

Saint Paul School of Theology	Fall 2008
THL420 Seminar in Theological Studies: Process Theology	

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Office Hours at Saint Paul School of Theology	By appointment anytime or during posted office hours, Tuesdays, 2:30-4:30 p.m. Office hours and appointments are also available by telephone and email.

Class Meeting: Kansas-Winger 407
Thursdays, 8:00-10:50 a.m.

Course Descriptions

Catalog Description:

This course provides an advanced level investigation of selected figures, movements, and/or issues in Christian theology. Analyzing ways these positions offer resources for contemporary Christian witness forms a key consideration of the course. The particular focus for the course is announced prior to registering. This course may be repeated for credit when the topic varies. Prerequisite: THL301. Semester credit hours: 3

Course Topic:

The current session of “Seminar in Theological Studies” addresses a contemporary theological movement known as process theology, relational theology, process relational theology, and Whiteheadian theology. *Process theology* may refer to a much broader assemblage of philosophical theologies, but the current course explores only those forms structured and informed by the philosophies of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne. Process theology is a philosophical theology characterized by a dynamic and relational worldview. Process theology is compatible with science, ecology, feminist and womanist thought, Black theology, Latin American theology, Asian theology and worldviews, Latino theology, Buddhism, and Judaism.

Course Concept:

The course is designed as a seminar, and the format entails discussion, collaboration, and online course tools.

Moodle

The course requires the instructor and students to interact using Moodle as our course management software. To enroll in the Moodle course, please follow these steps:

1. Find <http://saintpaul.fishersnet.net/moodle> using your internet service provider and browser.
2. On the Saint Paul homepage, find our course in the fall 2008 list.
3. If you have not used Moodle, you will need to create a user name and password of your choosing, but be sure to remember both!
4. All students must enroll in the course using the following enrollment key: Process2008.
5. After you enroll, please visit and develop your Profile and explore the course.

Course Teaching-Learning Objectives

1. Teaching and learning begin with understanding method (how scholars investigate topics and draw conclusions), sources (what information scholars consult to form new ideas), and language (how scholars express ideas). Students should familiarize themselves with scholarly methods in science, religion, and interdisciplinary reflection.
2. Teaching and learning depend on sophisticated reading of texts. Students should develop the skills of empathetic and critical reading. The diverse contexts that form postmodern thought create worldviews that may not be your own. Diverse worldviews demand charitable readings of texts for the sake of understanding the authors' points of view and with awareness that theology is neither abstracted from culture nor limited to singular "correct" forms of expression.
3. Teaching and learning involve critical thinking, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. One pedagogical strategy for appropriating these skills is reading texts, engaging discussion, and writing assignments with awareness of perspectives and worldviews, which shape unexamined assumptions as well as explicit theological claims. A key to learning in the course is interpreting the philosophical worldview that shapes process theology, including how the worldview addresses persons and communities marginalized by class, gender, race, theology, and sexual orientation.
4. Teaching and learning lead to praxis. The goal of the course is to consider applications to ministry and Christian witness. The course assumes that Christian vocations demand mature integration of thought and action.

Required and Recommended Texts

All required texts are on reserve at the Saint Paul School of Theology library.

Cobb, John B., Jr. *God and the World*. Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1998.

Keller, Catherine. *On the Mystery: Discerning God in Process*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.

McDaniel, Jay, and Donna Bowman, ed. *Handbook of Process Theology*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2006.

Mesle, C. Robert. *Process-Relational Philosophy: An Introduction to Alfred North Whitehead*. West Conshohocken, Penn.: Templeton Foundation Press, 2008.

Mesle, C. Robert. *Process Theology: A Basic Introduction*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1993.

Suchocki, Marjorie Hewitt. *Fall to Violence*. New York: Continuum, 1995.

www.ctr4process.org



John B. Cobb, Jr.



Marjorie H. Suchocki



Catherine Keller

Course Schedule: September 2-December 12, 2008

September 4:

Topic: Introduction to the Course and Process Theology
Required Reading: Course syllabus

September 11:

Topic: God and a Whiteheadian Worldview
Required Reading: Cobb, pages 9-66
Required Activity: www.ctr4process.org

- Listen to John B. Cobb's lecture "Process Theology: An Introductory Introduction." (Go to "About CPS" on the toolbar. Select "What is Process?" in the menu.)
- Scan "What Is Process Theology? An Interview with Marjorie Suchocki."
- Scan "Process Theology" by John B. Cobb.

Reading Suggestion: Consult Mesle's books to assist you in interpreting all reading assignments for the course. Mesle's books explain concepts and definitions in accessible form. See also the short glossary in McDaniel and Bowman, pp. 5-8.

September 18:

Topic: God and a Whiteheadian Worldview
Required Reading: Cobb, pages 67-102
Student Presentations: McDaniel and Bowman, chapters 1 and 2

September 25:

Topic: God and a Whiteheadian Worldview
Required Reading: Cobb, pages 103-813
Student Presentation: McDaniel and Bowman, chapters 3 and 6

October 2:

Topic: Theology, Sin, and Violence
Required Reading: Suchocki, pages 11-64

October 9:

Topic: Theology, Sin, and Violence
Required Reading: Suchocki, pages 65-127
Student Presentations: McDaniel and Bowman, chapters 8 and 9

October 16:

Topic: Theology, Sin, and Violence
Required Reading: Suchocki, pages 128-165
Student Presentations: McDaniel and Bowman, chapters 10 and 11
Due: Seminar Paper Topic

October 23:

Reading Week

October 30:

Writing and Research Day
Students are expected to use class time for research and writing related to seminar papers.

November 6:

Topic: Feminism and Process Theism
Required Reading: Keller, pages ix-68
Due: Seminar Paper

Reading Suggestion: Keller's book includes further reading and questions for discussion and reflection on pages 180-186.
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November 13:

Topic: Feminism and Process Theism
Required Reading: Keller, 69-132
Student Presentations: McDaniel and Bowman, chapters 13 and 14

November 20:

Topic: Feminism and Process Theism
Required Reading: Keller, pages 133-176
Student Presentations: McDaniel and Bowman, chapters 16 and 18
Due: Insight Blog (ready for grading)

November 27:

Thanksgiving Recess

December 4:

Topic: Seminar Papers

Student Presentations:

Due: Class Participation Self-Evaluation Work Sheet
Extra Credit Papers (last date to submit)

December 11:

Topic: Seminar Papers

Student Presentations:

Course Requirements

1. Class participation is expected of each student. By class participation, I mean that each student must attend class regularly and engage in discussions. Students must attempt seriously all required assignments, and the instructor expects that advanced students are capable of completing all reading and written assignments. This does not mean that students fully understand material, but that they are familiar with the texts and know which passages are puzzling. Class participation allows students to raise questions and to achieve some understanding of course content. Good class participation in a seminar course includes active listening to and support for other students. At the end of the semester, students assess the quality of their class participation and assign themselves a letter grade using a self-evaluation work sheet, which makes explicit the criteria for good class participation. The instructor also assigns a class participation grade. The **Class Participation Self-Evaluation Work Sheet** (attached to the syllabus as page 13) is due no later than **Thursday, December 4**. The professor's grade determines the whole class participation grade in the event that the Class Participation Self-Evaluation Work Sheet is not submitted or is submitted after the December 2 deadline.
2. One strategy for learning process theology is to develop a glossary of theological terms unique to the movement. In response to each reading assignment, students are required to engage in developing a glossary on Moodle, which allows students to propose and comment on definitions of terms. The challenge is to define terms in accessible language without oversimplifying the meanings, but try to write so that your congregation might understand the terms. Students need not write or comment on every term and definition, but each student must initiate at least one definition per month (no duplicates of definitions) and comment on a few others. The **Moodle glossary** is due **each Wednesday** as students complete readings for Thursday class. The Moodle glossary activity is part of the class participation grade.
3. As students engage required reading, they will prepare a journal on Moodle. The journal includes three short paragraphs as follows:
 - Discussion of one keen insight from the required reading.
 - Posing of one question inspired by the required reading.
 - Suggestion of one ministry application evoked by the required reading.

The assignment is written in the form of blog, which is found in the Moodle student profile. The **Insight Blog** is submitted weekly, but all entries must be completed for grading on **November 20**. [Note that the professor will read blogs weekly, so students may not wait until the last minute to post all blogs.] Students may write blogs individually or in conversation with one other student.

4. Students assist in defining and characterizing process theology during class sessions through a series of presentations from McDaniel and Bowman's *Handbook of Process Theology*. The assignment requires a 3-4 page paper posted on Moodle by 8:00 a.m. on the date of presentation. The presentation is not a paper reading, but requires students to understand the material well enough to discuss the assigned chapter using notes. Each presentation is 10 minutes long and is followed by opportunity for class discussion. The point of the presentation is to inform the class about readings not required of all students, so students should envision themselves clearly and briefly explaining the content of the assigned chapter. The **Presentation and Short Paper** deadlines are **Thursdays, September 18, 25, October 9, 16, November 13 and 20**.
5. Students are required to write one paper: 10-12 double-spaced pages. The paper requires reflection on two articles written by process theologians. Library research is required by each student to find two articles appropriate for the assignment. The Center for Process Studies website (www.ctr4process.org) may be helpful for finding topical bibliographies (Go to "Publications" on the toolbar and select "Bibliographies" in the drop down menu.) Students must declare a **topic** no later than **October 16!** A successful paper will include the following components:
 - Description of a Christian doctrine developed by process theology
 - Description of a proposal for the practice of ministry by a process theologian
 - Analysis of two articles (doctrine and practice) using resources from required readings
 - Original application to ministry

The form of the paper must follow Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual of Style for Writers' of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (sixth edition). Because students have access to Turabian's manual and to the professor's digest of the manual, the papers will be graded strictly on proper form (title page, footnotes/endnotes, bibliography). Please submit papers to howellnr@spst.edu as a Word document (**one file only!**), and confirm that the attachment is included by sending a copy of the email to yourself, rather than emailing the instructor to ask whether the paper has been received. Students may also use delivery and read notifications. The **Seminar Papers** are due **no later than November 6**. Because of the flexible deadline, any papers received after November 6 will be assigned a grade no higher than C. This means that students should plan to complete the paper earlier than November 6 in case some emergency arises to delay completion of the assignment. **Fifteen-minute Seminar Paper Presentations** are scheduled on **December 4 and 11**. Students may co-author papers.

6. **Extra Credit** is possible in the course when important lectures or events are relevant to the course. Events must be approved by the instructor. To receive extra credit, submit a one- or two-page, double-spaced paper with one paragraph

summarizing the main thesis and supporting points in the lecture and with a second paragraph discussing the relevance of the lecture to a specific theme or issue in the course reading assignments. Use specific details and citations from reading to locate the course material relevant to the lecture. Extra credit papers that do not include both required parts do not receive credit. Extra credit papers never penalize student grades, but an accepted extra credit paper may tip a borderline final grade to the higher grade. A successful extra credit paper adds 0.1 point (based on a 4.0 scale) to the final grade. **Extra Credit Papers** are accepted anytime during the semester, but **no later than December 4**.

Grading

Students in consultation with the instructors determine how grading will be assessed. At the end of the term, students receive letter grades in accordance with policies and descriptions outlined in the current catalog.

Class Participation/Glossary		_____%
Self-evaluation	_____%	
Professor evaluations	_____%	
Presentation and Short Paper		_____%
Insight Blog		_____%
Seminar Paper		_____%
Extra Credit Paper	Adds 0.1 to final grade	

[N.B.: Submission of late papers and late postings on Moodle result in grade penalties of at least one letter grade.]

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/or 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. Adherence to clear critical thinking, relevant and accurate evidence, and logical organization constitute sound arguments. 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 repeating what is read or discussed. Excellent work moves beyond repetition 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.

Student Responsibilities

Students must abide by policies established in the Saint Paul handbook and catalog. Pay special attention to the policies on Integrity of Work Submitted and Class Attendance found in the catalog. The instructor reserves the option to fail a student for a single instance of plagiarism. The professor reserves the option to fail a student strictly for habitual failure to attend class or for habitual tardiness.

Students are invited to communicate with the instructor. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of illness, if you have emergency information to share with the instructor, 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 the instructor for any assistance with your learning and class attendance.

Professors' 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 learn. PLEASE SEE ME IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR SPECIFIC NEEDS.

Learning-Disabling Conditions

Saint Paul faculty are committed to facilitating 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 office of the Dean of Students immediately to discuss evaluation and documentation of learning needs, alternative learning strategies 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. Students with documented learning disabilities should consult the Saint Paul School of Theology Handbook and comply with institutional guidelines and policies. Similarly, mental or physical conditions should be documented and discussed with the Dean of Students, who is authorized to arrange accommodations, and all handbook guidelines and policies apply.

Inclusive Language

In oral and written course work, students are expected to be conscious of the power of language. Inclusive language respects all human diversity, and students must demonstrate awareness that language about persons and God expresses values and impacts ethics theology. Both gender and race, for example, are socially-constructed categories, and changing language is part of bringing justice to discourse.

Class Participation Self-Evaluation Work Sheet
Saint Paul School of Theology

Nancy R. Howell
Fall 2008

Name: _____

Course: THL420 Seminar in Theological Studies: Process Theology

Circle the number that best describes your class participation in each category if 1 is excellent, 2 is very good, 3 is average, 4 is satisfactory, and 5 is poor.

Preparation

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| I conscientiously attempted reading assignments. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| I reflected seriously on reading assignments. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| I 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 or my self-assigned deadlines required them. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| I checked spelling, grammar, quotations, and footnotes before submitting papers. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| I posted contributions on Moodle by the deadlines for discussion. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Class and Moodle

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| I attended class weekly. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| I always attended class on time. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| I contributed to class discussions. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| I remained focused on the topic of class discussion. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| I 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 shared my responsibilities for successful class sessions. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| I supported other students' efforts in class discussions or assignments. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| I contributed to Moodle discussions and commented constructively on other students' work. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Attitude

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| I remained involved and engaged in the course. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| I was constructive in relationships with others. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| I put extra effort into the course—such as study groups/partners, library research, recommended or supplemental reading. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| I contributed my share of the work in collaborative writing or projects. | 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 |
| I took responsibility for my learning. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| My understanding of course content has grown. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

I assign myself the following letter grade: _____
(Enter A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D, or F in the blank.)

Please submit any additional reflection on class participation that should affect your grade in writing on the back of this page. This work sheet 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.