# STMM 500: CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY (3 credits)

**FALL 2007**

Section 01: Wednesdays 5:45-8:35, Hunthausen 100
Section 02: Fridays 9:00-11:50, Hunthausen 100

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**Office Hours:** By appointment.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

An exploration from a Christian perspective of the mystery of human existence. Examination of the structures of human being: self-transcendence, finitude, freedom, destiny, relatedness, autonomy, growth and history. Special attention to the horizons that shape human life, to the roots of the possibility of religion, to grace and sin in human life, and to the work of the Holy Spirit in human life and creation. This course also serves as an introduction to some of the fundamental themes and methods of theological reflection.

## GOALS OF THE COURSE

- To develop the ability to reflect theologically on the basic themes of the Christian faith in the areas of theological anthropology, grace, sin, and the Holy Spirit.
- To develop an understanding of the methods and themes of theological reflection in general, especially as they are used by some Twentieth Century Christian theologians.
- To reflect theologically on one's own experience of human life.
- To develop the ability to express one's theological reflections in written form in the light theological texts and to critique and rework those reflections.
- To reflect on the pastoral implications of the themes of Christian anthropology.

## TEXTBOOKS

- Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, Volumes 1 and 2, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951, 1957.
- Karl Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith, Seabury, 1978.
- Elizabeth Johnson, She Who Is, The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse, Crossroad.

## METHODS IN THE COURSE

I tend to think of my method of teaching as “interrupted lecture”. I have an outline of the material we need to cover and will follow it. However, some of the best learning takes place when questions are asked. Feel free to ask them. I will referee whether they take us too far a field. The more the lecture becomes a discussion, the more I think we learn. I will take responsibility for keeping us on track and making the connections.

The reading in this course is difficult. You will notice that in the assignments from week to week I will at times assign the same readings a second time. There is not a lot in terms of page numbers, but there is a lot in terms of the weight of the material. In general, Tillich is fairly difficult. He says something once, hits the nail on the head with his way of saying it and moves on. So you have to spend time with each paragraph and sometimes with each sentence. It is helpful to try and make everyday applications of what he is saying. When I first read Tillich, I could read about 3 pages an hour.

Rahner, on the other hand, loves to keep rolling over the same central themes, but opening them in new ways. With him you want to keep reading and see if you can catch the pattern of his basic themes coming through again and again.

Johnson is the easiest to read of the three. She managed to avoid that heavy Germanic influence.

## COURSE OUTLINE

- Session 1: Introduction. Basic definitions of the human.
- Session 2: Basic structures and dynamics of the human: the tension of embodiedness and self-transcendence. Read all of the section entitled Being and the Question of God in Vol. 1 of Tillich. Then go back and concentrate on the sections titled Finitude and the Categories (192-198) and the Ontological Elements (174-186).
- Session 3: Basic structures and dynamics of the human: raising the question of God. Reread all of the section entitled Being and the Question of God in Vol. 1 of Tillich. Then go back and concentrate on the following sections: Being and Finitude (186-192); Self and World (168-174); and sections on pages 198-210.
- Session 4:
  - Gender, Race and Anthropology: read Johnson, pages 150-156.
  - To speak of God: human experience and God language: read Johnson pages 3-57.
  - a short history of the theology of grace in the West. No required reading. Supplemental reading: Roger Haight, The Experience and Language of Grace (*you do not have to read this; if you want to pursue this further, this book is an excellent starting point).*
- Session 5: Finish the short history of the theology of grace;
  Karl Rahner's Christian Anthropology and Theology of Grace; read Rahner, chs. 1 & 2
- Session 6: continue Karl Rahner's Christian Anthropology and Theology of Grace; read Rahner, chs. 3-5
- Session 7: Finish the theology of Grace; Begin the dynamics of sin and evil; read Tillich, Vol. 2, pages 1-90
- Session 8: The dynamics of sin and evil continued; reread Tillich, Vol. 2, pages 1-90.
- Session 9: Grace and the Holy Spirit; read Johnson, chapter 7
- Session 10: Grace and the Holy Spirit; wrap up the course.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Class participation in discussion and reflection on the readings.
- Reading of assigned material in preparation for all classes.
- Three papers:
  - Due: session 4:
    A 5 page paper in which you develop your definition of the human in the light of one of the major themes in Paul Tillich's Systematic Theology, Vol. 1, pp. 163-210.

  - Due Session 7:
    A 5 page paper in which you discuss the theme of grace. Special attention should be paid to how grace functions in human life given how you have defined human nature. Develop your ideas in the light of a significant theme or passage in Rahner, Volume 1 of Tillich, or the readings from Johnson. If you need to do so, you can further develop and revise your ideas about human nature.

  - Due Session 10:
    A 5 page paper in which you discuss the theme of sin. Special attention should be paid to how sin distorts human nature and closes the human to the work of grace. Attention should also be paid to how grace heals the distortions of sin. Develop your ideas in the light of a significant passage or theme in Rahner, Tillich or Johnson.

**REGARDING STYLE**

- Papers must be typed, double-spaced.
- Use 1-inch margins all round. Use 10 or 12 pt. type.
- Do not use right-hand justification as it leads to oddly spaced words.
- **Papers are to be turned in electronically using the SU Angel system**.
- Keep a copy other than the one you submit **.**

## SOME OTHER SOURCES OF REFLECTION:

Ronald Rolheiser, The Restless Heart
Ronald Rolheiser, Forgotten Among the Lilies
Norman Chaney, Six Images of the Human.
Leo J. O'Donovan, A World of Grace.
Geffrey Kelly, Karl Rahner, Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning.
James Luther Adams, The Thought of Paul Tillich.
David H. Kelsey, The Fabric of Paul Tillich's Theology.
Karl J. Armbruster, The Vision of Paul Tillich.
Stephen J. Duffy, The Graced Horizon, nature and Grace in Modern Catholic Thought.
Stephen J. Duffy, The Dynamics of Grace, Perspectives in Theological Anthropology.
James A. Carpenter, Nature and Grace, Toward an Integral Perspective.
Roger Haight, The Experience and Language of Grace.
James H. Evans, Jr., We Have Been Believers.
Anne E. Carr, Transforming Grace, Christian Tradition and Women's Experience
Wilhelm And Marion Pauck, Paul Tillich, His Life and Thought.

## The following should give you a sense of some of the elements that are weighed in grading a paper:

**The Superior Paper (90-100, i.e. A/A-)**

**Thesis:** Easily identifiable, plausible, novel, sophisticated, insightful, crystal clear.

**Structure:** Evident, understandable, appropriate for thesis. Excellent transitions from point to point. Paragraphs support solid topic sentences.

**Use of texts:** the passages from cited texts are clearly understood, well expressed or explained, and use appropriately for the development of the thesis of the paper.

**Logic and argumentation:** All ideas in the paper flow logically; the argument is identifiable, reasonable, and sound. Author anticipates and successfully defuses counter-arguments; makes novel connections to outside material (from other parts of the class, or other classes), which illuminate the thesis.

**Mechanics:** Sentence structure, grammar excellent; correct use of punctuation and citation style; minimal to no spelling errors; absolutely no run-on sentences or comma splices.

**The Good Paper (84-89, i.e. B+/B)**

**Thesis:** Promising, but may be slightly unclear, or lacking in insight or originality.

**Structure:** Generally clear and appropriate, though may wander occasionally. May have a few unclear transitions, or a few paragraphs without strong topic sentences.

**Use of texts:** passages from cited texts are understood, but may not be clearly expressed or explained throughout. They support the thesis of the paper, but all the nuances may not be seen.

**Logic and argumentation:** Argument of paper is clear, usually flows logically and makes sense. Some evidence that counter-arguments acknowledged, though perhaps not addressed. Occasional insightful connections to outside material made.

**Mechanics:** Sentence structure, grammar strong despite occasional lapses; punctuation and citation style often used correctly. Some (minor) spelling errors; may have one run-on sentence or comma splice.

**The Borderline Paper (78-83, i.e. B-/C+)**

**Thesis:** May be unclear (contain many vague terms), appear unoriginal, or offer relatively little that is new; provides little around which to structure the paper.

**Structure:** Generally unclear, often wanders or jumps around. Few or weak transitions, many paragraphs without topic sentences.

**Use of evidence:** passages from cited texts not clearly understood, expressed or explained. The relationship between the text and the thesis of the paper is not always clear.

**Logic and argumentation:** Logic may often fail, or argument may often be unclear. May not address counter-arguments or make any outside connections.

**Mechanics:** Problems in sentence structure, grammar, and diction (usually not major). Errors in punctuation, citation style, and spelling. May have several run-on sentences or comma splices.

**The "Needs Help" Paper (C/C-)**

**Thesis:** Difficult to identify at all, may be bland restatement of obvious point.

**Structure:** Unclear, often because thesis is weak or non-existent. Transitions confusing and unclear. Few topic sentences.

**Use of text:** Cited texts not understood, explained or expressed. Not related well to the thesis.

**Logic and argumentation:** Ideas do not flow at all, usually because there is no argument to support. Simplistic view of topic; no effort to grasp possible alternative views.

**Mechanics:** Big problems in sentence structure, grammar, and diction. Frequent major errors in citation style, punctuation, and spelling. May have many run-on sentences and comma splices.

**The Failing Paper**

Shows obviously minimal lack of effort or comprehension of the assignment. Very difficult to understand owing to major problems with mechanics, structure, and analysis. Has no identifiable thesis, or utterly incompetent thesis.