STMA 500: HERMENEUTICS
Winter 2013
Michael Raschko
Hunthausen Hall 213, phone: 206-296-5311
mraschko@seattleu.edu
Office Hours: by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION
A study of the major historical and contemporary theories of interpretation and the issues around which they differ. Practical exercises in interpretation that will uncover our own approach to the matter. The pastoral implications and uses of the various approaches to texts. Ministry as interpretation.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES
- to obtain a working knowledge of the major schools of thought in interpretation theory;
- to have a basic knowledge of the historical contexts out of which the basic theories of interpretation emerged;
- to practice interpretation so that we might discover our own practical ways of dealing with texts;
  - to look at the pastoral implications of interpretation theory.

METHODOLOGIES
lecture, seminar discussion, papers

TEXTS, in the order in which we will read them:
David Tracy. Plurality and Ambiguity, Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987.

Richard E. Palmer. Hermeneutics. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969.

Paul Ricoeur. Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, edited and translated by John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Two Articles which may be found on Angel:
- Diana L. Hayes, "James Cone's Hermeneutic of Language and Black Theology", *Theological Studies*, 61 (2000)
- Luis R. Rivera-Rogriguez,"Reading in Spanish from the Diaspora Through Hispanic Eyes." *Theology Today*, 54 (1998)

Sandra Schneiders. The Revelatory Text, Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture. San Francisco: Harper, 1991.

Course Outline
Session 1: April 4
Introduction to Hermeneutics

Session 2: April 11 NO CLASS: MISSION DAY

Session 3: April 28
Tracy, Plurality and Ambiguity

We will begin discussion of the first three chapters of Tracy's text. The trick in reading Tracy is not to drown in all the examples he throws your way, but to try and get to the central point. Among the key topics he raises are the following:
- ❖ What is a classic and why are they important?
- ❖ What does he mean by pre-understanding?

- Why does he turn to game theory? What does that have to do with his notion of conversation, and why is conversation so important to him?
- What does it mean to talk about truth in terms of relative adequacy and not certainty?
- How does argument differ from conversation, when is it necessary?
- What are the roles of theory, method and explanation? How do these differ from conversation? What is distanciation and why is it an issue?
- Why talk about truth as manifestation? How does that differ from notions of truth as correspondence?
- What does it mean to say that we belong to language and history?
- What is the difference between "langue" and "parole" and why is the difference important in Tracy's mind? Why is it important to him to move past words to sentences and texts?

Sessions 4 through 6: April 25, May 2 and May 9

We will begin our discussion of Palmer's book, Hermeneutics. Some guiding questions:

- What is realism's approach to the interpretation of a text? How does phenomenology critique that approach? What is hermeneutics trying to do that realism does not do with a text?
- You might contemplate the 6 definitions of Hermeneutics in chapter 3.
- What are the basic issues in the argument between Betti and Gadamer in chapter 4? Betti is the realist, the Enlightenment thinker? What does Gadamer think he is missing and vice versa?

- Schleiermacher:
  - What is Schleiermacher after with his notion of understanding? Why is it an art rather than an objective science? Why does it entail intuition?
  - What does Schleiermacher mean by the hermeneutical circle?
  - What is the difference between grammatical and psychological interpretation? Why is Schleiermacher interested in psychological interpretation?

- Dilthey:
  - How is Dilthey building on Schleiermacher's insights? What is he doing that moves beyond Schleiermacher?
  - Dilthey wants to distinguish the human sciences (liberal arts) from hard science-why? Yet he wants to see the human sciences as sciences of a different kind-why?
  - What does Dilthey mean by history and life philosophy?
  - What is the distinction between understanding and explanation?
  - What does Dilthey mean by experience and life expressions?

- Heidegger:
  - What is meant by phenomenology? How do we come to know reality according to Heidegger?
  - What does Heidegger mean by DaSein?
  - What does Heidegger mean when he talks about potentialities are disclosed?
  - What does Heidegger mean by the world and how are objects manifest within a world?
  - Why is a presuppositionless interpretation impossible?
  - Why must any assertion involves a shared world?
  - What is meant by objectification? What is it able to do? Why does Heidegger think there are problems in thinking this way? What does Heidegger propose in the place of objectification?
  - What is the human role in reality as the enunciator of being?
  - Why is being linguistic?
  - What does it mean to be at the crucial border of concealment and disclosure?
  - Why suddenly does art take the center stage?

- Gadamer:
  - Why does Gadamer see method as problematic? How does dialectic replace method in Gadamer's thought?
  - How does something new come into being with art? How does Gadamer think we should approach art?
  - Why game theory?
  - What is meant by prejudgment and what role does it play in interpretation? Why are they risked in interpretation?
  - Why is Gadamer trying to rehabilitate tradition and authority? Why would anyone from an Enlightenment point of view have trouble with this rehabilitation?
  - Why understand the text and not the author? Who is going to be upset at this notion?
  - What does it mean to apply the text?
  - In the encounter with the text who/what is asking the questions?
  - How does Gadamer understand the nature of language? What role does language play in the disclosure of the world?

Sessions 7 and 8: May 16 and 23

- Discussion of chapters 1-2 and 4-7 of Ricoeur's Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences:
  - What does it mean to say that words are polysemous and why is that a problem?
  - What does Ricoeur mean when he talks about the first locus of hermeneutics as epistemological? Whom does he have in mind and why?
  - What does Ricoeur mean by the later, ontological locus of hermeneutics? Whom is he talking about and why?
  - According to Ricoeur what are the key critiques Habermas has of Gadamer? How does Ricoeur explain what Gadamer and Habermas are each trying to do? The key issue seems to be distanciation: how does Ricoeur begin to position himself on this question in the second chapter?
  - How does Ricoeur develop his ideas on the necessary role of distanciation in chapter 4? How is distanciation productive? What is a work and how does it involve distanciation? How is the work distanced from the author? What role does distanciation play in the reading of the text?
  - What is a text according to Ricoeur? Why does he set aside the issue of the referent of a text? Why would he claim the text interprets the reader?
  - Why does Ricoeur turn to metaphor in chapter 6? What do metaphors do to the meaning of words? Why would he then consider the metaphor a work? What do metaphors teach us that can be applied to texts?
  - And finally appropriation----why is distanciation important in appropriation of the world of a text? Why does he turn to play like Gadamer and Tracy? How do we come to know through the encounter with a text?
- Discussion of the following two articles:
  - Diana L. Hayes, "James Cone's Hermeneutic of Language and Black Theology"
  - Luis R. Rivera-Rogriguez,"Reading in Spanish from the Diaspora Through Hispanic Eyes."

Sessions 9 and 10: May 30 and June 6

We give the last word to Sandra Schneiders. We will discuss her The Revelatory Text in the last 2 classes. In some ways this is the easiest read of our texts, but there is a lot going on below the surface. She is taking her stand firmly in the Tracy, Ricoeur line of thought. So it would be worth our while to watch the themes we have discussed in the previous weeks emerge again, this time in dealing with questions of handling the scripture and the tradition. Beneath it all lies the question: what does it mean to be a minister, one who interprets and hands on the tradition?

STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS

- Reading of texts and preparation for class
- Class participation
- 6 papers
    - Paper 1, due at the beginning of the 3rd class session. What does Tracy mean by his notion of classic? Why does he think classics are important? What are some of the classics of your tradition? How do they function in your Church? How does your Church interpret them? This paper should be no more than 2 or 3 pages.
    - Paper 2, due at the beginning of the 4th class session. How do the notions of truth as manifestation and truth as correspondence differ? Why is the difference important? Why does Tracy distinguish truth as relatively adequate and as certitude? Why is the difference important? This paper should be no more than 2 or 3 pages.
    - Paper 3, due at the beginning of the 6th class session. Compare the Enlightenment and the Romantic notions of interpretation on the basis of the following 3 questions: what is the object I am interpreting, what is my goal in interpreting it, and what kind of world does this interaction take place in? No more than 4 pages.
    - Paper 4, due at the beginning of the 7th class session. What is the Enlightenment notion of the autonomous self? How do Heidegger and Gadamer challenge that notion? What fundamental difference does this make in the project of hermeneutics? No more than 3 pages.
    - Paper 5, due at the beginning of the 8th class session. What is the role of distanciation in Ricoeur's interpretation theory? What does it entail and why is it productive? Why is it not the final step? No more than 2 pages.
    - Paper 6, due at the beginning of the 10th class session. Take any text, object or event of your choosing and interpret it from one school's theory of interpretation using the following questions: what is this object I am interpreting , what actions do I perform to interpret it, who/what am I as an interpreter, what kind of world does this interaction take place in? No more than 5 pages.

General norms for papers

1. All papers should follow a standard manual of style. Please follow the required S.T.M. writing guide: Lynn Quitman Troyka and Douglas Hesse, *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*, 9th ed. (Upper Saddle Brook, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2009).
2. Footnotes rather than endnotes make it easier to grade the paper. A bibliography of the reading you did for the paper should be included at the end.
3. Papers are to be double spaced and paginated.
4. Hand papers in stapled in the upper left hand corner—i.e. no plastic binders.
5. Keep a copy of your paper (In case the bird eats it).

Some keys to writing a good paper:

1) advance a thesis – a basic point – that is easily identifiable, plausible, novel, compelling, insightful, and crystal clear [see Part One, Chapter 2 of *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*];

2) display a structure or organization of materials that is solid, evident, understandable, and appropriate to your thesis – in particular, transitions from point to point must be smooth, each paragraph must have its own topic sentence, and all paragraphs must somehow advance your thesis [see Part One, Chapter 3 of *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*];

3) make use of appropriate evidence to support your points – do not just make assertions, but offer your reader reasons why s/he should accept your assertions and, thereby, embrace your thesis (such evidence may

come from other texts and artifacts, judiciously selected, as well as your own experience, carefully articulated) [see Part One, Chapters 4 and 5 of *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*];

4) reflect sound argumentation – all ideas should flow together smoothly, you might anticipate and answer counterarguments to your thesis, as well as making novel connections to other experiences and ideas [see Part One, Chapters 4 and 5 of *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*];

5) demonstrate good mechanics – sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, style of citation of sources, and spelling [see Parts Two through Five of *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*, as needed, and make consistent use of one of the three style guides (MLA, APA, or Chicago) provided in Part Five, Chapters 34-36].

LATE PAPERS

Papers are due at the beginning of the listed class session. Papers will lose ½ a grade for each 24 hours after that. ½ grade would move a paper from A to A- or from A- to B+.

GRADING

Papers 1 through 5: 15% each
Paper 6: 25%
Class participation and the professor's sense of the student's mastery of the material overall will be taken into consideration.

SOME OTHER BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bernstein, Richard J. Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985.

Bleicher, Joseph. Contemporary Hermeneutics, Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique. London: Foutledge and Kegan Paul, 1980.
SU: BD241/B58

Gefre, Claude. The Risk of Interpretation, On Being Faithful to the Christian Tradition in a Non-Christian Age. New York: Paulist Press, 1987.

Hirsch, E.D. Validity in Interpretation. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967.

Jeanrond, Werner, Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance,New York: Crossroad,1991.

Keegan, Terence J., O.P., Interpreting the Bible, A Popular Approach to Biblical Hermeneutics, New York: Paulist Press, 1995.

McKnight, Edgar V. Post-Modern Use of the Bible, The Emergence of Reader-Oriented Criticism. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988.

Mueller-Vollmer, Kurt, ed. The Hermeneutics Reader, New York: Continuum, 1988.

Ormiston, Gayle L., and Schrift, Alan D., eds. The Hermeneutic Tradition, From Ast to Ricoeur. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990.

Ricoeur, Paul. Interpretation Theory, Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning. Fort Worth: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976.

Taylor, Mark C. Erring, A Postmodern A/theology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Wachterhauser, Brice R. Hermeneutics and Modern Philosophy. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986.
SU: BD241/H3365/1986

Wilson, Paul Scott. Imagination of the Heart, New Understandings in Preaching.
Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988.

From **SEATTLE UNIVERSITY'S ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY**

Introduction

Seattle University is committed to the principle that academic honesty and integrity are important values in the educational process. Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense against the academic community. Acts of academic dishonesty will be addressed according to the Academic Honesty Policy.1

Standards of Conduct

Without regard to motive, student conduct that is academically dishonest, evidences lack of academic integrity or trustworthiness, or unfairly impinges upon the rights and privileges of others is prohibited. A non-exhaustive list of prohibited conduct includes:

A. Committing Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of the work or intellectual property of other persons, published or unpublished, presented as one's own work. ***Examples of plagiarism include but are not limited to copying, paraphrasing, summarizing, or borrowing ideas, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or an entire paper from another person's work without proper reference and/or acknowledgement.*** While different academic disciplines have different modes for attributing credit, all recognize and value the contributions of individuals to the general corpus of knowledge and expertise. Students are responsible for educating themselves as to the proper mode of attributing credit in any course or field. Note that plagiarism can be said to have occurred without any affirmative showing that a student's use of another's work was intentional.

B. Cheating on Exams and Other Assignments

Cheating is acting dishonestly or deceptively in connection with an assignment, examination or other activity related to a course.

Examples of cheating include but are not limited to:

Copying another person's work during an examination;
Allowing another person to copy one's work;
Using unauthorized materials during an examination;
Obtaining test materials before they are administered;
Having someone take an exam in one's place; and
Taking an exam for someone else.

It is the responsibility of the student to consult with the faculty member concerning
what constitutes permissible collaboration.