

Syllabus for Introduction to Theology
CT 549H
Spring 2016
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 Sakai)

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 vocabulary quiz.

One short paper four to five pages in length. (For instructions, see Reading and Writing for CT 549 on Populi). This paper is due by the start of class on the day we discuss the set of readings you chose to write on.

One final examination.

Regular attendance is expected.

Turn in your papers electronically through the Assignments on Populi. Put your last name as the first word of the title of your document.

GRADING:

Quiz: 20%

Short paper: 35%

Final examination: 35%

Class contribution: 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 2:

Lecture online: Introduction to the Course

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

February 9:

Lecture online: Knowing God

Reading on Sakai: 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 16:

Lecture online: 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 23:

Lecture online: The Current Context

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

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

March 1:

Vocabulary quiz.

March 8:

Lecture online: God I

Reading: González and Pérez, chapter 2 parts 2-3 (pp. 43-49), Pedraja, chapter 5

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 online: 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 and 29: No class, Spring Recess and Holy Week

April 5:

Lecture online: Creation and Anthropology

Reading: González and Pérez, chapter 3 (pp. 55-76); Abraham and Procaro-Foley, part I (pp. 9-75)

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 12:

Lecture online: Jesus Christ I

Reading: González and Pérez, chapter 4 (pp. 77-95); Pedraja, chapter 7 (pp. 127-144)

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 19:

Lecture online: Jesus Christ II

Reading: Pedraja, chapters 8-9 (pp. 145-186); Abraham and Procaro-Foley, part II (pp. 79-150)

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 26:

Lecture online: The Holy Spirit

Reading on Sakai: Paul Fiddes, “Wisdom and the Spirit”; John Kenneth Gibson “The Pneumatological Theology of Diversity

Question: What does Gibson mean when he says, “The Spirit is the enlivening principle of unity and diversity.” Would Fiddes be inclined or not to support this statement?

May 3:

Lecture online: 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 10:

Lecture online: 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 17:

Final Examination

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 the Director of Student Services 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.

Please see Student Handbook for sections providing policy details on the following:

Class attendance—Regular attendance is expected in all classes. During unavoidable absences, students are responsible for missed work. An excessive number of absences may result in grade reduction or course failure, despite successful completion of all assigned work. In most cases, a student will not be allowed credit for a course if he or she is absent for 25% of the class sessions. As it relates to blended courses, students may not be allowed credit if they are absent for 25% of class meetings or if 25% of online course work is not completed. Use of Skype or similar technology is not a substitute for attendance in class.

Electronic Devices—Turn mobile devices off or “vibrate only” during class. Browsing the Internet or engaging in email or social network conversations during class is discouraged. Instructors have the right to impose grading penalties for disruptions due to electronic devices.

Human Subjects Research—Research by MTSO faculty, students, or affiliated personnel that collects non- public information from and/or about living individuals or contemporary organizations/groups for purposes of publication or public presentation (including class assignments) must be approved by the Human Subjects Research Committee. MTSO faculty, students, or affiliated personnel should err on the side of caution and apply for committee approval of any activity that may fit this description.

Inclusive Language—In accordance with MTSO’s policy on inclusive language, all students are expected to use gender inclusive or gender neutral language in their writing and in the classroom discussions when referring to human beings.

Incompletes—To receive a course grade of Incomplete, students must submit the petition form from the Registrar with all signatures to the Dean’s Office before the last day of regularly scheduled classes. See Student Handbook for intensive term deadlines. Any petition submitted without a due date for outstanding work will be denied. If work is not complete by the due date the Registrar will record the grade of F for the course.

Pass/Fail—The decision to exercise this option must be made before the end of the second week of the course by completing the appropriate form available through the Registrar. To receive a grade of “pass” the student must do at least the equivalent of C minus work in the course.

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 students have 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.