

Prerequisites: NT 500, 501, History 500, or by permission of instructor

Competence Objectives

In successfully completing this course, a student will be able to:

- Demonstrate an introductory working knowledge of contemporary spatial theory
 - Identify some basic approaches of select spatial theorists
 - Identify ways in which spatial theory contributes to the practices of ministry and religious life
 - Converse about how contemporary postcolonial theory, gender and queer studies, feminist theory, and literary study furnish useful points of convergence with spatial study in the study of religion in general and early Christianity in particular
- Demonstrate an awareness of the use of spatial theory in the analysis of early Christianity
 - Demonstrate familiarity with a variety of early Christian texts through engagement with primary sources

- Demonstrate an understanding of the spatial and temporal features of the material world of the Roman Empire and their importance for interpreting biblical and early Christianity
- Use spatial theory in a sustained analysis of a biblical or other early Christian text or, in the case of students who do not self-identify as Christian, a text or practice representative of their own religious tradition
- Demonstrate the application of spatial theory in the religious interpretation of contemporary life
 - Identify congregational organization of space, time, and practice
 - Explore preaching and liturgical leadership (or, as relevant practices of other religious traditions) as resources for spatio-temporal awareness, confession, and construction
 - Apply the tools of liturgical, leadership, gender, postcolonial, and literary study to an articulation of the practice of religious leadership in the student's own faith tradition in order to advance an awareness of space-time construction more generally.

Format and Content

For on-campus students, work in the course consists of one 3-hr lecture/week which includes lectures, assigned readings, brief analyses of readings, and presentation of the contents of a final paper. For distance students, work consists of recorded audio lectures, engagement with other distant students in sharing written exercises, and engaging in written form the topic of a final paper. A synchronous learners will engage one another through weekly one-page single-spaced reflections on the contents of the lecture to be distributed to one another by the start of the succeeding week's lecture and then reflected upon in a further half-page reflection within 5 days of class. Synchronous learners will be present for the classroom discussions and offer a presentation of their final project.

Expectations and Evaluative Criteria:

1. Attendance as specified by VST requirements, which requires at least 80% attendance. For on-campus students, this means attending class on time with no more than 2 allowable absences for any reason. For distance students, this means listening to all the recorded lectures.
2. Reading all required assignments before class.
3. Completion of all assignments on time.
4. In the case of absence of a lecture, the student will be required to submit a 2-3 page single-spaced précis of the lecture by the start of the following class. This is to be a précis not a personal reflection on the lecture.
5. A 30 minute presentation of a study of space-time and practice analysis of an early Christian text or another religious resource of the student's own

- tradition (i.e. Jewish, Buddhist, etc.) that uses the insights of the methods discussed in the course in the analysis and interpretation of religious identity and practice in that tradition. Students from Indigenous and non-North American contexts, as well as those from the 2/3rds world, are to consider these topics from the perspective of their own respective cultural locations.
6. A one-page, single-spaced, 12 pt. font reflection on the contents of each week's lecture, due before the start of the succeeding class. One or more students will take turns presenting their reflection to the rest of the class to begin discussion at the start of class.
 7. A paper as described in a separate hand-out

Assignment and Course Evaluation

A research paper:

- Basic Degree (Dip; MA; MDIV): 3750-5000 words/15-20 pages
 - Research depth: 10 academic /scholarly entries beyond course texts for final paper as applicable
 - **Due: 6 April 2017**
- Advanced Degree (Th.M.): 7500-8750 words/30-35 pages
 - Research depth: appropriate for Advanced Degree, but minimally 15 academic /scholarly entries beyond course texts for final paper as applicable
 - 10 item annotated bibliography
 - **Due 22 May 2017**
- Bibliographical and citation style must conform to a recognized academic style guide of the student's choice. At the top of the bibliography on the paper the style will be named. Bibliographies that do not conform to the recognized format chosen will be returned for correction.
- Students are strongly encouraged to avail themselves of the library resources of Regent College and UBC.

Course evaluations at VST combine a letter grade system with a competence model of assessment. Individual assignments within a course are given narrative evaluations, that is, APP (Approved) or INC (Incomplete) or NAPP (Not Approved) with narrative comments, based on the competencies and expectations set for that assignment. No number or letter grades or weights of assignments are calculated for assignments. One re-write is allowed on any assignment which is INC or NAPP within a course. The re-written assignment is due two weeks after the work is returned. The final evaluation for an assignment can be APP or NAPP after a re-write. The final grade for a course is reported both as a letter grade and as a narrative evaluation on the basis of a student's overall fulfillment of the competencies and expectations of the course, which are stated in the course syllabus. No number grades are assigned. Final grade designations are:

A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-; NAPP. No re-writes are allowed to improve a letter grade given as a final grade for a course.

Policy on Late assignments

Submission of assignments on time is a part of academic, professional and pastoral competence and a part of every course at VST. All assignments in courses are due on the dates specified in the syllabus for each course. Failure to submit an assignment on time without the request of an extension will be noted in the narrative evaluation of an assignment and will be reflected in the final grade.

Course Content:

- Introduction to Spatial Theory and the Contribution of Postcolonial and Feminist/Gender/Queer Studies to its Theorisation
 - Edward Soja, Michel de Certeau, Henri Lefebvre, Pierre Bourdieu, David Harvey, Edward Casey, Homi Bhabha, Guyatari Spivak, Judith Butler
- Space-time of the Imperial and its Gendering
- The Construction of Space-time in the Constantinian Church via Eusebius of Caesarea and the Invention of “the Second Century”
- Space-time Practices in Pauline Literature: Urban Poverty, Time, Space and Practice and Pauline Teachings and Ethics
- Space-time Practices in Johannine Literature: The Word Dwelling in the World in a Community of Persecuted Friends
- Space-time Practices in Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, and Revelation: Renouncing the Beast by Alternative Space-time Sacrifices
- Space-time Practices in Second Century literature including:
 - Apostolic Writings (*Shepherd of Hermas*, *1 Clement*, *Epistle of Diognetus*, the *Didache*, *Epistles of Ignatius*, *Epistle of Polycarp*): Some Variegated Terrains of Space-time amongst Early Christ Believers in Urban Contexts
 - Martyrological Literature (*The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, *the Martyrdom of Blandina and Companions*, *the Martyrdom of Polycarp*): Bending Gender, Space and Time in the Arena
 - Select “Gnostic” Texts (*Gospel of Truth* and other Nag Hammadi texts): Strange Space-times in the World
 - Justin Martyr: Assailing the Demonic, Imagining the Cosmic Space-time of the Logos
 - Irenaeus: Recapitulations of Time and Space
- Student presentations

Texts: Available at UBC Bookstore (these books are also available as used copies from various book sellers)

Required

- Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley, Calif. [u.a.]: Univ. of California Press, 2013. ISBN 978-0520271456
- Holmes, Michael W. *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek texts and English translations*, 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 2007. ISBN 978-0801034688
- Soja, Edward W. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Malden: Blackwell, 2014. ISBN 978-1557866752
- Various Moodle Readings posted on the dedicated course site

Recommended

- Casey, Edward S. *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009. ISBN 978-0253220882
- Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell, 2000. 978-0631162940
- Hubbard, Phil and Rob Kitchin, eds. *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, 2nd ed. London [u.a.]: SAGE, 2011. ISBN 978-1849201025
- Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 2016. ISBN 978-0631181774