

Saint Paul School of Theology
TH311 Theology in Context: U.S. Liberation Theologies
Fall 2004

Instructor

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Office Hours

By appointment and during
posted office hours, which vary
weekly to accommodate the
instructor's class and meeting
schedule

Course Meeting Times and Place

Thursday, 1:10-4:00 p.m.
Kansas-Winger 309

Course Description

Catalog Description: This course provides an introductory examination of selected figures, movements, and/or issues in Christian theology with an eye to the historical, social, and geographical contexts of these theological positions. Analyzing ways these positions offer resources for contemporary Christian witness forms a key consideration of the course. The particular topical focus for the course is announced prior to class registration. The course may be repeated for credit when the topic varies if the instructor approves. (3 credit hours)

U.S. Liberation Theologies: The current topic concentrates on African American, Hispanic-Latino/a American, and Asian American theological perspectives, with options to explore other diverse expressions of liberation or contextual theology (for example, Native American, feminist, or gay/lesbian theology). The theme of the course entails reflection on constructive theology that emerges from the experience of marginalization and oppression in the United States.

Learning Goals

1. The primary goal of the course is to promote understanding and appreciation of the breadth and depth of theological perspectives in Christian theology. The course emphasizes contemporary theology emerging from (a) deconstruction of marginalization, oppression, and/or exploitation and (b) construction of liberating alternative theological perspectives unique to immigrant, racial/ethnic, indigenous, and other contexts.
2. Learning begins with attention to methods, tasks, language, and sources in liberating theological perspectives. The course requires examination geography, history, and social/political relations as the context for constructing theology.
3. Learning entails the ability to read and interpret theological positions arising from unfamiliar social contexts. Analysis and criticism require skillful and just methods of engaging texts, as well as humility about insights and conclusions.
4. Learning extends insights about liberating theologies by reflecting on praxis. Praxis is the process of reflection and action, which requires justice work to arise from theological reflection. Learning includes imaginative thinking about applications of liberating theologies to practical ministries.
5. Learning recognizes the diversity of doctrinal and theological expression within Christianity and acknowledges that context, class, gender, and race are some of the factors that shape the development of Christian thought and express the valuable tensions in Christian theology.

Required Texts

- Brock, Rita Nakashima, *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power*, Crossroad, 1988. [N.B. Brock's book is out of print, and limited chapters are assigned in the event that only one library copy is on reserve.]
- Douglas, Kelly Brown, *The Black Christ*, Orbis, 1994.
- Fernandez, Eleazar S., and Fernando F. Segovia, *A Dream Unfinished: Theological Reflections on America from the Margins*, Orbis, 2001.
- Hopkins, Dwight N., *Down, Up, and Over: Slave Religion and Black Theology*, Fortress Press, 2000.
- Isasi-Díaz, Ada María, *Mujerista Theology*, Orbis, 1996.
- Lee, Jung Young, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology*, Fortress, 1995.
- Pedraja, Luis G., *Teología: An Introduction to Hispanic Theology*, Abingdon, 2003.

Course Schedule

Reading Week: October 18-22
Thanksgiving Recess: November 22-26

Session 1
September 2 Introducing and Designing the Course

African American Theology

Session 2
September 9 Topic: Historical Context and Method
Reading Assignment: Hopkins, chapter 1 or 2 or 3
Douglas, chapters 1 and 2

Session 3
September 16 Topic: Constructive Black Theology
Reading Assignment: Hopkins, chapters 4-6

Session 4
September 23 Topic: Womanist Theology
Reading Assignment: Douglas, chapters 3-5

Session 5
September 30 Topic: Diversity of African American Theology
Presentations: Fernandez and Segovia, Part I (five options)

Hispanic-Latino/a Theology

Session 6
October 7 Topic: Historical Context and Method
Reading Assignment: Isasi-Díaz, chapters 1-3
Pedraja, chapters 1-4

Session 7
October 14 Topic: *Mujerista* Theology
Reading Assignment: Isasi-Díaz, chapters 4-8

Reading Week
October 21 No class meeting

Session 8
October 28 Topic: Hispanic Theology
Reading Assignment: Pedraja, chapters -10

Session 9
November 4 Topic: Diversity in Hispanic-Latino/a Theology
Presentations: Fernandez and Segovia, Part III (four options)

Asian American Theology

Session 10
November 11

Topic: Historical Context and Method
Reading Assignment: Lee, chapters 1-3

Session 11
November 18

Topic: Multicultural Theology
Reading Assignment: Lee, chapters 4-7

Thanksgiving
Recess
November 25

No class meeting

Session 12
December 2

Topic: Feminist Theology
Reading Assignment: Brock, chapters 2-4

Session 13
December 9

Topic: Diversity in Asian American Theology
Presentations: Fernandez and Segovia, Part II (four options)

Session 14
December 16

Topic: Liberating Theology in the United States
Discussion: Theological Roundtable
Due: Research Paper
Class Participation Self-Evaluation

Course Requirements

1. *Class participation.* Class participation is expected of all students. (Please refer to the “Class Attendance” policy in the Saint Paul School of Theology catalog.) Any absence from class will lower your class participation grade, but serious extenuating circumstances should be discussed with the instructor. Class participation means that you have completed all reading and writing assignments for the day, not that you have understood all that you read or that your work is perfect. Good class preparation means that you have come to class prepared to ask questions, to engage the topic of the day, and to think critically about writing. Students have an opportunity to submit a class participation self-evaluation as part of the final grade. The Class Participation Self-Evaluation (attached to the syllabus) is due December 16. If the self-evaluation is late or not submitted, the instructor’s class participation grade stands alone as the grade for class participation in the course.
2. *Presentations with a short paper.* Student presentations assist the class in developing the range of theological options available to the class. The required text edited by Fernandez and Segovia provides a collection of essays from African American, Asian American, and Hispanic-Latino/a theologians. Each student is assigned to present one article from the book. The presentation is enhanced by a short written assignment of five pages: 2-3 pages summarizing the article, 1-2 pages analyzing the article in terms of the main required texts, and 1 page exploring implications for the church and ministry. The paper should be typed and double-spaced with one-inch margins. Please use *A Manual for Writers of Term Paper, Theses, and Dissertation* (sixth edition) by Kate L. Turabian to guide writing and format (including footnotes or endnotes, which are required). The papers should be distributed to members of the class (by email, if possible) prior to the class presentation. Presentations are scheduled September 30, November 4, and December 9—each student presents on only one of the scheduled dates.
3. *Research Paper and Theological Roundtable.* Students are required to prepare one research paper, which is described to the class in a theological roundtable on December 16. Two options for the topic of the paper are possible: (a) a paper on a figure who writes a liberating theology in the United States not covered in class (e.g., Native American theology, white feminist theology, gay theology, lesbian theology, middle class theology, blue collar theology, etc.) or (b) a figure in African American, Asian American, or Hispanic-Latino/a theology not covered in class. Obviously the paper requires library research. The paper should be 15-20 pages. Two-thirds of the paper should describe and analyze the figure’s theology and the remainder of the paper should explore implications for the church and its ministry. The paper should be typed and double-spaced with one-inch margins. Please use *A Manual for Writers of Term Paper, Theses, and Dissertation* (sixth edition) by Kate L. Turabian to guide writing and format (including footnotes or endnotes, which are required). Papers are not distributed, but a very brief summary of the paper is presented in class.

Grading

Class Participation	_____%	[Percentages are determined by consensus of students and instructor during the first class meeting.]
Self-Evaluation	_____%	
Professor	_____%	
Presentation/Short Paper	_____%	
Research Paper/Roundtable	_____%	

The course is graded according to the grading system described in the current Saint Paul School of Theology catalog and handbook.

Student Responsibilities

Students are expected to abide by institutional guidelines regarding class attendance, integrity of work, and student conduct. If you are unfamiliar with these guidelines, consult the current catalog and handbook. The professor reserves the option of failing students strictly for failure to attend class (including regular absences from part of class). A single instance of plagiarism may also result in failure.

Professor's Responsibilities

My job is to teach with integrity the scholarship representative of my field, to see that students learn as much as possible, and to create a comfortable environment for learning. These goals cannot be accomplished without genuine attention to the unique strengths, experiences, and expectations that both the professor and students bring to the classroom. My goal is to provide encouragement and support for your learning. Sometimes flexible procedures and learning options are necessary to facilitate the kind of teaching and learning that should occur here. I am anxious to hear what energizes you, what disappoints you, where you disagree, and what helps you to learn. PLEASE SEE ME IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR SPECIFIC NEEDS.

Learning-Disabling Conditions

It is the Saint Paul faculty commitment to facilitate the learning of students capable of graduate-level seminary work. Any student who has a condition that may prevent full demonstration of his/her abilities (e.g., difficulty seeing or hearing, dyslexia, or other learning disabilities) should contact the instructor and the Office of Student and Community Life) immediately to discuss learning needs, alternatives that have worked for the student in the past, and mutually accountable accommodations to ensure the student's full participation and evaluation in the course.

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. Please see me whether the accommodations you need are long-term or short-term.

Criteria for Evaluating Course Work

Regardless of whether you write a paper, answer an essay question, voice an oral presentation, or create any original project, the academic context requires that certain minimal requirements characterize your work. While there are subjective components in the grading process, most professors are concerned that you become well educated in four basic qualities of excellent academic work:

1. ***Demonstration of an empathetic understanding of the content of texts and resources.*** Your topic should not only be well researched in the library, through interviews and observations, and from assigned readings and class discussions, but you should be able to provide a fair description and a clear understanding of texts and resources. This is apparent in the ability to describe and discuss precisely and accurately what an author has written or a speaker has said. Evaluation, response, and critique follow accurate representation of another's ideas—earn the privilege of criticizing a viewpoint by showing that you really understand it.
2. ***Clear critical thinking that provides appropriate specific evidence for conclusions.*** Use the most precise historical, empirical, or contemporary data or information to support the claims of your thesis and paragraphs. Conclusions follow from and are supported by evidence. Be sure that your evidence is relevant, accurate, and detailed. Even creative writing requires logical relationships among ideas to assist your readers in following the plot or main point.
3. ***Creativity that moves beyond reporting someone else's ideas.*** Your creative addition to academic discourse might include questioning, evaluating, applying, criticizing (positively or negatively), developing, or responding. You might see a connection between two or more ideas. You might see information from a unique perspective. The minimal requirement of academic work is correctly reporting what is read or discussed. Excellent work moves beyond repetition of others' ideas to unique insights, organization, correlations, and theses. Work to find your own scholarly and professional voice.
4. ***Flawless grammar, spelling, and form.*** Excellent written work is conscious of proofreading and good communication. Oral presentations are equally accountable for careful expression. A brilliant thesis can be lost in a paper or project that obscures its ideas with careless communication. Your readers and listeners should not have to guess what you mean—help them by speaking and writing well.

Name _____ Semester _____

Please evaluate yourself in the following categories. Circle the number that best describes your class participation if 1 is excellent, 2 is very good, 3 is average, 4 is satisfactory, and 5 is poor.

Preparation

- I have conscientiously attempted reading assignments. 1 2 3 4 5
- I have reflected seriously on reading assignments. 1 2 3 4 5
- I have worked to bring depth to comments and questions by preparing more than superficially for class. 1 2 3 4 5
- I prepared written assignments on time and when the syllabus required them. 1 2 3 4 5
- I checked spelling, grammar, quotations, and footnotes before submitting papers. 1 2 3 4 5

Class

- I have attended class regularly. 1 2 3 4 5
- I have contributed to class discussions. 1 2 3 4 5
- When I talked in class, I remained focused on the topic of class discussion. 1 2 3 4 5
- I have listened respectfully to comments and questions raised by other students. 1 2 3 4 5
- I brought my questions to class or to the professor. 1 2 3 4 5
- I expressed disagreement constructively. 1 2 3 4 5
- I have shared my responsibilities for successful class sessions. 1 2 3 4 5
- I supported other students' efforts to improve their writing. 1 2 3 4 5

Attitude

- I have remained involved and engaged in the course. 1 2 3 4 5
- I have been constructive in relationships with others. 1 2 3 4 5
- I put extra effort into the course – such as study groups/partners, library research, extra reading or writing. 1 2 3 4 5
- I made appointments with the professor when I needed assistance or wanted to discuss the course. 1 2 3 4 5
- My understanding of theology has grown. 1 2 3 4 5

I assign myself the following letter grade: _____

Please submit any additional reflections on class participation that should affect your grade in writing on the back of this page. This worksheet is intended to assist you in thinking about the quality of your participation in class. Any interpretations, additions, or connections of criteria should be included in your additional reflections.