IST2010-1-WI14 - Constructive Theology

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Consultation is by appointment only.

Time: Tuesday 1:00pm

Room: **I-201**

**Course Description**

This course is a critical and constructive examination of classical themes and topics in theology in relation, and as a response, to contemporary problems and challenges. The emphasis is on doing theology as an imaginative and constructive endeavor in the light of the deconstructing forces of modernity and a would-be postmodern global world. The idea of ‘constructive theology’ will be explored through an analysis of five related themes: imagination, theological construction, relevance, context, and everyday practice.

**Special Needs/ADA Statement**

**If you have concerns about accommodations as stipulated in the Americans with Disabilities Act, please contact your assigned advisor to initiate the process of requesting accommodations. You can contact your advisor through The Advising Centre at advising@iliff.edu or by phone at 303.765.1146.**

**Use of Electronic Media**

Please make sure that your cell or mobile phones are switched off when in class. Note also that if you wish to use your laptop, tablet and smartphone  to take notes you must do so responsibly. Do not use your laptop, tablet or smartphone in class to check email, do online shopping, play games, and consult Wikipedia, or other sites to fact check lecture or class presentation content. You can do that afterwards. Respect yourself, your instructors, and your fellow students.

**Course Goals**

1. To help students imaginatively engage the substantive proposals of Christian theology by carefully examining its classical and contemporary content, tasks, and methods.
2. To explore particular issues currently shaping theological debate.
3. To equip students to develop a ‘systematic’, critical and carefully reasoned statement of their own theological perspective.

**Course Content**

**January 7: Definitions, Sources and Tasks of Theology**

  Readings: Jones and Lakeland, Constructive Theology, pp.1-18; Hodgson and

 King, Christian Theology, pp.1-60.

**January 14 God and Revelation**

 Readings: Jones and Lakeland, Constructive Theology,pp.19-76;

**January 21** **Creation, Sin, World and Evil**

 Readings: Hodgson and King, *Christian Theology*, pp.141-166  & 194-221.

 Jones and Lakeland, *Constructive Theology;* pp.117-159.

**January 28** **Humanity and Personhood**

 Readings: Dwight Hopkins, *Down, Up and Over;* pp.237-278.

 Hodgson and King, *Christian Theology,*pp.167-193.

**February 4** **Humanity as Gendered**

Readings:Radford-Ruether, *Feminist Theologies;* pp.1-154;

 Pui-Lan, *Hope Abundant: Third World and Indigenous Women’s Theology*. Use

 the essays in this book to supplement  readings in Reuther’s *Feminist*

 *Theologies.*

**February 11 Humanity as Race-d**

 **Readings:** Jones and Lakeland, *Constructive Theology;* pp.77-116.

 Hopkins, *Down, Up and Over,* pp. 1-154.

**February 18** **Humanity as Sexed**

 Readings: Elizabeth Stuart, Gay *and Lesbian Theologies: Repetitions with*

 *Critical Difference, pp. 1-116.*

**February 25** **Christology**

Readings:Jones and Lakeland, *Constructive Theology*; pp.161-199.Hodgson

 and King, *Christian Theology*, pp.222-248.

**March 04 Spirit and Spirits in a Material World**

 Readings: Jones and Lakeland, *Constructive Theology;* pp.239-278. Hopkins,

 *Down, Up and Over,* pp.155-191. Hodgson and King, *Christian Theology*,

 pp.302-327.

**March 11 Church, Community and Hope**

 Readings: Jones and Lakeland, *Constructive Theology,* pp.201-238. Hodgson

 and King, *Christian Theology,* pp.328-352.

**Required Texts**

**Books**

Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H King (eds.) *Christian Theology: An Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994.
Kwok Pui-Lan, *Hope Abundant: Third World and Indigenous Women’s Theology*, 2010.
Serene Jones and Paul Lakeland (eds.), *Constructive Theology: A Contemporary Approach to Classical Themes*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.
Elizabeth Stuart, *Gay and Lesbian Theologies: Repetitions with Critical Difference.* Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003.
Dwight N. Hopkins, *Down, Up and Over: Slave Religion and Black Theolog*y. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000.
Rosemary Radford Ruether, (ed.) *Feminist Theologies: Legacy and Prospect*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.

 **Articles**

1. William V. Dych, ‘Theology and Imagination.’ *Thought* (57) 1982, 116-127.
2. M. P. Gallagher, ‘Imagination and Faith.’ *The Way* (24) 1984, 115-123.
3. Brian Hearne, ‘Theology and Imagination’. *The Furrow* (pp. 505-515).
4. John McIntyre’s ‘The Place of Imagination in Faith and Theology’- I & II. *The Expository Times.*
5. Gordon D. Kaufman, 'Theology as Imaginative Construction'. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (Mar., 1982), pp. 73-79.

**Course Requirements**

* Attendance at all classes
* Two papers of not more than five (5) typed doubled spaced pages each on a prescribed topic from the issues covered in this course.
* You are required to do all the assigned weekly readings which will serve as the basis for class discussion.
* Active participation in class, including participation in group discussions.

**Class Format**
Members of the class will be required, individually or in groups, to make a presentation to class on a  topic chosen from one of the class readings. I will guide the discussion, answer questions and expound on obscure points or points of concern to students.

**Assignments**

There are two assignments for this course. The first is a five (5) page statement in which you reflect upon and analyze two texts: 1) Jones and Lakeland, *Constructive Theology*, pp.1-18; and 2) John McIntyre’s ‘The Place of Imagination in Faith and Theology’- I & II.  Read, critically reflect upon and concisely analyze these texts in relation to your social location or context (e.g. Queer, Black or White, Methodist, etc.).  Use these texts to formulate *your own approach* to theology. **I am not asking you to develop a theology of your own just yet. This will come later.** Rather, at this point I am asking you to articulate a *method* or *an approach* for such a theology. You must relate your approach or method to your social location. **This assignment is due on February 4, 2014.** The essay by McIntyre will be posted on Canvas.

The second assignment is a five (5) page statement of your critical (reasoned and well argued) theological position which uses the approach or method developed in your first assignment to constructively address one of the following topics:

1. Christology and Revelation: What is revelation, and where, if anywhere, is it located? In what respects, if any, is Jesus Christ God’s revelation? Why do Christians need the idea of revelation, or what function does it have in the structure of Christian belief and practice?
2. Liberation: What is the place and role of the idea of ‘liberation’ in Christian Theology? What, if any, are the theological and political implications of this idea?
3. Gender and Theology: Using the texts prescribed for this course show: 1) how the idea of gender has contributed to major changes in theological method and understanding in recent times, 2) Discuss the role of non-western gender and women’s theologies in this process in relation to some of the key areas of difference in different women’s theologies?
4. Humanity: Is there such a thing as human nature? What relevant examples of it exist? What are the implications of denying or affirming the existence of human nature? Or, using the standard Christian claim that humans are made in the image of God, describe and critically articulate a theology of both the universality and particularity of humanity**.**

**Grading and Incompletes**
This class cannot be taken on a pass/fail basis.
You are reminded that plagiarism is an offense for which you will be severely penalized. It is your responsibility to consult the Masters Student Handbook for a definition of plagiarism and other instances of academic dishonesty.

**The grade is structured as follows:**

1. Class Participation  25%
2. First Assignment    35%
3. Final Assignment   40%

**I will not entertain incompletes except in cases of a demonstrated medical or other emergence. Lack of proper planning on your part does not count as an emergence.**

**Quality Class Participation Defined**

**Class Participation is not:**

* Attending class. While on the one hand, the simple fact of turning up  and being in class does not count as participation, on the other, repeated and unexcused  absence from class will count against you
* Uninformed  comments, statements, claims and would-be arguments do not count as participation
* Over-participation: Be warned of the dangers of being besotted with the sound of your own voice and  the appearance of your own ideas. This can lead to monopolizing the floor, over-participation, irrelevance and the exclusion and silencing  of other voices.

**Quality Class Participation is comprised of:**

* Comments  that contribute to the continuity and focus of the class discussion. This disallows off-the-wall comments
* Comments that are relevant and connect with the input and contributions of others
* Comments that are focused, critical while being constructive and, if necessary, controversial without being rude or disrespectful
* Comments that demonstrate in-depth analysis and are well supported by good arguments, solid data and relevant sources
* Comments that make connections between material and ideas in different parts of the class or between this and other classes
* Comments that provide examples from your own observations or experience of the subject under discussion
* Active participation in group or team activities in class

**Finally, civility in the give and take of rigorous and critical class discussion is a requirement. Discussion questions** **in class will be formulated to provoke passion and disagreement, and, of course, there always is more than one viable** **approach to resolving problems presented in any context. Again, disagree without being disagreeable.**

These comments are intended to give you a general sense of what I am looking for in class discussions. These comments are not intended to be an exhaustive checklist of the precise and only criteria I will use.

### Etiquette

* Please always address me by my title unless I indicate otherwise
* Do not befriend me on Facebook or invite me to join you on LinkedIn unless we have agreed on this beforehand
* Respect your fellow students at all times
* Always wait your turn to speak and do not monopolize the floor
* Allow others who may be less forthcoming to make their contribution before you return to the floor

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Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary Studies of the Creation f Meaning in Language University of Toronto Press 1981

Janet Martin Soskice Metaphor and Religious Language. Oxford University Press, 1987

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, The Metaphors we Live By. University of Chicago Press, 2003.