

**Saint Paul School of Theology**  
**TH311 Theology in Context: Liberation Theologies in Global Context**  
**Fall 2003**

*Instructor*

Nancy R. Howell  
Associate Professor of Theology and  
Philosophy of Religion  
Kansas-Winger 308  
(816) 245-4826 (or ext. 126)  
[howellnr@spst.edu](mailto:howellnr@spst.edu)  
Fax (816) 483-9605  
[www.nancyrhowell.com](http://www.nancyrhowell.com)

*Office Hours*

By appointment and  
Tuesday, 3:30-5:30 p.m.

*Course Meeting Times and Place*

Tuesdays, 1:10-3:00 p.m.  
Library 201

*Course 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.

The Fall 2003 course, which is 2 semester credit hours, examines Latin American, Asian, and African liberation theologies.

*Learning Goals*

1. The priority in this course is learning about theological method (how theologians investigate topics and draw conclusions), sources (what information theologians consult to form new ideas), and religious language (how theologians talk about God).
2. Since theology is embedded in experience and cultures, this course will examine how contemporary theological perspectives are sociohistorical constructions related to specific political, economic, social, and cultural contexts.
3. The sociohistorical, political, and cultural influences upon theology create contexts where diverse theological expressions arise. This challenges us to develop an empathetic understanding of contexts and theologies that may not be our own and to recognize that Christianity is neither abstracted from culture nor limited to one "correct" form or expression in the eyes of religious scholarship.

4. Good scholarship requires work toward excellent written and oral expression. This course will require each student to learn how to pose theological questions, formulate theses, advance arguments, and draw relevant conclusions.

5. One presupposition of this course is that learning is not competitive but collaborative. A goal of the course is to learn how to participate in scholarly conversations that support learning for all students involved in the course. Students must be responsibly prepared to assist the learning process. Students are encouraged to find ways to collaborate on written assignments.

### *Required Texts*

Isabel Allende, *The House of the Spirits*  
Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*  
John Parratt, *Reinventing Christianity*  
Choan-Seng Song, *Third-Eye Theology*

In addition to the required texts about, the course reading list includes the following chapters selected from texts in liberation theology:

Luz Beatriz Arellano, “Women’s Experience of God in Emerging Spirituality,”  
pages 318-338 from *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader*, ed.  
Ursula King  
Ivone Gebara and María Clara Bingemer, “Mary—Mother of God, Mother of the Poor,”  
pages 275-281 from *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader*  
Leonardo Boff, “Ecology: Politics, Theology, and Mysticism,” pages 9-54 from  
*Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm*  
Marianne Katoppo, “The Concept of God and the Spirit from the Feminist Perspective,”  
pages 244-250 from *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader*  
Chung Hyun Kyung, “To Be Human Is to Be Created in God’s Image,” pages 251-  
258 from *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader*  
Kuribayashi Teruo, “Recovering Jesus for Outcasts in Japan,” pages 11-26 from  
*Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah  
Teresa M. Hinga, “Jesus Christ and the Liberation of Women in Africa,” pages 183-  
194 from *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa*, ed.  
Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi R. Kanyoro  
Anne Nachisale Musopole, “Sexuality and Religion in a Matriarchal Society,” pages  
195-205 from *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa*  
Bénézet Bujo, excerpt, pages 75-92 from *African Theology in Its Social Context*

## Course Schedule

Reading Week: October 13-17  
Thanksgiving Recess: November 24-28

Session 1 August 26	Introducing the Course
Session 2 September 2	Topic: Oppression and the Role of Experience in Theology Reading: Allende, <i>The House of the Spirits</i>
Session 3 September 9	Topic: Oppression and the Role of Experience in Theology Reading: Allende, <i>The House of the Spirits</i>
Session 4 September 16	Topic: Latin American Liberation Theology Reading: Gutiérrez, <i>A Theology of Liberation</i>
Session 5 September 23	Topic: Latin American Liberation Theology Reading: Gutiérrez, <i>A Theology of Liberation</i>
Session 6 September 30	Topic: Latin American Liberation Theology Reading: Gutiérrez, <i>A Theology of Liberation</i> Arellano, "Women's Experience of God in Emerging Spirituality" Gebara and Bingemer, "Mary—Mother of God, Mother of the Poor" Boff, "Ecology: Politics, Theology, and Mysticism" Due: Reading Summary and Presentation
Session 7 October 7	Topic: Asian Liberation Theology Reading: Song, <i>Third-Eye Theology</i>
Reading Week October 13-17	
Session 8 October 21	Topic: Asian Liberation Theology Reading: Song, <i>Third-Eye Theology</i>
Session 9 October 28	Topic: Asian Liberation Theology Reading: Song, <i>Third-Eye Theology</i>

Session 10 November 4	Topic: Reading:	Asian Liberation Theology Song, <i>Third-Eye Theology</i> Katoppo, “The Concept of God and the Spirit from the Feminist Perspective” Chung, “To Be Human Is to Be Created in God’s Image” Teruo, “Recovering Jesus for Outcasts in Japan”
	Due:	Reading Summary and Presentation

Session 11 November 11	Topic: Reading:	African Liberation Theology Parratt, <i>Reinventing Christianity</i>
---------------------------	--------------------	---

Session 12 November 18	Topic: Reading: Due:	African Liberation Theology Parratt, <i>Reinventing Christianity</i> Last date to submit Exploratory Research Paper
---------------------------	----------------------------	---

Thanksgiving Recess  
November 24-28

Session 13 December 2	Topic: Reading:	African Liberation Theology Parratt, <i>Reinventing Christianity</i>
--------------------------	--------------------	---

Session 14 December 9	Topic: Reading: Due:	African Liberation Theology Parratt, <i>Reinventing Christianity</i> Hinga, “Jesus Christ and the Liberation of Women” Musopole, “Sexuality and Religion in a Matriarchal Society” Bujo, excerpt Class Participation Self-Evaluation Reading Summary and Presentation
--------------------------	----------------------------	---

### *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 9. 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. *Reading Summary and Presentation.* Each continent where liberation theology is written is a complex and multidimensional place where many contexts and circumstances affect theological development. In order for this course to provide a meaningful and responsible introduction to liberation theology, the reading list is ambitious for a 2-credit-hour course. Therefore, students and the instructor must develop a system for summarizing additional reading assignments. Collaboration gives individual student some exposure to diverse topics, while class presentations and discussion expose all students to a range of issues. On September 30, November 4, and December 9, students assigned to specific readings provide a two-page summary of their reading assignments (with one copy for the instructor and each member of the class). The summaries may be distributed by email or in printed documents on the day of the oral presentation. The assignment is limited to a maximum of four pages of writing per student, and the format requires typed, double-spaced manuscripts with careful use of parenthetical references that refer to the reading.
  
3. *Exploratory Research Paper.* A research paper exploring one doctrine from a liberation theology outside the U.S., which is not covered in class, enables students to explore further theological options. The typed, double-spaced paper should be 10-12 pages in length. The instructor prefers that the papers be submitted on a disk or as an email attachment in Word software. Papers are due no later than November 18, but students assign themselves both a deadline and a topic in consultation with the instructor.

*Grading*

Class Participation				_____ %
Self-Evaluation	_____ %			
Professor	_____ %			
Reading Summary and Presentation				_____ %
Reading Summary and Presentation				_____ %
Exploratory Research Paper				_____ %

[Percentages are determined by student and instructor consensus on the first day of the class.]

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.

### *Differently-Abled Students*

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical 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.

## 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 or my learning contract 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 encouraged other students' learning.   | 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 |

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.