TH5/714 (3) Indigenous Theologies and Epistemologies

Class dates: Sept 9, 23; Oct 7; Nov 4, 18  Plus on-site intensive Oct 17-19

Course Description: This course is an exploration of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. The course foci include Indigenous identity, Indigenous ways of teaching, ceremony and their implication for the practice of theological reflection. The course focuses primarily upon North American Indigenous groups through dialogue, media, assigned reading and an intensive weekend.

Students will meet for 5 weekly sessions and one extended retreat to talk about Indigenous identity and its development within dominate society.

This course will assist students with inquiring into the Indigenous mind as a way of thinking and being rather than a concept of identity and separation. Throughout discussions and writings, all are supported to explore personal and collective experiences past and present.

Throughout all exploration, the emphasis will be on foundational spiritual teachings from Indigenous thought and protocol and the teachings of Christ.

Recommended Texts

Texts are available on Amazon


Waters, Anne, American Indian Thought (selected essays), (Wiley-Blackwell) 2003


Competencies

1. Define the broad parameters of Indigenous ways of knowing.
2. Begin to discuss, articulate, formulate and critique the questions that are used to explore Indigenous identity and Indigenous knowledge.
3. Begin to be able to compare and contrast Indigenous ways of knowing and being in relation to Western Christian Theology
4. Document the environmental, cultural, and historical influences shaping the relationship between Indigenous Ways of knowing and being and the colonial enterprise
5. Discuss ways to learn from different Indigenous ways of understanding without being guilty of cultural appropriation.

FORMAT AND CONTENT

The assignments include assigned reading, facilitating dialogue, short paper and final project. We will discuss the intensive weekend during the first class session.

**Requirements**

**Participation and Reading**

Students are required to read assigned portions of the required texts. Each student is expected to actively participate in class discussion. You are encouraged to come prepared to engage in a dialogue about the reading assigned for each class. To facilitate this discussion, each student will be required to make one or two 5 minute in class presentation on particular reading for each class. In addition, each student will post to canvas before each class 6 bullet points for the assigned reading for the day. Three of the points will be descriptive of the reading and three of the points will be evaluative.

**Short Paper**

Students will write a short description of how their approach to theological education and/or ministry could be enhanced by Indigenous understanding. Describe how you interact with Indigenous ways of knowing in a respectful, appropriate manner that aids Indigenizing some aspect of North American society, without falling into a new cultural colonialism. Due November 4.

**Final project:**

Students will write a 4500-5000 word double spaced essay exploring in greater depth an Indigenous culture specific way of understanding key theological concepts: God and creation; ceremony or worship; and ethics or law. After giving a description of these terms make comments on how they might aid in de-colonization of Modern Christian theology. Due December 9.
COURSE POLICIES

1. Attendance Learners are required to attend all the class sessions.

2. Reading and assignments Students are expected to read all required assignments before class and to complete all assignments as outlined in the syllabus within the specified dates of the course and term.

3. Submission of assignments Written assignments should follow the format set out by the Society of Biblical Literature. (A concise form of key examples may be found, free of charge, at https://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/pubs/SBLHSupp2015-02.pdf

Please note the following additional criteria.

- All assignments must be submitted as a word document to the course canvas page.
- All assignments should have a title page containing all of the pertinent information.
- All assignments will be double-spaced in 12 point New Times Roman.
- All assignments must be submitted as Microsoft Word documents.
- File name submitted must begin with the student’s surname and designate the particular assignment. (e.g. Smith Theology Paper 1.doc)
- The professor will return all submissions to the canvas page.
- Failure to submit assignments in the form outlined above will result in a grade reduction of a full letter grade, at least. In some cases, it may require the student to resubmit the assignment according to the proper format. Such may also, consequently, be subject to the penalties of a late submission.

4. Academic honesty Students are expected to adhere to VST’s requirements for academic honesty as published in the Student Handbook.

5. Inclusive language In speaking and writing, inclusive language is expected when making reference to humans and a variety of metaphors are anticipated when making reference to God.

6. Assignment and Course Evaluation
Course evaluations at VST combine a letter grade system (A+ to B-; course failure is “Not Approved”) including narrative comments based on the competencies of the course. No number grades or weights of assignments are calculated, nor are final grades given numerical equivalents.

Individual assignments within a course are given narrative evaluations, that is, APP (Approved) or INC (Incomplete) with narrative comments, based on the competencies and expectations set for that assignment. One re-write is allowed on any assignment that is INC. 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.

7. **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. Failure to submit an assignment on time will be noted in the narrative evaluation of an assignment. Repeated failure to submit assignments on time may affect the final grade for the course. All assignments must be completed in a manner that meets the expectations of the professor in order to receive a passing grade for the course.

8. **Limitation on use of social media**
Ordinarily, the use of electronic devices in the contexts of classrooms or meetings will be to support the learning, formation, or agenda at hand.

9. **VST is committed to creating safe space and an inclusive learning environment.** If you have a diagnosed or suspected learning disability, chronic condition, mental health concern, or physical requirement which you anticipate may impact your participation in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs with the instructor and the Dean within the first week of classes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Presenter(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sept 9</td>
<td>Introductions:</td>
<td>Charleston (ch. 1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sept 23</td>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>Wilson / Waters (ch.1) / Kovach (Ch. 1, 2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Oct 7</td>
<td>Decolonize and Sin</td>
<td>Twiss Ch 2 / Charleston (ch. 6) / Battiste 11-53</td>
<td>Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Oct 17</td>
<td>Restoration and Identity</td>
<td>Charleston (ch. 6) / Battiste 115-178</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Oct 17</td>
<td>Land, Heaven and Hell</td>
<td>Charleston (Ch. 2, 4) / Waters (Ch. 17, 18)</td>
<td>Toward a shared Narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Oct 18</td>
<td>Story and epistemology</td>
<td>Archibald 1-100 / Waters (Ch. 2) / Kovach (Ch. 3 - 5)</td>
<td>Telling the story And the resurrection Of story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Oct 18</td>
<td>Story and ontology</td>
<td>Waters (Ch. 8, 9, 13) / Charleston (Ch. 10) / Kovach (Ch. 6, 7)</td>
<td>Going outside And learning the Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Oct 19</td>
<td>Creating</td>
<td>Charleston (Ch. 5) / Battiste 179-208</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Nov 4</td>
<td>Thanksgiving and/ or worship</td>
<td>Charleston (Ch. 8) / Waters (Ch. 20, 21)</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Nov 18</td>
<td>Mission and teaching</td>
<td>Archibald 101-167 / Charleston (Ch. 9) 209-278</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Nov 18</td>
<td>Final things</td>
<td>Kovach (Ch. 8-9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Waters, Anne, American Indian Thought (selected essays), (Wiley-Blackwell) 2003