**Christology (IST 2088) Hybrid Course, Spring 2020**

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**Course Description**

Understandings of Christ and salvation in Christian theology.

**Course Objectives**

*Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:*

1. Engage the content of Christian theology imaginatively by carefully examining its classical and contemporary content, tasks, and methods; most specifically, with regard to doctrines and traditions concerning the figure of Jesus Christ, such as soteriology, the virgin birth, and the resurrection.
2. Demonstrate competence concerning specialized theological vocabulary.
3. Understand and characterize theological perspectives other than one's own with accuracy and generosity.
4. Identify and explain issues shaping current debate about the person, work, and relevance of Jesus Christ as both a religious and historical figure.
5. Consider the alternatives to a proposed Christology and recognize when the theological questions or commitments under consideration may need to be restated or even rejected.
6. Name important practical and ethical implications of adopting a particular Christology.
7. Articulate a critical and carefully reasoned Christological statement of one's own with sensitivity to its systematic connections to other doctrines.

**Required Texts**

Tyron L Inbody. *The Many Faces of Christology*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002.

Kyle Roberts. *A Complicated Pregnancy: Whether Mary Was a Virgin and Why It Matters*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017.

Don Schweitzer. *Contemporary Christologies: A Fortress Introduction*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010.

Amos Yong. *Theology and Down Syndrome: Reimagining Disability in Late Modernity*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007.

*Also choose one of the following texts (see Book Review assignment description):*

Wendy Farley. *Gathering Those Driven Away: A Theology of Incarnation*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011.

Wonhee Anne Joh. *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.

Ian A. McFarland. *The Word Made Flesh: A Theology of the Incarnation*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2020.

F. LeRon Shults. *Christology and Science*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008.

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

**Recommended Resources**

*While each of these texts is part of the Ira J. Taylor Library reference collection, students are encouraged to acquire a personal copy of at least one.*

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.

**Course Requirements (At a Glance)**

Class Participation 25%

Discussion Starter 10%

Book Review Project 30%

Group Consultation 5%

Group Presentation 5%

Written Report 20%

Constructive Proposal 35%

Prelim. Statement 10%

Final Draft 25%

**Grading Scale**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A | 93-100% |
| A- | 90-92% |
| B+ | 87-89% |
| B | 83-86% |
| B- | 80-82% |
| C+ | 77-79% |
| C | 73-76% |
| C- | 70-72% |

**See Canvas for Iliff’s Institutional Policies.**

**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 Discussion Starter posted after the Monday deadline will incur a penalty of 10% the assignment’s total value. If it is over 24 hours late it will incur a second 10% penalty. If a Discussion Starter still has not been posted within 48 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.  
If a student does not make the required second and/or third posts before the Sunday night deadline, one point will be deducted from the student's weekly discussion grade for each of those posts that is late.  
Posts made more than 24 hours after the Sunday night deadline will not receive credit.

**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 (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 Gathering Days activities 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 Classroom 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 Discussion Starter (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 apiece. 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.

Week 5 Exception: Because the COVID-19 event has made the traditional on-campus sessions of Gathering Days impossible, the assigned readings for Week 5 will be discussed online, but in a slightly different manner than in a typical week. There will be **two discussion forums**, one devoted to the Lowe essay and another devoted to the selections by Bohache. Instead of a Discussion Starter, the instructor will provide the prompt in conjunction with a video lecture on the material. Students will be expected to provide a first post in both forums, earning 5 points for each first post that is properly on topic and made on time. These posts will be due by 11:59pm MT on Sunday, April 26th.   
This is the only week of the term in which replies are encouraged by not required.

*Discussion Starter (10% of grade):* Before the end of the quarter, each student will contribute one Discussion Starter post. Beginning in Week 2, the Discussion Starters will be the parent posts for our threads of conversation. These more substantial contributions (500-650 words in length) require the student to interpret and analyze one of the assigned readings more closely than one may be able to do in a typical week. An effective Discussion Starter both focuses and stimulates class discussion of that week’s material. The instructor will evaluate these posts according to how well the student performs the following tasks:

* **Identify the distinct contribution to Christology***.* 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 theologians together. This task often involves distinguishing passages of argument from passages of exposition.
* **Summarize the case to be 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?
* **Raise a question of critical analysis for discussion**. For example, the student might address how the adoption of a particular Christology promises to promote or harm the life of faith communities. Alternatively, one might describe a specific way in which a theological proposal seemed to lack internal coherence or consistency of method. Above all else, this question needs to bring together the student’s strongest interests in the material with what one expects other students 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 the initial 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.   
NOTE: There will be no Discussion Starters in Weeks 1, 5, or 6.

*Book Review Project (30% of grade):* In addition to the 4 common texts required for this course, students must choose a fifth text (Farley, Joh, McFarland, or Shults). Students should use the corresponding sign-up sheet on Canvas at their earliest convenience. Each text is a recently published, book-length discussion of Christology that includes the author’s own constructive theological proposal on the subject. Proper engagement of the selected text will involve the completion of four interrelated assignments:

* **Group Discussion Forum (not graded).** To facilitate collaboration, the instructor will allocate a discussion forum for each group’s exclusive use. This will give group members the opportunity to discuss the content of the book with one another and develop plans for the Week 5 presentation at their convenience (see below). They may also continue using this forum in Week 6, following the presentation and in advance of submitting individual written reports on the text. Members have the freedom to create and carry out threads of conversation as they see fit. The instructor will monitor the forums loosely but only post if invited by a group to do so.
* **Group Consultation (5%).** The instructor will host a synchronous Zoom meeting for each group on either Monday, April 20th, or Tuesday, April 21st. The purpose of this meeting is to allow students to talk with the instructor and one another in real-time about the content of their selected text and how they might best present it. Group members must agree on a common 1-hour time slot between 8am-5pm MT and schedule it with the instructor via Google Calendar. Students who actively participate in the meeting will receive full credit.
* **Group Presentation (5%)**. From 9:00-11:30am MT on Wednesday, April 22nd, the entire class will participate in a synchronous Zoom meeting. During this time, each group will offer a presentation on their selected text and take questions from other members of the learning community. The presentation itself should: a) describe the author’s basic approach to Christology as a theological issue (considering elements such as the central topics raised, the intended audience, the academic disciplines or theological schools that inform the author’s assumptions and methods, the attention given to social location, etc.), b) summarize the author’s own constructive proposal (considering the same content elements one would in a Discussion Starter) and, c) lead the rest of the class in considering the larger relevance and implications for the field of theology, ministry, praxis, piety, or other relevant areas the group prefers to highlight. These presentations should run for 20-30 minutes, and each group member should actively contribute. The instructor will evaluate each presentation according to how well it accomplishes the required tasks, as well as its overall clarity and coherence.
* **Written Report (20%)**. At the end of Week 6, each student must submit a written report, 800-1000 words in length, detailing one’s critical engagement of the selected text. This document should accomplish the following three tasks. (Credit goes to Dr. Deborah Beth Creamer for the structure of this section and most of its wording):
  + **Summary/description of text**
    - How would you describe this book to a partner or a friend? What are some of the significant themes this text addresses?
    - What are the author’s key claims and ultimate conclusions? Identify a central thesis if possible.
    - What image of Jesus Christ does the author present? Is more than one image employed constructively?
    - What larger outcomes does this author appear to pursue? In other words, how do they think the world would be improved if the recommendations of this book were put into practice?
  + **Analysis of text**
    - What do you see as the main strengths of this work?
    - What weaknesses/concerning implications do you find it?
    - Who do you think is the ideal audience for this book?
    - How cogent or internally consistent is the author’s constructive proposal on Christology?
    - How practical are the author’s suggestions for thought and action?
  + **Creative engagement** – choose one of these two options:
    - How would you **apply** this approach?

Be very specific here – do not just say “I could preach a sermon on it” but detail specifically what you would do, where you would do it, who you would do it with or for, what your intentions would be, what your ideal outcome would be, etc. Will this proposal work in real life? How can you “flesh it out”?

* + - How would you **extend** this author’s proposal?

If you think the author is on the right track but missed something, what would you fill in? How would you make this a stronger theological statement, and/or apply it to other issues and/or populations? How would you fit this Christology together with other theological doctrines or themes?

Students do not need to engage resources beyond their selected text in order to complete this assignment. However, they may choose to do so (e.g. looking at the author’s other publications or journal reviews of the book). Any additional resources must be cited properly using Chicago style. Full bibliographic information must be provided in either a footnote or a works cited page.

The written report must be submitted by **11:59pm MT on Monday, May 4th**.

*Constructive Proposal on Christology (35% of grade):* The culminating project of this course is a short paper in which the student provides a carefully reasoned statement of one's personal Christology. This project will be completed in two stages:

* **Preliminary Statement (10%).** At the beginning of Week 3, each student must submit a document, roughly 400 words in length, that provides concise answers to the questions below. This part of the assignment is a task of self-examination and, in that sense, is meant to be more confessional than academic. Papers that clearly and directly answer all the questions and are submitted on time will receive full credit. Students are encouraged to use the questions themselves as sections headings to structure the document.  
  + What importance or relevance does Christology hold today?
  + What is the relationship between the Jesus of history and the Christ of theology?
  + What does it mean to identify Jesus Christ as “savior”?
  + What does it mean to identify Jesus Christ as “divine”?
  + What bearing should religious pluralism have on Christology?
  + How might your social location shape your answers to these questions?

This statement must be submitted by **11:59 pm MT on Monday, April 13th**.

* **Final Draft (25%).** In this roughly 1000-word document, the student must describe a particular understanding of Christology and defend it. Building on the content of the Preliminary Statement, this proposal needs to draw on material from the assigned readings and additional research to substantiate its claims in light of relevant alternatives and possible objections. The method and structure of the paper is up to the student. The instructor will grade the final draft according to the following criteria:  
  + There is a clear, concise, and engaging thesis statement.
  + The content of the paper includes, but is not limited to, refined answers to the questions addressed in the Preliminary Statement. These answers ought to integrate smoothly into the overall argument of the final draft.
  + The student makes fair and effective use of academic resources, including the proper citation.
  + The paper is well-organized and intelligibly written, containing little-to-no errors of grammar and spelling.

The final draft must be submitted **by 11:59 pm MT on Monday, June 1st**.  
Graduating students must submit it **by 11:59 pm MT on Tuesday, May 26th**.

**COURSE RHYTHM**  
In 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 Afternoon/Evening**: The academic week begins and all items in its corresponding module will be made available no later than 6 pm MT. The first item is each module is **an introductory video by the instructor**. The primary function of these videos will be to frame class discussion, set up key themes and ideas in readings, and provide additional remarks on upcoming assignments. Their content will likely also include a summary of salient points from the preceding week's discussion. Students can expects videos to run for 10-30 minutes, depending on the material covered in a given week.  
   
Discussion forums also open at this time. Starting in Week 2,**Discussion Starters are due by 11:59 pm MT**. (See [assignment description](https://iliff.instructure.com/courses/2522222/assignments/21737627) and group sign-up sheets.) While all students will have access to the discussion forum at this time, only students providing a Discussion Starter should post before Tuesday. Conversation will benefit from waiting until all that week’s Discussion Starters have been posted (assuming, of course, that all presentations are posted on time).

**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& 5 being the exceptions). Students should watch the instructor’s video introduction to the module and read all Discussion Starters before making their first posts.

**Thursday Evening**: Each student’s **first discussion post is due by 11:59 pm MT**. This should be a 150-to-250-word response to one of that week’s Discussion Starters. Strong posts will directly address the content of a Discussion Starter, responding to its exposition of an assigned reading and/or attempting to answer a question 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, it is a rule of thumb that the longer a post runs, the more likely it is that other students may only skim it or skip it altogether.

**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 Evening**: **All other discussion posts are due by 11:59 pm MT**, when that week’s forum closes. Each student must provide at least two additional responses per forum - 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 Morning/Afternoon:**After reading over the weekend’s posts, the instructor will provide one last round of responses and assess participation scores. When circumstances all, the instructor may begin providing these responses during the weekend itself. Students are welcome to continue posting in the forum after the Sunday deadline, but they should keep in mind that such a post may go unread by other participants. The course rhythm starts over once all elements of the following week's module become available on Monday afternoon/evening.    
  
Week 5 Exception

Because the COVID-19 event has made the traditional on-campus sessions of Gathering Days impossible, course activities in Week 5 will consist of a combination of synchronous and asynchronous online assignments. See the detailed descriptions of Class Participation and the Book Review Project for more information.

**COURSE CALENDAR**

NOTE: The contents of this schedule are subject to change

**Week 1 – Introductions and Beginnings**

* Kyle Roberts, *A Complicated Pregnancy*.
* The syllabus in its entirety.

**Week 2 – Considerations of History, Tradition, and Revelation**DISCUSSION STARTERS BEGIN

* Tyron Inbody, The Many Faces of Christology, Preface & Chs. 1-2 (7-68).
* Don Schweitzer, Contemporary Christologies, Introduction & Ch. 1 (1-32).

**Week 3 – A Liberal/Conservative Divide?**

* *Many Faces*, Chs. 3-4 (69-114).
* Contemporary Christologies, Ch. 2 (33-52).

**Week 4 – Social Location and Christology: Gender as a Case Study**PRELIMINARY STATEMENTS ON CHRISTOLOGY DUE

* *Many Faces*, Ch. 5 (115-138).
* Kwok Pui-Lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*, Ch. 7 (168-185).
* A. Elaine Crawford, “Womanist Christology and the Wesleyan Tradition” (213-220).

**Week 5 – Centering Soteriology**

GROUP PRESENTATIONS & CONSULTATIONS

* Walter Lowe, "Christ and Salvation" (222-248).
* Thomas Bohache, *Christology from the Margins*, Ch. 11 & Epilogue (230-261).

**Week 6 – Diving Deep into Constructive Christologies**BOOK REVIEWS DUE

**Week 7 – The Implications of Human Suffering for Soteriology**

* *Many Faces*, Ch. 6 (139-164).
* Mary J. Streufert, “*Solus Christus* within Empire: Christology in the Face of Violence against Women” (223-232).
* *Contemporary Christologies*, Chs. 3-4 (55-98).

**Week 8 – Social Location and Soteriology: Disability as a Case Study**

* John Swinton, “Disability Theology” (140-141).
* Amos Yong, *Theology and Down Syndrome*, Chs. 6-8 (151-258).
* *Recommended*: *Theology and Down Syndrome*, Chs. 1-2 (1-42).

**Week 9 – Challenges of Religious Pluralism**

* *Many Faces*, Chs. 7-8 (165-212).
* *Contemporary Christologies*, Ch. 5 (99-126).

**Week 10 – Ends and Endings**  
NOTE: Discussion forum closes Friday, May 29th, the official end of Spring classes

* *Contemporary Christologies*, Conclusion (127-142).
* Theology and Down Syndrome, Ch. 9 & Epilogue (259-295).

Constructive Proposal on Christology Due by **11:59pm MT on Monday, June 1st**.

Graduating students must submit it **by 11:59 pm MT on Tuesday, May 26th**.