

COS 522 – Theology in the Contemporary Church

Indiana Extension Course of Study School, University of Indianapolis

Class Dates: September 9th-10th, October 8, and November 12

Instructor: Rev. Dr. Rachel Metheny, email: rmetheny@cosumc.org, phone: 317-531-8173

Course Goals

This course covers significant individuals, movements, events, and theological developments from the nineteenth century to the present. Students will read selected primary sources.

Course Objectives:

1. Understand the origins and theological tenets of liberalism from the early 19th century to the present, including its influence on ecumenism and process theology.
2. Understand and distinguish reactions to liberalism, including Fundamentalism, Neo-Orthodoxy, and Evangelicalism.
3. Understand the historical development and theology of the Holiness Movement, Pentecostalism, and the Charismatic Movement.
4. Understand the origins and tenets of Liberation and Contextual theologies.

Required Textbooks

1. John Caputo, *What Would Jesus Deconstruct?*
2. Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*

Assignments and Participation

Pre-Course Assignment due September 9th

- A. Read Chapters 1-5 in *Faith Seeking Understanding*
- B. Write a paper addressing these questions (each answer should be one page and in your OWN WORDS).
 1. Migliore writes about three approaches or “methods” of doing theology. What are they? Assess their strengths and weaknesses.
 2. What is your understanding of revelation?
 3. Do you agree that “the authority of scripture is understood primarily in terms of its indispensable witness to the sovereign, liberating, and reconciling love of God in Jesus Christ?” (page 55) What are the principles by which you interpret Scripture?
 4. According to Migliore, what is the source of the doctrine of the Trinity? What is your understanding of the Trinity?

5. Many critics charge that Christianity is the primary source of the ecological crisis. Why is this so? What attitudes and practices underlie the crisis? How can a new doctrine of creation address the crisis?

Assignments due October 8th

A. Read Chapters 6-10 in *Faith Seeking Understanding*

B. Write a paper addressing these questions

1. What is the theodicy question? How would you address it?
2. What does it mean for humans to be created in image of God? What is your definition of sin?
3. Who is Jesus and what is his work?
4. How would you explain the phrase “Jesus died for us?”
5. How are contextual Christologies different from the classical creeds, confessions, and liturgies? What voices from these contextual theologians do you need to hear?
6. Explain the doctrine of justification and sanctification. How do Catholics and Protestants view justification differently? How do different theologians view justification differently?

C. Read Caputo's, *What Would Jesus Deconstruct* and prepare a 10 minute presentation on addressing the following questions: If Jesus pays a surprise visit to your church, what would Jesus deconstruct? Outline 2-3 theological topics and perspectives and engage Caputo when explaining Jesus' “deconstruction” during this surprise visit.

Assignments due November 12

A. Read Chapters 11-14 in *Faith Seeking Understanding*

B. Write a paper addressing these questions

1. Name and assess the strengths and weaknesses of the models of the church that Migliore names in chapter eleven.
2. To what model of church does your church demonstrate? How has reading informed you in terms of defining your church? implementing church? revisioning?
3. What is Barth's critique of infant baptism? Assess the argument for and against this practice. In United Methodist theology is Holy Communion an ordinance, a sacrament, or both?
4. Can Christians continue to affirm the “finality” of Christ in a world where the plurality of cultures and religions increasingly points to the need for a spirit of openness and dialogue? Use Knitter's typology of theologies of the religions
5. Is the kingdom of God proclaimed in the NT an already present reality (realized eschatology) or entirely in the future (futurist eschatology)? Explain

C. Final Presentation: TBA

Grading

Classroom Participation 20%

Assignments 60%

Presentations 20%