**Being Human in the Modern World (IST 3043), Fall 2019**

Gathering Days are February 8th, 1-5 pm & February 9th, 8 am-Noon

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**Course Description**

What does it mean to be human? This course examines a variety of Christian theological responses to that question. After a brief survey of the history of theological anthropology, we engage contemporary proposals for reconstructing this doctrine with regard to social location and the ethical dimensions of theological imagination. Special attention will be given to how notions of embodiment, agency, and relationality have become fundamental to current perspectives on being human, producing both liberative and problematic results.

**Course Objectives**

1. Introduce students to recent historical developments and academic trends that have fundamentally shaped the field of theological anthropology.
2. Further the process of developing student fluency in the vocabulary and concepts distinctive to Christian theological discourse.
3. Explore themes and notions that are prominent within present-day discussions of what it means to be human (especially relationality, expressivism, embodiment, agency, and flourishing) and consider how constructive theologians from a variety of perspectives and social locations address those common loci.
4. Equip students to articulate their own informed and carefully considered positions on issues that are central to theological anthropology, such human nature, the image of God, the relationship between self and community, and the place of human beings within the rest of creation.
5. Facilitate the continued development of skills in reading, writing, and critical thinking.

**Required Texts**

M. Shawn Copeland. *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Grace, and Being*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009.

Serene Jones. *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace*.  
Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000.

Ian A. McFarland. *The Divine Image: Envisioning the Invisible God*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress  
Press. 2005.

Hans S. Reinders. *Receiving the Gift of Friendship: Profound Disability, Theological*  
*Anthropology and Ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.,  
2008.

F. LeRon Shults. *Reforming Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn to*  
*Relationality*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003.

**"Recommended" Course Texts**

[NOTE: Most or all of the content of these books will be assigned reading in the course. However, they can be accessed for free as ebooks through the Ira J. Taylor Library. (Use the links below.) They are "recommended" in the sense that purchasing them is optional; securing access to them remains necessary.]  
  
Isaiah Berlin. *The Roots of Romanticism*. Edited by Henry Hardy. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. [The ebook is the 2nd edition.]

Patrick Cheng. *Rainbow Theology: Bridging Race, Sexuality, and Spirit*. New York: Seabury Books, 2013.

\*All other assigned readings will be made available through Canvas.\*

**Recommended Additional Resources**

*These texts are part of the Ira J. Taylor Library reference collection*

Patrick W. Carey and Joseph T. Leinhard, eds. *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Theologians*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000.

Justo L. González. *Essential Theological Terms*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.

Donald K. McKim. *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms, 2nd Edition*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014.

Ian A. McFarland, et al., eds. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price, eds. *New and Enlarged Handbook of Christian Theology*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003.

*These texts belong to the the combined Iliff/DU library collection*

Rebecca S. Chopp and Mark Lewis Taylor, eds. *Reconstructing Christian Theology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994.

Marc Cortez. *Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed*. New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2010.

David Ford and Rachel Muers, eds. *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology Since 1918, 3rd edition*. Madden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2005.

Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King, eds. *Christian Theology: An Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994.

Serene Jones and Paul Lakeland, eds. *Constructive Theology: A Contemporary Approach to Classical Themes*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.

Ed. L. Miller and Stanley Grenz. *Fortress Introduction to Contemporary Theologies*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998.

Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price, eds. *A New Handbook of Christian Theologians*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996.

Laurel C. Schneider and Stephen G. Ray, Jr., eds. *Awake to the Moment: An Introduction to Theology*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016.

**Course Requirements (At a Glance)**

Attendance/Participation 25%  
Critical Analysis Presentation 15%  
Theological Anthropology Profile 10%  
Final Paper 50%

**Special Needs/ADA Statement**

Iliff engages in a collaborative effort with students with disabilities to reasonably accommodate student needs. Students are encouraged to contact their assigned advisor to initiate the process of requesting accommodations. The advising center can be contacted at [advising@iliff.edu](mailto:advising@iliff.edu) or by phone at [303-765-1146](tel:3037651146). The Disability Services Officer at Iliff is Vince Tango, Associate Dean of Admissions/Student Services, [vtango@iliff.edu](mailto:vtango@iliff.edu). For more information, go to the Disability Services in the Master Student Handbook on Bloomfire.

**Policy on Late Assignments**  
*Written Documents*: An assignment submitted after its stated deadline will incur a penalty of 5% the assignment’s total value for each 24-hour period it is late. If the instructor does not receive the assignment within 72 hours of its deadline, it will receive no points.

*Forum Posts*: A Critical Analysis Presentation posted after the Monday deadline will incur a penalty of 10% the assignment’s total value. If a Critical Analysis Presentation still has not been posted within 24 hours of its deadline, it will receive no points.  
If a student does not make the first discussion post by the Thursday night deadline, one point will be deducted from the student’s weekly discussion grade for each day the post is late.

**Policies on Academic and Collegial Integrity**All students are expected to abide by Iliff’s statement on Academic Integrity, as published in the Masters Student Handbook. Any detected plagiarism or cheating on an assignment will result in an automatic penalty of an "F" for that assignment. All participants in this class are expected to be familiar with Iliff’s Core Values.

Proper online and in-class participation consists of contributions that facilitate the stated objectives for this course. The purpose of our learning community is to equip **each** student to articulate a theological perspective and to demonstrate understanding and generosity toward each of our peers, not in the absence of disagreement and passion, but in the midst of them. Accomplishing this purpose demands that all students do their best to discipline themselves concerning the content, frequency, and spirit of what they say:

* The **content** of a quality contribution will depend on the material under discussion, be it an assigned reading, an instructor lecture, or a student presentation. Comments ought to remain relevant to this material and connect with the input and contributions of others. Personal stories and opinions, cultural references, humor -these things all have a place in constructive theological discussion, but only if they clarify or amplify the ideas at the center of an exchange. This is why preparation is key: If everyone is on the same page (sometimes literally), then being understood and understanding others gets that much easier. Also, when disagreeing with a theological proposal, remember that **criticism is not the same as critique**. True critique aims to illuminate the most perceptive or impactful points in another's position rather than remaining content to point out just any detail one might find objectionable.
* Achieving the proper **frequency** of participation is a challenge in all forms of communication, but especially during academic engagement. Many students will need to push themselves to contribute regularly in the face of uncertainty, anxiety, and (yes, sometimes) boredom. Others will have to curb their contribution occasionally because they are naturally verbose or prone to argue. To these students, I can offer no better advice than these words of Dr. Edward Antonio: "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." As the instructor, I will be sure to offer a tactful word of advice to students who habitually fall into one of these patterns of participation.
* By the **spirit** of one's remarks, I have in mind all those things that go into showing **respect** for a conversation partner. For me, it is a notion that brings together tone, intent, and specific types of content. Students should keep their comments free of hatred, slander, or discriminatory remarks. Each of us should be deliberate about which passions and convictions we give expression to in a class setting, rather than be impulsive or overly reactive. Students should almost always anticipate disagreement on sensitive topics and choose words that are charitable towards those with opposing viewpoints. Finally, all participants should use **inclusive language** in writing and in speech. This is not merely an instructor’s preference but an expectation of the institution itself.

**Course Requirements (Detailed Descriptions)***Class Participation and Attendance (25% of grade)*: The discipline of theology is not merely a study of the history of certain ideas. More importantly, it is an ongoing conversation among persons who are commonly committed to addressing theological problems and questions about what it means to live faithfully in the context of day-to-day life. For that reason, active engagement in online discussions and full attendance during Gathering Days are two essential components of this course. Both the quality and depth of theological conversation depend heavily on the voices involved. Students should enter into online discussions and come to in-class sessions having read all the assigned readings for that day and having thoughtfully considered the key ideas and arguments presented in those readings. For more on what makes a proper contribution to class discussion, see "Policies on Academic and Collegial Integrity."

The evaluation of a student’s weekly contributions to online discussion forums includes a quantitative requirement. In a typical week, a student ought to contribute at least 3 posts to the current forum, the first reacting to a classmate’s Critical Analysis Presentation and discussion questions (see the section below for details) and the others simply being organic and engaged comments or questions. Students are encouraged to post more than this if they would like. The quantitative requirement is just a minimal threshold meant to keep all students active in the course on a weekly basis. Each first post is worth 5 points, and both subsequent posts are worth 2.5 points. In most instances, a post that is on topic and on time will receive full points. The “Course Rhythm” section of the syllabus provides further instructions concerning the basic mechanics of online conversations.

*Critical Analysis Presentation (15% of grade)*: Beginning in Week 2, each student will take a turn helping the instructor lead class discussion. In a typical week, the students who have signed up for that week will make a parent post in the discussion forum consisting of 750-1000 words. This contribution will critically engage a portion of a required text in a way that helps shape the substance and direction of class discussion. In this parent post, the student must:

* **Identify the distinct contribution to Theological Anthropology***.* If the reading is an author’s own constructive proposal, name the central thesis of that proposal. If the reading is a survey, state the key insights that bind a group of scholars together, as well the general conclusions the author of the survey may draw. This task often involves distinguishing passages of argument from passages of exposition.
* **Summarize the case made in support of this contribution**. If a constructive proposal, what are the most noteworthy points the author makes in support of the thesis statement? If a survey chapter, what are the most compelling reasons to adopt the general approach described there. In most cases, it will also be necessary to identify where this reading fits within the larger context of the book in which it appears.
* **Provide a critical appraisal of the reading**. When formulating this appraisal, the student should consider questions such as: As a work of constructive theology, what present-day issues or resources does the author emphasize? How does this proposal resemble or deviate from traditional articulations of the doctrine(s) under discussion? How internally coherent, clear, or convincing is this proposal in its own right?
* **Raise a question or two for further discussion**. For example, the student might raise the question of how the adoption of a particular theological anthropology promises to promote or harm the life of faith communities. Alternatively, the student might respectfully compare this reading to other proposals or perspectives examined in the course. Above all else, a discussion question needs to bring together the student’s strongest interests in the material with what one expects their classmates will be eager to unpack.
* **Revisit and guide the conversation**. A student’s responsibility for illuminating and unpacking the assigned reading does not end with attaching the Word document to a parent post. One should be prepared to provide additional exposition or analysis of that text if the comments and questions of other students require it. The student will also be expected to follow that week’s other threads of conversation.

As part of the process of organizing these contributions, students should use the electronic sign-up sheet on Canvas at their earliest convenience. Further instructions about when these papers must be submitted and how other students ought to engage them may be found in the “Course Rhythm” section of the syllabus.

NOTE: There will be no Critical Analysis Presentations in Weeks 1, 5, or 6.

*Theological Anthropology Profile (10% of grade)*: There is only so much time in a 10-week seminar to explore the recent history of Christian theological anthropology. For this reason, students may find themselves wanting to know more about a modern theologian's understanding of what it means to be human than the assigned readings cover. This short assignment is an opportunity to dig deeper into the relevant thought of 20th-to-21st-century Christian thinker. This is intended to be a more fun, low-stakes assignment. Each student must submit a written document of 650-750 words that provides information about the following:

* **The Theological Anthropology Itself** - Compose a brief but representative description of how a particular theologian characterizes the nature, structure, and purpose of human existence.
* **Historical and Theological Context** - Make judicious use of information that may further illuminate the content and motivations behind this theological anthropology, such as the theologian's biography, his or her regular conversation partners, or the larger body of work to which this anthropology belongs.
* **Current Relevance** - Offer focused reflections on this scholar's influence and the continued viability of his or her ideas for theological construction in the present day.

During our on-campus sessions at Gathering Days, each student will present the results of their research to the rest of the class and field questions about the material. The instructor will evaluate a profile based on: a) the clarity and internal coherence of the written report, b) the effective use of research materials and, c) the general quality of the in-class presentation.

Students are free to choose which primary and secondary sources to consult when composing this profile. Whatever resources one chooses, a Works Cited/Bibliography page needs to included. Any well-known citation format is acceptable (Chicago, MLA, APA, etc.), as long as its use is accurate and consistent. As part of the process of organizing these presentations, students should make their contribution to the sign-up sheet on Canvas at their earliest convenience. This page includes necessary information for selecting both the content of the profile and the day of its presentation.

The written document must be submitted by **11:59 pm MT (1:59 am ET) on Monday, February 11th**.

*Final Paper (50% of grade)*: As in many topical seminars, the last and most heavily-weighted assignment will be a research paper. This paper may take the form of the constructive proposal of a theological anthropology, a close reading and critique of an assigned text, or any other topic for which the student receives instructor approval. This project will be completed in two stages:

1. **Prospectus (10%).** In Week 7, each student must submit a preliminary statement detailing tentative plans for the final paper. This document must name the student's chosen topic, provisional thesis statement, motivations and goals for engaging this material, and a brief list of key books, articles, and other resources that may be used.   
     
   This statement must be submitted by **11:59 pm MT (1:59 am ET) on Monday, February 18th**.
2. **Final Draft (40%).** The final draft of the paper will need to consist of 2500-3000 words. Students may select their own citation style as long as they employ it consistently and accurately. Papers must feature a clear, strong thesis statement, demonstrate an appropriate level of research beyond the assigned course material, and exhibit a level of thoughtfulness and critical thinking befitting a depth seminar.  
     
   This paper must be submitted by **11:59 pm MT (1:59 am ET) on Monday, March 18th**.

**COURSE RHYTHM**  
IIn my experience, providing students a clear rhythm for a typical class week helps them plan their time in the course more easily. Keep yourself to a regular rhythm as suits your schedule to avoid getting lost. Let me know if you have questions.

**Monday Night**: The module for the current week becomes fully available at 6 pm MT (8 pm ET). The module will include an introductory video by the instructor. The remarks in this video are intended to help frame and inform class discussion.   
Discussion forums also open at this time. Starting in Week 2, **Critical Analysis Presentations are due by 11:59 pm MT (1:59 am ET)**. (See the Critical Analysis Presentation assignment description and sign-up sheet on Canvas.) While all students will have access to the discussion forum at this time, only students providing a Critical Analysis Presentations should post before Tuesday. Conversation will benefit from waiting until all that week’s Critical Analysis Presentations have been posted.   
The deadline for all other written assignments in the course will be 11:59 pm MT (1:59 am ET) on a Monday night. (See Course Calendar for details.)

**Tuesday Morning**: The week's discussion forum is officially open to all students. There will be only one discussion forum in a typical week (Weeks 1 and 5 being the exceptions). Students should watch the instructor’s video introduction to the module and read all Critical Analysis Presentations before making their first posts.

**Thursday Night**: Each student’s **first discussion post is due by 11:59 pm MT (1:59 am ET)**. This should be a 150-to-250-word response to one of that week’s Critical Analysis Presentations. Strong posts will directly address the content of a Critical Analysis Presentation, responding to its exposition of an assigned reading and/or attempting to answer the question(s) it poses. Students should not feel the pressure to make these posts mini-essays in their own right; they should simply be relevant and meaningful statements in an academic conversation. Also, posts may exceed the upper limit stated here. However, keep in mind that the longer a post runs, the more likely it is to put off classmates.

**Friday**: Having given students ample opportunity to engage one another first, the instructor will read all posts made up to that point and contribute as necessary.

**Sunday Night**: **All other discussion posts are due by 11:59 pm MT (1:59 am ET)**, when that week’s forum closes. Each student must provide at least two additional responses per forum (three total) - no length limits. This is a bare minimum requirement; even more posts across any or all of the forum’s threads are encouraged. The only posts that will be marked down are those that are late (see Late Policy) or stray too far afield in their content (also see Policies on Academic and Collegial Integrity).

**Monday Afternoon:** Weekly round-up. After reading over the weekend’s posts, the instructor will post a response video in that week’s module. This response will summarize key points raised during discussion and revisit ideas from the readings that may deserve further attention. Students should watch this video before moving on to the next week’s module or forum. The course rhythm starts over later that evening.   
  
Week 5 Exception (Gathering Days)  
There will be no online discussion forums during the week of February 4th. There will still be assigned readings, but the work we do with that material will take place in on-campus sessions on February 8th and 9th. Our assigned room is TBD.

**COURSE CALENDAR**

NOTE: The contents of this schedule are subject to change

Part I: Establishing a Historical and Conceptual Framework for Theological Construction

**Week 1 – Introduction: Relationality, Romanticism, and the Expressivist Turn**

* + Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, Chs. 1-5 (117 pages).
  + Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Ch. 1 (48 pages).
  + F LeRon Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology*, Introduction & Ch. 1 (38 pages).

**Week 2 – Bringing Theology into the Conversation**

* + Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology*, Parts I & II (124 pages).
  + David Kelsey, "Human Being" in *Christian Theology* (27 pages).

**Week 3 – Considerations for Theological Reconstruction**

* + Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology*, Part III (80 pages).

**Week 4 – Complicating the Framework: Gender and Disability**

* + Serene Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology*, Chs. 1-2 (48 pages).
  + Hans Reinders, *Receiving the Gift of Friendship*, Introduction & Part I (155 pages).

**Week 5 – Gathering Days – Complicating the Framework: Sexuality and Race**

*Room: TBD*  
*February 8th*

* + *Patrick Cheng, Rainbow Theology*, Introduction & a Chapter from Part I.
  + THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY PROFILE PRESENTATIONS, Round One.

*October 12th*

* + Cheng, *Rainbow Theology*, Part II & Conclusion.
  + Reread assignment description for Final Paper.
  + THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY PROFILE PRESENTATIONS, Round Two.

Part II: Engaging Constructive Proposals in Theological Anthropology

**Week 6 - Brief Considerations of Humanity in Ecological Context**  
THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY PROFILE DOCUMENT DUE

* + Sallie McFague, "Human Beings, Embodiment, and Our Home the Earth" in *Reconstructing Christian Theology* (28 pages).
  + Faith Glavey Pawl, "Human Superiority, Divine Providence, and the Animal Good" in *The Christian Doctrine of Humanity* (20 pages).

**Week 7**   
PROSPECTUS FOR FINAL PAPER DUE

* + Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology*, Chs. 3-7 (128 pages).

**Week 8**

* + M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom* (130 pages).

**Week 9**

* + Ian McFarland, *The Divine Image* (167 pages).

**Week 10**  
NOTE: Discussion forum closes Friday, March 15th, the official end of winter classes

* + Reinders, *Receiving the Gift of Friendship*, Part II (117 pages).