

Theology Graduate Course Descriptions

Fall 2024

THEO 418-001: Prophetic Literature

Dr. Robert Di Vito

Tuesday, Thursday 11:30AM – 12:45PM

The prophetic movement has often been regarded as the high point and center of ancient Israel's religious history. This course is an introduction to Israel's prophetic writings, in the context of the ancient Near East and the Bible. The books of so-called Major Prophets--Isaiah and Jeremiah--are the primary focus; but additional prophetic works, viz., Amos, Ezekiel, and Daniel, will be introduced (Daniel, if time permits).

Two goals inform the approach taken in class. These are: (1) the development of a habit of close and precise reading, such that one can grasp in its main lines the original message of the prophets and the impact it had subsequently; and (2) practice in articulating in a contemporary idiom the theological questions raised directly or indirectly by the biblical text. To achieve these goals, throughout the course emphasis will be on developing basic exegetical skills and learning what is involved in a critical reading of the text. In addition, some time will be dedicated weekly to an explicit consideration of the material's theological implications for today.

Obviously, it is essential that everyone come to class prepared, by having read the biblical texts assigned and done the required background reading. Special attention should be given to the passages highlighted for treatment in class. Sometimes students will have a brief written assignment to help in their preparation for class. Each week one or two members of the class will be responsible for leading the class in a discussion either of the material's implications for theology (see below) or of the required Brueggemann text.

Students should regularly check Blackboard for course documents and news.

Course Requirements.

- 1.) In addition to the required texts, assigned readings from the Prophets and various articles/texts designed to supplement these and provided on Sakai.
- 2) Occasional, short written assignments to be done in preparation for class. These are typically **no more** than a half page in length and are based on the reading of a text to be treated in class. See below.
- 3) Depending on class numbers, one or two students each week will guide the class in a 15-20 minute discussion either of the previous week's class material, where the primary concern is for the theological implications of what has been presented in lecture. These student "guides" will make available to the class ahead of class 2 questions for discussion.
- 4) An exegetical paper, following the suggested format (10 pages). Through the course of the semester (see schedule below) a written digest of what will be presented for each of the exegetical tasks that make up the final exegesis is to be presented to the instructor for critique. Note: you must select your passage by February 4th. An explanation of what each step of the exegesis entails will be provided by the instructor either in class or asynchronously.
- 5) A mid-term and final examination.

Approximate weight given to the course requirements: (1) Leading of discussion, written assignments, and participation in the course (15%); (2) exegetical paper (30%); and (3) midterm and final examination (25% and 30%).

Required Texts.

NAB, RNAB, NRSV, RSV, or JPS.

Gene M. Tucker. *Form Criticism of the Old Testament*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971.

David L. Petersen. *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

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THEO 424-001: The Synoptic Gospels

Dr. Christopher Skinner

Wednesday 10:25 AM – 12:55PM

This graduate introduction focuses on the gospel texts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke; their respective literary, historical and social contexts, their theological perspectives and pastoral concerns. Some attention is also given to the origin and growth of each gospel within early Christianity.” Further, this course is concerned with the unique narrative and theological contributions of each synoptic gospel. Thus, we will focus on each gospel as an autonomous narrative while also examining their interrelationships. In addition, we will spend time examining the different critical methodologies used in the study of the gospels over the last two centuries. After a thorough investigation of these introductory issues, we will examine a number of important passages from the Synoptics and discuss the relationship of the Synoptic Gospels study to the most recent “quest for the historical Jesus.

THEO 477-001: Religion and Reproductive Justice (Fem Issues: Theo and Ethics)

Combined with

THEO 378-001: Religion and Reproductive Justice (Theology and Culture)

Dr. Sandra Sullivan Dunbar

Tuesday, Thursday 10:00AM – 11:15AM

****Cross-listed with Women’s and Gender Studies and Bioethics**

Reproductive justice is a framework developed by women scholars and activists of color that attends to all aspects of reproductive lives and places reproductive ethics in a complex historical, legal and social justice context. The reproductive justice framework gives particular attention to the ways in which reproductive lives have been structured by race, gender and class—and the ways in which reproductive laws, policies, and practices have shaped and reinforced race, gender and class structures.

We will explore the RJ framework in dialogue with approaches to reproduction, reproductive ethics and social justice found in several religious traditions, including diverse and nuanced approaches within religious traditions. We will also attend to the history of reproductive policies in the United States and the evolving engagement of religious groups with those policies and policy debates. The greatest focus will be on Protestant Christianity, Roman Catholic Christianity, and Judaism, but we will also give some attention to other traditions, including Islam and Native American approaches to reproductive justice.

Most readings will be available on Sakai or as online library resources. Students should expect to purchase the Roberts book (list price \$18.00) and the Peters book (list price \$18.00).

Course texts will include selections from the following books:

Loretta Ross et. al. *Radical Reproductive Justice: Foundations, Theory, Practice, Critique*

Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*

Rebecca Todd Peters, *Trust Women: A Progressive Christian Argument for Reproductive Justice*

Michael Raucher, *Conceiving Agency: Reproductive Authority Among Haredi Women*

Margaret Kamitsuka and Rebecca Todd Peters, *The T&T Clark Reader in Abortion and Religion: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Perspectives*

We will also read a range of other sources on religion, reproductive ethics, and reproductive justice, including primary sources, scholarly essays, and personal narratives.

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THEO 440-001: Contextual Theologies (Seminar in Systematic Theology)

Dr. Miguel Diaz

Tuesday 4:15PM – 6:45PM

The turn to theological reflections rooted in concrete historical and personal experiences is a hallmark of contemporary Christian theologies. But a wide range of theologians working within the field of constructive theologies have underscored that any theology is always and everywhere contextual. Among other things, they have challenged the privileged place that some theologies have acquired based on specific human experiences related to geo-political affiliations, socio-economic conditions, philosophical approaches, religious interpretations, culture, race, gender, sexual orientation, and physical ability. This course examines key voices and theologies associated with the effort to critique normative and oppressive theological understandings. It mines liberating sources that can speak to and respond to “the signs of our times.” The course highlights theological voices that have turned to contemporary human contexts and, consistent with Christian evangelical perspectives, theologized out of the peripheries of our human experiences.

THEO 523-001: The “Heresy of Evil”: Gnostic Gospels and Christian Faith (Cultural-Religious Environmental Early Christianity)

Dr. Edmondo Lupieri

Monday 10:25 AM – 12:55PM

The purpose of this seminar is twofold: (a) to analyze the complexity and transformations of early Christian reflections from around the end of the first century through the third and (b) to study the most common features of the “Gnostic worldview” and possibly understand the reasons for the ancient success of the so-called “Heresy of Evil.”

To accomplish this purpose, we will discuss the content of some key passages from Irenaeus and other heresiologists, but especially that of original Gnostic texts (in English translation). We will focus particularly on the so-called Gnostic Gospels (The Gospel of Thomas, The Gospel of Philip, The Gospel of Mary [Magdalene], and The Gospel of Judas) and, if time will allow it, on some apocalyptic Gnostic texts. In the final part of our course, we will approach the contemporary revival of Gnostic Churches and ideologies, while some elements of the Mandaean literature and lore will be analyzed for their Gnostic elements, which are still vital in the religious landscape of the xxi century.

Required Texts:

Any edition of the Bible (Old and New Testament).

Everett Ferguson. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003 (with particular attention to the section on Gnosticism).

Marvin Mayer, ed., *The NagHammati Scriptures: The Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York: HarperOne, 2007).

Edmondo Lupieri, *The Mandaeans: The Last Gnostics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

Other readings will be posted and available on Sakai.

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THEO 530-001: The Concept of Remembrance in Bible, Theology, and Ethics (Seminar)

Dr. Hille Haker

Friday 10:25 AM – 12:55PM

This seminar will examine the concept of memory and remembrance from different disciplinary perspectives, centered on biblical texts, Christian Systematic Theology, and Christian Ethics. Remembrance has not only a practical meaning in biblical writings, but it is a central theological term in the Hebrew Bible as well as in the New Testament. It is an obligation to witnessing and to practice the faith of love and justice.

In the course, we will first review some scientific and cultural anthropology studies on memory and its relevance across cultures, and then study the contributions from Christian theology. We will read some seminal texts from all three disciplines, engage with the philosophy of memory, and then design research projects, with students engaging with material from their own area of research as well as the other two disciplines. We will develop some common research questions and discern the relevance of the concept of memory/remembrance for 21st century Christian interpretations of the bible, theology and ethics.

Students will need to be open to work together, engage in interdisciplinary questions, and together, we will explore the possibility to share some projects with the department in a colloquium, panel discussion, or poster session that is open to the public.