

Saint Paul School of Theology
THL446 Liberation Theology in the U.S.
Spring 2008

Instructor

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Philosophy of Religion
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Office Hours

By appointment and posted office hours
on Tuesdays, 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Course Meeting Times

Mondays, 12:00-2:50 p.m.

Moodle

<http://saintpaul.fishersnet.net/moodle>
Enrol key: LibTheo2008

Course Description

Informed by literature and social sciences, the survey of liberation theologies establishes particular social, cultural, political, economic, and historical contexts in the United States. The course explores central doctrines of such liberation theologies as black and womanist, Latino/a, Asian American, Native American, feminist, and gay/lesbian theologies. In addition to theological and contextual issues, the course emphasizes the relevance of liberation theologies to constructive approaches to ministry.

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 of 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

- Baker-Fletcher, Karen. *Dancing with God: the Trinity from a Womanist Perspective*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2007.
- de la Torre, Miguel, ed. *Handbook of U.S. Theologies of Liberation*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2004.
- Hopkins, Dwight N. *Down, Up, and Over: Slave Religion and Black Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000.
- Isasi-Díaz, Ada María. *Mujerista Theology*. Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis, 1996.
- Park, Andrew Sung. *From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded*. Nashville, Abingdon, 2004.
- Pedraja, Luis G. *Teología: An Introduction to Hispanic Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2003.

Course Schedule

Easter Recess: March 29-21

Reading Week: March 24-28

Session 1 Introducing and Designing the Course
February 11

African American Theology

Session 2 Topic: Historical Context and Method
February 18 Reading Assignment: Hopkins, chapter 1-3

Session 3 Topic: Constructive Black Theology
February 25 Reading Assignment: Hopkins, chapters 4-6

Session 4 Topic: Womanist Theology
March 3 Reading Assignment: Baker-Fletcher, pages 1-116

Session 5 Topics: Womanist Theology
March 10 Reading Assignment: Baker-Fletcher, pages 117-169

Session 6 Diversity of African American Theology
March 17 Presentations: de la Torre, chapters 2, 5, 10, 13, 16
[3-5 presentations needed—we can omit Hopkins and/or Baker-Fletcher]

Reading Week No Class Meeting
March 24

Hispanic-Latino/a Theology

Session 7 Topic: Historical Context and Method
March 31 Reading Assignment: Isasi-Díaz, chapters 1-3
Pedraja, chapters 1-4

- Session 8
April 7 Topic: *Mujerista* Theology
Reading Assignment: Isasi-Díaz, chapters 4-8
- Session 9
April 14 Topic: Hispanic Theology
Reading Assignment: Pedraja, chapters 4-10
- Session 10
April 21 Topic: Diversity in Hispanic-Latino/a Theology
Presentations: de la Torre, chapters 4, 7, 12, 14, 17
[4-5 presentations needed—we can omit Pedraja]

Asian American Theology

- Session 11
April 28 Topic: Historical Context and Method
Reading Assignment: Park, chapters 1-3
Due: **Research Paper**
- Session 12
May 5 Topic: Korean American Theology
Reading Assignment: Park, chapters 4-8
- Topic: Diversity in Asian American Theology
Presentations: de la Torre, chapters 9, 15, 18
[2-3 presentations needed—we can omit Park]
- Session 13
May 12 Topic: Diversity in U.S. Liberation Theologies
Presentations: de la Torre, chapters 2, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23
[gay and lesbian theology 2, 21; Native American theology, 19;
feminist theology, 20; the poor, 22; environmental racism, 23]
Due: **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 May 12. 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 Miguel de

la Torre provides a collection of essays from African American, Asian American, and Hispanic-Latino/a theologians, as well as other liberation 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 posting as Word attachments on Moodle prior to the class presentation. Presentations are scheduled March 17, April 21, May 5, and May 12—each student presents on only one of the scheduled dates.

3. *Research Paper and Theological Roundtable.* Students are required to prepare one research paper. 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 thoroughly 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 may be presented in class, if time permits. While the deadline is April 28, students may submit the paper anytime after March 24. Papers may be submitted by posting an attachment on Moodle or by emailing the attachment to howellnr@spst.edu. Do not submit multiple attachments; submit the correctly assembled paper in one Word file.
4. *Extra Credit.* Attending lectures approved by the instructor may earn extra credit adding 0.1 points to the final grade (in a 4.0 grading system). To earn extra credit submit a short paper of no more than two double-spaced pages. The paper must include two paragraphs: (a) one paragraph summarizing the main point of the lecture and (b) one paragraph connecting the lecture with a particular point from one of the course reading assignments. If the paper does not include both paragraphs, extra credit is not awarded. Extra credit papers are due no later than May 12. The following lecture is an extra credit option:

Diana L. Hayes, "Standing in the Shoes Our Mothers Made: Womanist Theology and the Black Catholic Community, Rockhurst University Visiting Scholars Lecture Series, Mabee Theater, Sedgwick Hall, 1100 Rockhurst Road, Kansas City, MO 64110, Tuesday, February 12, 7:30 p.m. The lecture is free and open to the public.

Grading

Students in consultation with the instructors determine how grading will be assessed.

Class Participation	_____	%
Self-Evaluation	_____	%
Professor	_____	%
Presentation/Short Paper	_____	%
Research Paper	_____	%

The course is graded according to the grading system described in the current Saint Paul School of Theology catalog and handbook. Submission of late papers, late postings on Moodle, and tardiness on presentation days result in grade penalties of at least one letter grade.

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.

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

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 both oral and written contributions to the course, students are expected to be conscious of the power of language in theology. Inclusive language respects both gender and racial diversity, and students should demonstrate awareness that language about persons and God expresses values and impacts theological ideas in the details of race and gender connotations. Both gender and race are socially constructed categories, and changing language is part of bringing justice to theological discourse.

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.

Saint Paul School of Theology
TH311 Theology in Context: U.S. Liberation Theologies
Class Participation Self-Evaluation Nancy R. Howell

Name _____ Semester Spring 2008

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 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 required them. 1 2 3 4 5
- I checked spelling, grammar, quotations, and footnotes before submitting papers. 1 2 3 4 5
- I posted papers on Moodle by the required deadlines.

Class

- I attended class regularly. 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 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 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, 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
- I took responsibility for my learning. 1 2 3 4 5
- My understanding of theology has grown. 1 2 3 4 5

I assign myself the following letter grade: _____
 (Submit a letter grade in the blank space.)

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.