

Mary for Protestants

Vancouver School of Theology Summer School July 12-16, 2021, 2-5 pm PDT

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To attend to Mary of Nazareth is to attend to the whole of the Christian mystery. As St. John of Damascus said, "The name of the Theotokos expresses the whole mystery of God's saving dispensation." The medieval and early modern church fortified this claim with so many devotional practices that one can lose sight of her Son. The Reformation rebelled against Marian theology and practice, so that Karl Barth could say "In the doctrine and worship of Mary there is disclosed the one heresy of the Roman Catholic Church which explains all the rest." The ecumenical movement saw some movement back toward rapprochement between Protestants and Catholics, even as Rome promulgated such modern doctrines as her immaculate conception and bodily assumption into heaven that ultimately discouraged further steps.

In attending to Mary, we see the Christian faith in all its glory and in all its contentiousness. What do we make of Mary now, as Protestant thinkers and ministers? And how might this thought be expressed once again in liturgical and devotional practice?

This course introduces students to the biblical/exegetical and historical/theological place of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Christian thought and life. Particular attention is paid to Christological, ecclesiological, and eschatological elements and the close reading of primary texts.

Course competencies

This course will equip students to

- (1) Enter sympathetically into moments in the history of Christian thought very different from the modern era. We will attend to the Christological, ecclesiological, and eschatological elements of Marian thought with close reading of primary texts.
- (2) Describe and practice Marian typological readings of the Old Testament and properly interpret key New Testament passages, as well as to trace major theological developments across patristic, medieval, Reformation, and modern eras.
- (3) Students will develop the ability to articulate the rationale for key moments in Marian doctrine, dogma, and practice in the history of the church and to adjudicate their applicability to today, perhaps even allowing ancient insight to criticize our contemporary.

Resources

Ray Aldred, "Preaching in the Traditions of Indigenous Peoples," forthcoming, available on Canvas.

Sarah Jane Boss, *Mary: The Complete Resource* (New York: Continuum, 2007). *This book is unfortunately out of print and expensive to buy used. It is, however, blessedly available as an ebook in our library. You are welcome to read the whole tome, but we will focus on these portions in class*

Primary Sources

"The Conception of the Virgin Mary," from *The Protoevangelium of James* (Boss 47-49).

"Cyril of Alexandria on the Title Theotokos," from the *Third Letter to Nestorius* (74).

"The Vision of the Monk Robert," (173-176).

"Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary from the Collection of Johannes Herolt," 202-203.

"Extract from a Medieval Sermon on the Conception of the Blessed Mary," 236-237.

"*Ineffabilis Deus*: Dogmatic Constitution on the Immaculate Conception," 279-283.

Secondary Sources

Boss "Editor's Introduction," 1-7, & "The Title Theotokos," 50-55.

Parlby "The Origins of Marian Art," 106-127.

Murphy "Immaculate Mary: The Ecclesial Mariology of Hans Urs von Balthasar," 300-312.

Johnson "Mary in Early Modern Europe," 363-381.

Boss "Telling the Beads: The Practice and Symbolism of the Rosary," 385-394.

Boss "Marian Consecration in the Contemporary Church," 411-423.

Boss "Black Madonnas," 458-474.

Jason Byassee, "What about Mary?: Protestants and Marian Devotion," *Christian Century* (December 13, 2004), on Canvas.

John Calvin *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.11. Battles edition, vol. 1 (95-116).

Martin Luther "The Sermon on the Mount and the Magnificat" (excerpt), in *Luther's Works* 21:297-329.

Tim Perry, “Behold the Handmaid of the Lord” Joseph Ratzinger on Mary,” in Tim Perry, ed., *The Theology of Benedict XVI: A Protestant Appreciation* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019), on Canvas.

____. “Decline and Exaltation: Mary from the Reformation to the Nineteenth Century,” in *Mary for Evangelicals: Toward an Understanding of the Mother of Our Lord* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2006), 209-238. On Canvas.

Joseph Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion: Meditations on the Church’s Marian Belief*, trans. John M McDermott, SJ (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1983). *Please purchase!*

Rowan Williams *Ponder These Things: Praying with Icons of the Virgin* (Brewster, Mass.: Paraclete, 2012). *Note: the print version is worth buying for the illustrations, and, oddly, is cheaper than the Kindle.*

Schedule

Monday: Rationale for the course and scriptural foundation. Please preread Ratzinger, Aldred, Byassee, and Perry “Behold the Handmaid.” Please also preread and dwell upon Gen 1:1-4; Ex 1:15-21; Judges 4; 1 Kgs 19. NT: Luke 1-2; Matthew 1-2; Rev 12

Tuesday: The early church and its flowering. Please preread Boss.

Wednesday: Pruning the tree, on the Reformers. Preread Luther, Calvin, and Perry, “Decline and Exaltation.”

Thursday: Devotional Practice. Preread Williams.

Friday: In-class presentations on “The challenge of Mary.”

Assignments

1-An in-class presentation on the final day of the course. This might be a good opportunity to pre-present material that will go into your final paper so as to get feedback and input from classmates and the instructors. Plan to present for no more than ten minutes.

2-Final assignment, due August 31. You have two options here.

A-More academically inclined students may write an academic paper on a topic in Mariology of your choosing, drawing on materials in the class and extending them with your own research. 6-8 pp (1800-2400 words), with 5-8 bibliographic entries beyond course texts.

or

B-More pastorally-inclined students may design a sermon series. Please write and deliver the first sermon and present it to the instructors digitally, turning in a manuscript. The

body of the manuscript should make sense in your ministry context. Please footnote extensively to show where you are drawing on course materials, since this will almost certainly not be anything you would want or need to tell your hearers. Sermons two through the four or five should be extensively outlined, so that you could stand and deliver those sermons if you had to, but there is no need to record or manuscript them. Please include citations in which you show your engagement with the course materials and 5-8 extra bibliographic sources beyond those assigned here.

3-Class participation and engagement with the material and one another are musts.