

THE 131: Introduction to Theology

Fall 2012 Syllabus



OnLine

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Weekly

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Explores major themes of Christian doctrinal Theology: God, faith, Jesus Christ, revelation, Church, sacraments, prayer, death and social justice.

The text we will be using states: “*The College Student’s Introduction to Theology* seeks to provide an overview of theology’s various specialties. Its approach is methodological rather than topical, though traditional theological issues in Christology, ecclesiology, theological anthropology, liturgy, and moral theology, as well as contemporary issues such as Church renewal, different spiritualities, feminist theology, the option for the poor, and world religions, are treated as examples.”

The ultimate goal is to assist students to integrate fundamental Christian theological principles and their Christian experience into a new, critical, and ever developing, practical faith life.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Identify the methods of theology that have developed over the history of the Church, so that it assists one’s own deeper theological investigation upon future personal or ministerial issues.
- Recognize the various theological topics that challenge the Christian faith with a basic understanding of what and how theologians introduce their opinions in comparison to what and how the Church presents its answers or solutions to teach and guide Christians to live out their faith true to their Christian identity.
- Integrate theological studies and one’s own life experience of faith in order to grow spiritually and pastorally with a well-informed and critical faith.
- Enter into rational dialogue effectively and respectfully with all those who want to question one’s faith or discuss religious or theological issues.

FORMATIONAL APPLICATION

It is a basic yet important insight to realize that God is active and present in all persons and cultures. The role of the missionary or of any minister, either ordained or lay is to honor the dignity of all human beings, their cultures, and their spirituality. It is important in personal pastoral spiritual development to be aware of the various cultural biases, which may influence our own worldview. Also this awareness addresses important issues of today such as the Pastoral minister’s capacity to question the tradition and read the signs of the times and culture so that they promote social transformation and the questions that are raised about mission and ministry from the perspective of religious pluralism.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

OnLine Presentations, Lectures, threaded class discussions, short reflection papers, writing critical questions engaging the readings, mid-term project and final project using *Criterion* and *Populi*.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- ***The College Student’s Introduction to Theology***
Thomas P Rausch, Editor, 1993 Liturgical Press. ISBN: 0-8146-5841-5
- ***Introducing Asian Feminist Theology***
Kwok Pui-Ian, 2000 Sheffield Academic Press. ISBN: 1-8412-7066-0

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- **Other readings as assigned during the course**

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Do your own work and present your ideas with integrity. Using another's idea is only permitted if you give credit to the original source. Cheating is prohibited. Cheating includes (but is not limited to) looking at study materials during an exam, allowing others to copy your exams, obtaining exam materials in advance, and failing to report cheating by others. **Plagiarism, even if unintentional, if only one sentence, is cheating.** It is very important to make sure that you do not copy or paste from other sources, that you attribute your ideas as needed, and that you use quotation marks when indicated. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me *before* the assignment is due. The Academic Honor Code is presented on pp. 60-61 in the College Handbook.

SPECIAL NEEDS

According to the Americans With Disabilities Act, if you are aware or suspect that you have a disability which may interfere with your completing various requirements for this course, you have a right for reasonable assistance and are encouraged to speak confidentially with the college counselor Ms. Nan Peck or your instructor regarding any necessary arrangements or considerations for you to successfully complete this course.

REFLECTION PAPERS

Reflection papers (800 words) are to focus on a particular aspect, theme or issue within the assigned readings, lectures or class discussions. A successful reflection paper depends on several factors. Primary among these are the intent and purpose of your paper. What issue or questions are you exploring or analyzing? Follow the MLA format for writing papers. Unclear or rambling writing will not merit a satisfactory grade. Additionally, be mindful of the following:

1. Focus and develop your main idea, writing in complete paragraphs.
2. Review your writing: spelling, grammar, and punctuation affect your grade.

MEANS of ASSESSMENT

Reflection Papers (2 @ 15%) 30%

Mid-Term Project 20%

Engaging the Readings: Threaded Discussions & Critical Questions 25%

Final Integration Project 25%

PROFESSOR COMMITMENT

I am committed to your success and obligate myself to the following:

1. Conscientiously prepared for class
2. Available outside of class for discussions about your progress and work
3. Return your work within a reasonable amount of time
4. Respect, challenge, and hold each student accountable as an adult learner within a community of scholars

NETIQUETTE

What is netiquette?

Simply stated, it is network etiquette: the etiquette of cyberspace. Etiquette is defined as "the code of behavior that delineates expectations for social interactions according to contemporary conventional norms within a society, class, or group." In other words, netiquette is a way of

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behaving and interacting properly online. As a community of seekers and learners we are bound to a code of ethical behavior among the other members in our dealings with each other.

Why is netiquette important?

Each culture, (and cyberspace has its own culture), operates under a system of rules that may not be explicitly stated but are expected and enforced all the same. When you enter any new culture you're liable to commit a few social blunders unless you know the rules. You might offend people without meaning to. Or you might misunderstand others and take offense when it's not intended.

The rules in cyberspace are intrinsically different than those of everyday life because the internet presents such a new environment. Gone are the gestures, facial expressions, voice tone, laughter, and body language of human non-verbal communication that inform our understanding of others.

To make matters worse, the logistics of communicating in cyberspace make it easy to forget that you're interacting with other real people -- not just characters on a screen, but live human beings. So, as a result of missing out on important non-verbal clues, forgetting that people online are still real, and not knowing the conventions, well-meaning students are prone to miscommunication.

The **Simple Rules of Netiquette** and the explanations that follow are offered as a set of general guidelines for cyberspace. They give you some basic principles to use in communicating online.

General

1. Remember the human and respect everyone's human dignity.
2. Adhere to the same standards of behavior online that you follow in everyday life.
3. Know where you are in cyberspace.
4. Respect other people's time and bandwidth.
5. Make yourself look good online, but no need to show off.
6. Make your messages easier to read by making your paragraphs short and to the point.
7. TYPING IN ALL CAPS IS CONSIDERED SHOUTING ON THE INTERNET.
8. Messages in all lowercase letters can be difficult to read, instead, use normal capitalization.
9. Be careful when using sarcasm and humor, people cannot see your visual cues.
10. Never give your logon or password to another those who might need access have them.

Group Communication

1. Respect the fact that the class list is a closed discussion; do not forward mail from your classmates to others without their permission.
2. In an online forum or newsgroup, debate is welcome, but be tactful in responding to others. Remember that there's a person (or a whole class) at the receiving end of your post.
3. When responding to a message from someone else, briefly summarize her or his post.
4. If you quote a previous post (by using the reply function for example), quote only enough to make your own point.
5. Keep your questions and comments relevant to the focus of the discussion group. Emails intended for an individual or small group should be emailed only to those people directly.
6. When posting a question to the discussion group, request that responses be directed to you personally. Post a summary or answer to your question to the group.
7. Include your signature at the bottom of Email messages when communicating with people who may not know you personally or broadcasting to a dynamic group of subscribers.
8. Resist the temptation to "flame" others. Remember that these discussions are "public" and meant for constructive exchanges. Treat others as you would want them to treat you.

Individual Communication

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1. If you want to get in touch with only one person in the class, send a message to that individual's e-mail address, not to the entire discussion list.
2. When replying to a message posted to a discussion group, check the address to be certain it's going to the intended location (person or group).

COURSE

- **Module One:** Introduction to OnLine Learning and Syllabus
- **Module Two:** Theology and Methods in Theology
- **Module Three:** The Hebrew Bible
- **Module Four:** The Christian Scriptures
- **Module Five:** Ecumenical Councils & Early Church Fathers and Mothers
- **Module Six:** Systematic Theology
- **Module Seven:** Christian Anthropology
- **Module Eight:** Moral Theology – Faith and Life
- **Module Nine:** Sacramental and Liturgical Theology
- **Module Ten:** Effects of the Reformation and the Council of Trent
- **Module Eleven:** Contemporary Issues – Vatican II Theology
- **Module Twelve:** Christian Spirituality
- **Module Thirteen:** Other Voices – Feminist, Mujerista, Liberation Theologies
- **Module Fourteen:** Other Voices – Asian, African, Native Theologies
- **Module Fifteen:** Theology in a Multi-Cultural and Pluralistic World
- **Module Sixteen:** Tomorrow's Church