

Syllabus for Introduction to Theology
CT 149
Spring 2011
Instructor: Sarah Lancaster

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PURPOSE: The purpose of the course is to introduce basic theological concepts and to begin to learn how to engage in critical reflection about those concepts through dialogue with various theologians and through written reflection about each idea.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) To introduce basic vocabulary and concepts in the field of theology.
- 2) To become acquainted with some important and often persistent theological questions.
- 3) To gain proficiency in following theological arguments.
- 4) To develop critical thinking skills
- 5) To improve writing skills.

TEXTS:

C. David Grant, *Thinking Through Our Faith: Theology for 21st Century Christians*

John Wesley, "The Case of Reason Impartially Considered" (on SharePoint)

Justo L. González and Zaida Maldonado Pérez, *An Introduction to Christian Theology*

Luis G. Pedraja, *Teología: An Introduction to Hispanic Theology*

Susan Abraham and Elena Procaro-Foley, *Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology: Shoulder to Shoulder*

Recommended: Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price, eds., *A New Handbook of Christian Theology*; Van Harvey, *A Handbook of Theological Terms*; *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*; Donald K. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*

ASSIGNMENTS:

Each student will be required to do the following:

One quiz.

One short paper four to five pages in length.

One final examination.

Regular attendance is expected.

GRADING:

Quiz: 20%

Short paper: 35%

Final examination: 35%

Class participation: 10%

Unless arrangements have been made in advance with the instructor, late papers will not be accepted. I enforce the school's policy on attendance with regard to credit for this course.

SCHEDULE:

February 1:

Lecture: Organization, Procedures, and Introduction to the Course

Reading: González and Pérez, chapter 1, pp. 9-31

February 8:

Lecture: Knowing God

Reading: Wesley, "The Case of Reason Impartially Considered," and González and Pérez, chapter 2, part 1 (The Knowledge of God)

Question: How does Wesley describe the things that reason can and cannot do?

February 15: (We will not meet together as a class on this day. Work will be done online.)

Lecture: Interpreting the Tradition

Reading: Grant, *Thinking Through Our Faith*

Question: According to Grant, what is historical consciousness and how has it affected our understanding of our relation to the Bible today?

February 22:

Lecture: The Modern Context

Reading: Pedraja, chapters 1-4 (pp. 11-87); Abraham and Procaro-Foley, preface (pp. 1-5)

Question: What context do these theologians address in their work and why is it important to them?

March 1:

Examination. Bring paper or blue books for taking the examination.

March 8:

Lecture: God I

Reading: González and Pérez, chapter 2 parts 2-3 (pp. 43-49), Pedraja, chapter 5 (Recommended reading in Musser and Price: "Trinity")

Question: Why do González and Pérez say that the traditional proofs for God's existence do not bring us to know "the One whom Scripture calls 'the Living God'"? Would Pedraja be inclined to agree or disagree with this assessment of the proofs?

March 15:

Lecture: God II

Reading: González and Pérez, chapter 2, part 4 (pp. 49-54); Pedraja, chapter 6 (pp. 103-125)

Question: What does Pedraja mean when he claims that the idea of God as triune came out of "the way people experience God" (p. 117). Would González and Pérez agree or disagree with this claim?

March 22: Spring Break

March 29:

Lecture: Creation and Anthropology

Reading: González and Pérez, chapter 3 (pp. 55-76); Abraham and Procaro-Foley, part I (pp. 9-75) (Recommended reading in Musser and Price: “Creation,” “Anthropology,” “Alienation,” “Freedom,” and “Sin”)

Question: : What do González and Pérez mean when they say that one way to diminish the power of sin is to turn it into a “spiritual and private matter” (p. 72)? How would the feminist authors read for this week respond to this idea?

April 5:

Lecture: Jesus Christ I

Reading: González and Pérez, chapter 4 (pp. 77-95); Pedraja, chapter 7 (pp. 127-144) (Recommended reading in Musser and Price: “Incarnation” and “Christology”)

Question: How does Pedraja explain the meaning of “incarnation”? Would González and Pérez think these insights are important for talking about the person of Christ?

April 12:

Lecture: Jesus Christ II

Reading: Pedraja, chapters 8-9 (pp. 145-186); Abraham and Procaro-Foley, part II (pp. 79-150) (Recommended reading in Musser and Price: “Atonement”)

Question: What does Pedraja understand to be the potential for oppression in atonement theories? Would the feminist authors read for this week also share this concern?

April 19: Easter Break**April 26:**

Lecture: The Holy Spirit and the Church

Reading: González and Pérez, chapters 5-6 (pp. 97-137, Abraham and Procaro-Foley, part III (pp. 153-224) (Recommended reading in Musser and Price: “Holy Spirit,” “Ecclesiology,” and “Sacraments/Sacramental Theology”);

Question: How do González and Pérez talk about the four marks of the church? What would Abraham have to say about their description?

May 3:

Lecture: Soteriology and Eschatology

Reading: González and Pérez, chapter 7 (pp. 139-158), Pedraja, chapter 10 (pp. 187-204)

Question: Why does Pedraja question that eschatology is a doctrine of endings? Would González and Pérez be inclined to agree or disagree with what Pedraja thinks eschatology teaches?

May 10: Final Examination**INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE:**

I expect language regarding human beings to be inclusive of women and men. If, for instance, you intend to refer to human beings as such, I expect to read “humankind” instead of “mankind.” I encourage language about God to be inclusive.

PLAGIARISM:

Plagiarism is a serious matter of academic, professional, and personal integrity. All students at the masters level are expected to understand the requirement to provide attribution when the work of others is used. Students are also expected to be familiar with and understand the school’s policy on Academic Misconduct found in the Student Handbook. If a student has questions about attribution, citation, and how to avoid plagiarism they should consult the course instructor, the school’s writing instructor, or library staff. When in doubt it is better to provide attribution even if one is uncertain about the proper citation form. Plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct that results in disciplinary actions per the Student Handbook that may range from failing an assignment or course to expulsion.

ADA:

MTSO seeks to remove barriers to inclusion in its learning communities. Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs at the beginning of the semester. Please contact Leslie Taylor, Director of Student Services at 740.362.3126 (ltaylor@mtso.edu) in room 129 of Werner Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Any accommodation must be agreed upon prior to the due date of the affected course requirement.