

Contemporary Catholic Theology

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T-Th 4:30-5:50

Fall 2014

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This course explores the diverse field of Catholic Theology in the twentieth century and beyond. We begin with a brief overview of the discipline of theology and its recent history in Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular. We then study the sources, foundations and systematic concerns of Catholic theology, while also surveying some of the most important Catholic theologians of the last century and assessing their formative impact on contemporary Catholic thought. Lastly, we turn our attention to moral theology and have the opportunity to analyze contemporary ethical issues using a postmodern Catholic framework.

The course load involves reading texts, writing response papers, group work, presenting outlines to the class, participating in discussions, a book report, one long paper and a final exam. If you are not comfortable with any of these requirements (for whatever reasons), you may wish to reconsider your enrollment. Remember this is a 300-level course.

A Note about Grading: A's are supposed to be exceptional grades. In order to earn an A(-) in this course, you must complete all assignments **really well**. Your work should not only be flawless, but also above and beyond expectations. Doing all assignments **well** fits more appropriately in the B range of grades. When work is flawed, late, or incomplete, it fits into the C and D range.

Required Texts Available at the Bookstore:

Introducing Contemporary Theologies: The What and the Who of Theology Today, by Neil Ormerod. Orbis Books (1997) 978-1-57075-139-4

The College Student's Introduction to Theology, ed. by Thomas Rausch. Liturgical Press (1993) 978-0-8146-5841-3

A Morally Complex World: Engaging Contemporary Moral Theology, by James T. Bretzke. Liturgical Press (2004) 978-0-8146-5158-2

Recommended Text:

The Road to Vatican II: Key Changes in Theology, by Maureen Sullivan, OP. Paulist Press (2007) 978-0-8091-4277-4

NOTE: If you have any special needs or a disability that requires any special accommodation to fulfill any of the course requirements, you need to provide acceptable documentation to the Office of Disability Services. Someone from that office will then make arrangements as needed with Dr. McGinley.

Course Requirements:

1. Attendance. Good attendance demonstrates a solid commitment and typically influences your grades on all other aspects of the course. Some of the material covered in lectures and class discussions is not found in the textbooks; additional details may be given in class regarding particular assignments; and the exam will draw from both text and class material – so it is vital to be present. If you are sick or have an emergency, it is wise to let me know. Use the University absence reporting website (<https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/>) to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. You will be allowed two absences (beginning September 2) before your grade is officially penalized; each absence beyond that (or the equivalent in tardies or leaving early) will lower your “Attendance and Participation” grade one notch. No “incomplete” grades will be given for falling behind or poor attendance.
2. General Participation in class. This requires completing the assignments before each class, arriving on time, taking notes, and being actively engaged in any class discussion. This also includes leading a content outline discussion in a group and your performance on occasional “pop” quizzes on the reading material. If you are absent for any reason on a day that we have a quiz or that you are expected to present material, you will simply lose participation credit for that particular assignment. (Note: while late written assignments will be penalized, you will be allowed one late paper (one class period) without a penalty.) *Use of electronic devices such as cell phones, laptops and tablets in class must only be for purposes related to this course (such as note-taking). The burden of proof is on you to demonstrate that you are not using such devices for other purposes.*
3. Response Papers based on discussion questions in the Ormerod text, due as indicated on the syllabus. These should be **one page maximum**, typed double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font (or smaller) with 1" margins (or less) all around. Do NOT waste space for a heading; you may write your name and the date in the top margin and begin your text on the first typed line. Simply answer the given questions at the end of the chapter and demonstrate that you are thinking critically (analytically) about the material.

Remember the point of the assignment is to prove that you did the reading and thought about it. You must complete **seven** (7) total: all that are assigned except whichever one is due the same day you are scheduled to present your outline of a theologian’s work. These are graded according to the following scale and will be lowered one whole number for each class a paper is turned in late. If not completed within the possible allotted time, the grade will be zero.

4 = A (Wow! Very insightful and nearly flawless! It exceeds expectations)

3 = B (**This is the typical grade for completing the paper as assigned**)

2 = C (Not complete or not clear or poorly written or some mistakes)

1 = D (Overly problematic, but at least you wrote something)

4. Book Report on a theologian’s work. You will choose one of the theologians we are studying from the Ormerod text and find a book written by that theologian. First, you will prepare a summary/outline of that work to present to the class and include some

interesting biographical details you learned about the theologian. Also share something from their work that challenged you to think or see things differently. Then you will write a written report to go along with your outline, offering a critical reflection on the book in light of the material we are studying in class and your own response to the text.

We will divide these in class and you should be prepared to make your presentation on the day we are scheduled to read about and study that theologian according to the syllabus. The written report (along with a copy of the outline) will be due Thursday, November 6. You will be assessed based on both your written and oral presentations. The oral presentation will be assessed as such:

- 10 (=A) Excellent presentation; demonstrates solid grasp of the material; judicious selection and emphasis of details; suitably thorough; visual aids used
- 8.5 (=B) Fine presentation; demonstrates a good understanding of the material; thorough enough; important details given
- 7 (=C) Lack of clarity in presentation; or misunderstanding of the material; or poor judgment in selection of details
- O (zero=F) Missing class on scheduled day for presentation; multiples of above problems.

Your written report should include enough summary to make sense of your outline and to clarify important points. Beyond that, you are essentially writing a review. You should approach this paper by explicitly answering the following questions:

- What do you find most interesting about the text?
- What aspects of the text make the most sense to you?
- What aspects of the text do you find problematic (if any) and why?
- What are three helpful things you take from this book?
- What about the text challenges you to think about something in a new way?

Please use helpful margins and fonts to make your material readable. The report itself, not including the outline, should be at least 1000 words. These are graded according to the following scale and will be lowered one-half number for each class the paper is turned in late.

- 10 = A (An extraordinary paper. Effective critical thinking. Rare but possible)
- 9.5 = A- (An excellent paper – well above and beyond expectations)
- 9 = B+ (Insightfully completed paper as expected and written very well)
- 8.5 = B (**This is the typical grade for completing the paper as assigned**)
- 8 = B- (Not quite up to expectations)
- 7.5 = C+ (Falls short in length or critical thinking)
- 7 = C (Falls short as above and/or too much summary without analysis)
- 6.5 = C- (Falls short as above and/or poor writing skills)
- 6 = D+ (These grades and below are compounding the problems mentioned above)
- 5.5 = D
- 5 = D-

The final grade for the report will be an average of the written and oral grades.

5. Group Outlines, due as indicated on the syllabus. You and other class members will outline an assigned chapter from the Bretzke book. You will present your outline to the class as a way of helping us to learn the most important details of the assigned material. You will be evaluated in general based on your thoroughness, synthesis of the information, coordination as a group, and your ability to present it clearly. This project is part of your participation grade.
- ✓+ (=A) Excellent presentation; demonstrates solid grasp of the material; judicious selection and emphasis of details; suitably thorough; visual aids used
- ✓ (=B) Fine presentation; demonstrates a good understanding of the material; thorough enough; important details given
- ✓- (=C) Lack of clarity in presentation; or misunderstanding of the material; or poor judgment in selection of details
- O (zero=F) Missing class on scheduled day for presentation; multiples of above problems.
6. A Theological Investigation of a contemporary moral issue, due no later than Dec 9. You will choose an ethical issue that is currently up for debate in modern society. You will need to find two Catholic theologians who take differing views on the issue and then write your own theological investigation of the issue utilizing the method outlined in the Bretzke text and referencing other theologians whose work we have discussed in class. The goal is to produce a Catholic theological reflection that will move the debate to a deeper level. The end result will be at least ten pages. More instructions in class.
7. Final Exam, Friday, December 19, 8:00-11:00 am. Absence will result in a **zero** grade.

Criteria for Evaluation:

- accuracy and precision of scholarship
- clarity of oral and written expression
- progress in critical thinking skills
- completion of assignments and readings on due dates
- thoroughness, creativity, originality and contribution to field of inquiry

Grades will be based on the following formula:

Attendance and Participation	20%
Response Papers	20%
Book Report	20%
Theological Investigation	20%
Final Exam	20%

All written assignments should be turned in as a hard copy. If you need to email an assignment in order to hand it in on time (by the beginning of class), please feel free to do so. You should send it to duganmcg@rci.rutgers.edu BOTH as an attachment and as text in the message, **then follow it up with a hard copy**. An Attachment alone does not guarantee the paper has been received. You may also leave papers in the mailbox or under the office door as long as they are clearly marked to the attention of Dr. McGinley. Remember that if you EVER consult an outside source

for something you are writing, you **MUST** acknowledge it through an appropriate citation. Portraying someone else's ideas or work as your own is **plagiarism** and any student found plagiarizing will receive an F for the entire course.

NOTE: If you would like to hand out materials for your in-class presentations and you want me to make copies, I must receive your original at least one full week in advance. Otherwise, you will need to make copies yourself. Keep in mind that making handouts is *not* a requirement.

Schedule of Topics, Readings and Assignments:

Readings and papers are DUE on the date for which they are listed.

Sep 2	Course Introduction	
Sep 4	THE DISCIPLINE OF THEOLOGY Methodology and hermeneutics Ormerod: Chapters 1-2	
Sep 9	THE DISCIPLINE OF THEOLOGY Methodology and hermeneutics Ormerod: Chapters 3-4 Rausch: Chapter 1 (Rausch)	
Sep 11	HEBREW BIBLE and NEW TESTAMENT Rausch: Chapter 3 (Siker) Also pp. 40-44 of Chpt. 2 (Smith-Christopher)	
Sep 16	HANS KUNG Ormerord: Chapter 5	Response Paper #1
Sep 18	THE CHURCH IN HISTORY Rausch: Chapter 4 (Ryan)	
Sep 23	ELISABETH SCHUSSLER FIORENZA Ormerord: Chapter 15	Response Paper #2
Sep 25	THE CONTENT AND ACT OF FAITH Rausch: Chapter 5 (Connolly)	
Sep 30	BERNARD LONERGAN Ormerord: Chapter 10	Response Paper #3
Oct 2	CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY Rausch: Chapter 9 (Milligan)	
Oct 7	GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ Ormerord: Chapter 13	Response Paper #4
Oct 9	THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY Rausch: Chapter 6 (Garascia)	

Oct 14	KARL RAHNER Ormerord: Chapter 9	Response Paper #5
Oct 16	MORAL THEOLOGY Rausch: Chapter 7 (Popiden)	
Oct 21	ROSEMARY RADFORD RUETHER Ormerord: Chapter 16	Response Paper #6
Oct 23	THE SACRAMENTS AND LITURGY Rausch: Chapter 8 (Downey)	
Oct 28	EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX Ormerord: Chapter 7	Response Paper #7
Oct 30	CONTEMPORARY CHURCH ISSUES Rausch: Chapter 10 (Mayeski)	
Nov 4	ELIZABETH JOHNSON Ormerord: Chapter 17	Response Paper #8
Nov 6	MORAL THEOLOGY Bretzke: Introduction/Group Planning	Book Report
Nov 11	MORAL THEOLOGY Bretzke: Chapter 1/Group Planning	
Nov 13	The RATIONAL CLAIM AXIS Bretzke: Chapter 2	Group Outlines
Nov 18	The SACRED CLAIM AXIS Bretzke: Chapter 3	Group Outlines
Nov 20	CONSCIENCE Bretzke: Chapter 4	Group Outlines
Nov 25	MORAL DISCOURSE Bretzke: Chapter 5	Group Outlines
Nov 27	No Class (Thanksgiving Holiday)	
Dec 2	CASUISTRY Bretzke: Chapter 6	Group Outlines
Dec 4	SIN and FAILURE Bretzke: Chapter 7	Group Outlines
Dec 9	Course Conclusion	Theological Investigation
Friday, Dec 19	FINAL EXAMINATION: 8:00-11:00 am	