

Saint Paul School of Theology
TH424 Theology in Context: Whiteheadian Feminist Theology
Fall 2006

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Class Meeting: Wednesday, 10:00-10:50 a.m.
Dana Dawson Library Room L-201

Course Description:

Catalog Description: This course provides an 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 registration. The course may be repeated for credit when the topic varies.

Whiteheadian Feminist Theology Topic: While the topic is very specific, the course in Whiteheadian feminist theology exemplifies interdisciplinary theological reflection, philosophical theology, and constructive postmodern theology—making the course good practice in discovering ways of developing contemporary Christian thought and learning the craft of theological reflection. Whiteheadian feminist theology is also called process feminist theology and feminist relational theology, which reflects different ways of identifying theological and philosophical priorities. Whiteheadian feminist thought is most often found in Christian, North American, white feminist theology, but is also represented in Jewish and womanist theology. The course is structured to replicate the process of analyzing a young theological movement, identifying critical emerging concepts, and editing a defining text. To this end, members of the class function as an editorial board for a hypothetical collection of essays and excerpts. To equip students for the editorial project, the course begins with introductory tutoring in Whiteheadian thought and process theology. Prerequisite: THL301 Introduction to Systematic Theology. Semester Credit Hours: 1.

Course Teaching-Learning Objectives

1. The priorities for teaching and learning in this course are (a) exploring interdisciplinary, postmodern, philosophical theology through the example of Whiteheadian feminist theology and (b) working collaboratively to analyze, define, critique, and prioritize key characteristics and figures in a theological movement.
2. Teaching and learning theology 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 theology, which equip them to be life-long learners and public theologians.
3. 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 theology 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.
4. Teaching and learning involve critical thinking, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. One pedagogical strategy for appropriating these skills is reading texts and writing assignments with awareness of perspectives marginalized by class, gender, race, theology, and sexual orientation.
5. Teaching and learning lead to praxis. One outcome is recognition of how theological worldviews shape the way we live, how we engage ministry/Christian vocation, and how we relate to God and the world.

Required and Recommended Texts

No textbooks are required for the course because each student is encouraged to explore diverse authors and representations of Whiteheadian feminist theology. However, some selected readings are required to help orient students to the theological movement. The essays are held on reserve at Dana Dawson Library. The following books are recommendations to assist students in learning and surveying process theology and Whiteheadian thought.

Introductions to Process Theology (recommended for students who need extra information about process theology, but not assigned as reading):

Cobb, John B., Jr. *The Process Perspective: Frequently Asked Questions about Process Theology*.

Cobb, John B., Jr., and David Ray Griffin. *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969.

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

Mesle, Robert. *Process Theology: A Basic Introduction*.

Suchocki, Marjorie H. *God-Christ-Church: A Practical Guide to Process Theology*. New York: Crossroad, 1982. (Revised edition 1989.)

See also www.ctr4process.org where the thematic bibliographies include “Process Philosophy and Theology: Introductory and Elementary.” The website also includes a page entitled “What Is Process?” where short descriptions helpfully define process philosophy and process theology.

Introduction to Whiteheadian Feminist Theology (recommended for students as a starting book for identifying early founders of the movement):

Davaney, Sheila Greeve, ed. *Feminism and Process Thought: The Harvard Divinity School/Claremont Center for Process Studies Symposium Papers*. New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1981.

See also www.ctr4process.org where the thematic bibliographies include “Feminism and Process Thought.”

Required Reserve Reading (listed in the course schedule on dates by which the reading must be completed for class discussion):

Introductions to process theology (read one of the following):

Brown, David. “Process Theology.” In *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, 567-58. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Griffin, David Ray. “Process Theology.” In *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Philip L. Quinn and Charles Taliaferro, 134-42. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1997.

Introductions to Whiteheadian feminist theology (read all of the following):

Coleman, Monica A. “An Exchange of Gifts: Process and Womanist Theologies.” In *Handbook of Process Theology*, ed. Jay McDaniel and Donna Bowman, 160-76. St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2006.

Howell, Nancy R. “Chapter 2 Constructing a Feminist Cosmology.” In *A Feminist Cosmology: Ecology, Solidarity, and Metaphysics*, 13-36. Amherst, Mass.: Prometheus Books; Humanity Books, 2000. [See also the bibliography for additional references to Whiteheadian feminist theology, but realize that the references are limited to publications before 2000.]

Huffaker, Lucinda A. “Feminist Theology in Process Perspective.” In *Handbook of Process Theology*, ed. Jay McDaniel and Donna Bowman, 177-187. St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2006.

Founding Essay in Whiteheadian feminist thought:

Saiving, Valerie. “Androgynous Life: A Feminist Appropriation of Process Thought.” In *Feminism and Process Thought: The Harvard Divinity School/Claremont Center for Process Studies Symposium*, ed. Sheila Greeve Davaney, 11-31. New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1981.

Course Schedule: August 28-December 15, 2006

August 30

Topic: Introduction to Course

September 6

Topic: Introducing Process Theology

Required

Listening: <http://www.ctr4process.org> (Go to homepage. Find in left menu column "What Is Process?" Go to John B. Cobb, Jr. audio stream: "Process Theology: An Introductory Introduction." The audio is less than 60 minutes.) Listen as Cobb describes process theology in relation to biblical and theological themes. Bring written notes to class noting which tenets of process theology seem most important for feminist theology.

Required

Reading: Read one of the following reserve articles and similarly make notes for class about which tenets of process theology seem most important for feminist theology:

Brown, David. "Process Theology." In *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, 567-58. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Griffin, David Ray. "Process Theology." In *A Companion to Philosophy and Religion*, ed. Philip L. Quinn and Charles Taliaferro, 134-42. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1997.

Assignment: Bring to class written notes described in the Required Listening and Required Reading.

September 13

Topic: Introducing Whiteheadian Feminist Theology

Required

Reading: Coleman, Monica A. "An Exchange of Gifts: Process and Womanist Theologies." In *Handbook of Process Theology*, ed. Jay McDaniel and Donna Bowman, 160-76. St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2006.

Nancy R. Howell. "Chapter 2 Constructing a Feminist Cosmology." In *A Feminist Cosmology: Ecology, Solidarity, and Metaphysics*, 13-36. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books; Humanity Books, 2000.

Huffaker, Lucinda A. "Feminist Theology in Process Perspective." In *Handbook of Process Theology*, ed. Jay McDaniel and Donna Bowman, 177-187. St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2006.

Assignment: Come to class prepared to discuss the basic characteristics of Whiteheadian feminist theology. Be sure to bring questions.

September 20

Topic: Introducing Whiteheadian Feminist Theology

Required

Reading: Saiving, Valerie. "Androgynous Life: A Feminist Appropriation of Process Thought. In *Feminism and Process Thought: The Harvard Divinity School/Claremont Center for Process Studies Symposium*, ed. Sheila Greeve Davaney, 11-31. New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1981.

Coleman, Monica A. "An Exchange of Gifts: Process and Womanist Theologies." In *Handbook of Process Theology*, ed. Jay McDaniel and Donna Bowman, 160-76. St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2006.

Howell, Nancy R. "Chapter 2 Constructing a Feminist Cosmology." In *A Feminist Cosmology: Ecology, Solidarity, and Metaphysics*, 13-36. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books; Humanity Books, 2000.

Huffaker, Lucinda A. "Feminist Theology in Process Perspective. In *Handbook of Process Theology*, ed. Jay McDaniel and Donna Bowman, 177-187. St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2006.

Assignment: Come to class prepared to discuss the basic characteristics of Whiteheadian feminist theology. Be sure to bring questions.

September 27

Topic: Establishing an Editorial Board

Required

Research: Explore the thematic bibliographies at www.ctr4process.org. Review especially the thematic bibliography entitled "Feminism and Process Thought," which is dated, but provides a helpful starting point for research.

October 4

Topic: Presenting Selected Short Readings

Assignment: Selected students will make presentations on brief readings as the class continues to define Whiteheadian process theology.

October 11

Topic: Presenting Selected Short Readings

Assignment: Selected students will make presentations on brief readings as the class continues to define Whiteheadian process theology.

October 18

Topic: Presenting Selected Short Readings

Assignment: Selected students will make presentations on brief readings as the class continues to define Whiteheadian process theology.

October 25

Reading Week
No Class Meeting

November 1

Topic: Presenting Editorial Cases
Assignment: Selected students will present arguments for inclusion of particular articles, chapters, or experts in the collection of essays.

November 8

Topic: Presenting Editorial Cases
Assignment: Selected students will present arguments for inclusion of particular articles, chapters, or experts in the collection of essays.

November 15

Topic: Presenting Editorial Cases
Assignment: Selected students will present arguments for inclusion of particular articles, chapters, or experts in the collection of essays.

November 22

Thanksgiving Break
No Class Meeting

November 29

Topic: Presenting Editorial Cases
Assignment: Selected students will present arguments for inclusion of particular articles, chapters, or experts in the collection of essays.

December 6

Topic: Presenting Editorial Cases
Assignment: Selected students will present arguments for inclusion of particular articles, chapters, or experts in the collection of essays.

December 13

Topic: Concluding Editorial Roundtable
Required
Review: Review the materials read and presented by all members of the Editorial Board.
Assignment: Submit to the class for discussion your suggested table of contents for the hypothetical collection of essays on Whiteheadian feminist theology.
Due: Class Participation Self-Evaluation Work Sheet

Course Requirements

1. Class participation is expected of each student and is critical for the success of the collaborative work of the course. 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 expectation is that all students are capable of completing and interpreting texts. 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 of other students. In addition, good class participation means completing oral and written assignments on time in order to meet obligations to other students' learning. 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) is due Wednesday, December 13.
2. The first assignment is oral and written presentation of a short article or chapter explicitly establishing the content and character of Whiteheadian feminist theology. Presentations are scheduled October 4, 11 and 18. The presentation is based on a 1-2-page paper, which should be distributed to students on the day of the presentation (and we will decide as a group the mode of distribution—email, website, paper, etc.) The paper should describe the content of the article carefully and then analyze the paper in terms of characteristics that may be unique to Whiteheadian feminist theology, perhaps equally dividing the paper to cover both requirements. Papers should be double-spaced and formatted with 11 or 12 point fonts and 1-inch margins. On matters of formatting, content, and footnotes or endnotes, the paper should follow Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (sixth edition). The short paper does not require a title page or bibliography, but should include complete footnotes or endnotes rather than parenthetical references.
3. The second assignment is oral and written presentation of an argument supporting inclusion of a particular excerpt, article, or chapter in the course's hypothetical collection of essays on Whiteheadian feminist theology. The presentations are scheduled November 1, 8, 15, 29, and December 6. Presentations will be based on 5-8 page papers that develop arguments based on (a) the significance of the author to Whiteheadian feminist theology, (b) the unique contributions of the author to the movement, (c) an evaluation and critique of the author's work (including assessment of how well the selection represented Whiteheadian feminism), and (d) a concluding statement expressing why the selected reading is appropriate for inclusion in a collection of essays on Whiteheadian feminist theology. Papers should be distributed to students the day before the presentation (and the mode of distribution will be determined by the students). The paper does

not require a title page or bibliography, but must include formatting and footnotes/endnotes that conform to Turabian's manual of style. The papers should be double-spaced and formatted with 11 or 12 point fonts and 1-inch margins. [As a special note, remember to address the authors as professional scholars rather than friends: in other words do not refer to authors by their first names.]

Professorial Idiosyncrasies: (1) Please do not submit written work in binders or folders—a single staple in the upper left-hand corner of any printed paper is preferred. (2) Consider submitting any printed drafts of papers on the unused side of scratch paper or printed on both sides of a clean sheet of paper. (3) For ease in electronic distribution of papers, use **Microsoft Word** as the preferred software in order to assure that all students and the instructor can open the files.

Inclusive Language

In both oral and written contributions to the course, students are expected to be conscious of the power of language in theology. Inclusive language attends to all kinds of diversity (e.g., age, class, disability, gender, nationality, religion, race/ethnicity), but the course in Whiteheadian feminist theology will most often require consideration of gendered language for both persons and God. Students are especially accountable to reflect the gendered language of other authors' writing as part of the content of their theology.

Grading

Criteria for grading follow.

Students in consultation with the instructor 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 | _____ | % |
| Self-evaluation | _____ | % |
| Instructor evaluation | _____ | % |
| Presentation/Paper on Short Readings | _____ | % |
| Presentation/Paper on Editorial Cases | _____ | % |

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 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. 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 absence or tardiness.

As encouragement to take responsibility for their learning, 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 me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with the professor as soon as possible. Please consult with the instructor for any assistance with your learning and class attendance.

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 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. 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 must consult the Saint Paul School of Theology Handbook and comply with institutional guidelines and policies. Similarly, mental or physical conditions must be documented and discussed with the Dean of Students, who may arrange accommodations, and all handbook guidelines and policies apply.

Class Participation Self-Evaluation Work Sheet
Saint Paul School of Theology
Fall 2006

Nancy R. Howell

Name: _____ **Course:** THL424 Theology in Context

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 and presentations 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/endnotes before submitting writing work. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Class

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 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 |
| When I talked in class, 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 disagreements 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 |

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 other 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 theology has grown. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| My understanding of ministry 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 reflections 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 (and optional) reflections.