

**Theology in an Ecumenical Context (3 credits)**

HUNT 100 –Wednesday mornings, 9am-1150am

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**Course Description:**

This course prepares participants to approach theology from an ecumenical perspective, to understand the nature of the Church, the unity and diversity of the Church, how that diversity became divisions, and movements toward ecumenical convergence. Participants will gain a basic sense of the denominations involved in STM, their theological and historical differences and explore what the ecumenical spirit of the school involves. Taught by STM core faculty.

**Objectives/Learning outcomes:** to help students

1. to realize that Christian unity is a given, rooted in Christ; and that the goal of ecumenism is to make this unity more visible.
2. to locate their own faith tradition/ecclesial community within denominational Christianity and to deepen their understanding and critical appreciation of this faith tradition/ecclesial community.
3. to increase their openness for receiving the gifts of other traditions.
4. to model the skills of ecumenical conversation and dialogue in class interactions.
5. to celebrate the diversity and also understand that divisions within churches threaten Christian unity today.
6. to explore the implications of churches reconciling their diversity as a witness to and hope for reconciliation in the wider community.
7. to gain some familiarity with the history and goals of the modern ecumenical movement.
8. to study models of inter-faith dialogue and understanding.
9. to grow in awareness of ecumenism in practice locally and globally.

**Course Requirements:** Course assignments with due dates are described at the end of this syllabus along with some notes on criteria for grading.

**Notice the reading assignment for the first morning's class. Please read these pages in Kinnamon's book as background for the opening class.**

**Textbooks: (required)**

Mary Boys, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: One Woman's Experience*  
New York: Paulist, 1997.

Ted Campbell, *Christian Confessions: a historical introduction.*  
Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996.

Michael Kinnamon, *The Vision of the Ecumenical Movement and  
How It Has Been Impoverished by Its Friends.*  
St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2003.

*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*  
Geneva: WCC, 1982.

*Readings*, a collection of articles required for the course, can be purchased at SU  
Reprographic Services. (Ask for it by course title.) References to these articles are  
marked with the empty-circle bullet--○.

**(recommended)**

Margorie Hewitt Suchocki. *Divinity and Diversity: a Christian Affirmation of Religious  
Pluralism.* Nashville: Abingdon, 2003.

**Class one:****Wednesday morning, March 29, 2006****Introducing the Course:**

- meeting the participants –faith tradition/ecclesial community, toward what ministry?
- finding the ecumenical interests we already have
- sorting out the language of ecumenism – developing one's own working definition
- toward dialogue and understanding the Other
- how to use the syllabus and other resources
- *Review of assignments:* weekly prayer, BEM, guest inquirers, synthesis paper.

**Readings:**

Kinnamon text: Introduction (1-7) and Conclusion (109-119),  
and Ch 1 (9-22) including the referred Appendices: 1, 4, 8, and 9.

Begin reading toward the paper on “Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry”

**Class two:****April 5, 2006****Introducing Ecumenism:**

- a brief history of the movement
- differing models of unity
- introducing the gift exchange
- are there limits to acceptable diversity?
- biblical and theological bases for ecumenism

**Readings:**

Kinnamon text: ch 2 (23-34)

- Sandra Beardsall, “Talking to Strangers”
- Martin Van Elderen, “The Ecumenical Movement”
- Iva Carruthers, “Black Theology and Ecumenism”
- Michael Kinnamon, “We have come this far by faith...”

**Class three:****April 12, 2006****Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism:**

Guest presenters from Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic communities.

**Readings** Campbell, chapters 1 and 2.

**Class four:****April 19, 2006****Reform and Union Churches:**

Guest presenters from Anglican and Reform communities.

**Readings** Campbell, chapter 3.

- Rena Karefa-Smart, “Challenge of Union Churches”
- Daniel Migliore, “The Presbyterian Gifts”
- John Thomas, “Contemporary Commitment and Catholic Substance”

**Class five:****April 26, 2006****Evangelical and Free Churches**

Guest presenters from Evangelical and Pentecostal communities.

**Readings** Campbell, chapter 4.

- Douglas Jacobsen, “Pietism and the Postmodern Context”

**Class six: BEM papers due****May 3, 2006****Finding convergence**

- Assessing Campbell’s argument for a center
- *Class sharing:* Bring your BEM paper. How did BEM enable convergence vis-à-vis the traditions you studied?

**Readings:**

--Campbell, chapter 5

- Justification by Faith—Lutheran and Roman Catholic Joint Agreement
- “The Notion of Hierarchy of Truths”

**Class seven:****May 10, 2006****Issues Dividing Church and Society**

- Dealing with Racism
- Dealing with gender issues
- Dealing with cultural diversity

**Readings**

Kinnamon text: ch 3 (37-49) and ch 4 (51-64)

- Chung Hyun Kyung, “Come Holy Spirit”
- Mercy Amba Oduyoye, “The African Family as a Symbol of Ecumenism”
- “Ten Affirmations on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation”

**Class eight:****May 17, 2006****Ecumenism in practice**

- the experience of ecumenism at the congregational level
- shared ministries and church councils
- reception, living into ecumenical agreements
- ecumenical action for justice

**Readings**

Kinnamon text: ch 6 (75-86) and ch 7 (87-97)

- Douglas Hicks, “The Taizé Community”
- Phyllis Anderson, “Formation of an Ecumenical Consciousness”

**Class nine:****May 24, 2006****Ecumenism and People of other faiths**

- setting priorities in dialogue
- exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism
- Jewish and Christian relationships
- Christian and Muslim relationships

**Readings:**

Kinnamon text: Ch 8 (99-108)

Mary Boys, *Jewish Christian Dialogue***Class ten:****May 31, 2006****Spirituality: holding the tensions, naming the symbols and metaphors of our vision**

- The role of prayer and worship together with everyday spirituality.
- Sharing synthesis papers, class evaluation

**Readings**

Kinnamon text: ch 5 (65-75) and Conclusion (109-119) again!

- Stephen Sundborg, “IETS and the Mission of Seattle University”

**Assignments**

1. **The first written assignment** is due on May 3 (the 6th class). Prepare a 10 to 12 page double-spaced paper reflecting on the response of your church/ecclesial community and one other church to one of the sections of the BEM document; i.e. on Baptism or on Eucharist or on Ministry. If you do not claim a particular ecclesial community, choose responses from two different churches for the sake of comparison. There are six volumes of Church responses to BEM on reserve in the library. There are also materials in the final section of *Readings*—the short monograph by Kinnamon is especially important.
2. Each week two students need to prepare **a brief prayer for the opening of the class** session. This prayer should reflect some particular ecclesial community—for instance, a hymn from the Methodists—but no prayer text or ritual should need more than one side of a page or five minutes. Be sure to allow for silent time before the actual prayer experience.
3. Prepare **questions for the guests invited** during weeks 3, 4, and 5. Assignments will be divided up according to presenters.
4. **The final synthesis paper** (16-20 pages double spaced) is due at the final class on May 31. Include in your synthesis of this quarter's work some comments about the following:
  - a. Name some strengths and weaknesses of your ecclesial community (or one you chose for this exercise) ecumenically, theologically, and in relation to contemporary justice issues.
  - b. What have you learned to appreciate about an ecclesial community other than your own?
  - c. Why is an ecumenical consciousness important to:
    - 1) the personal growth of Christians?
    - 2) ministry within the church?
    - 3) theological integrity and catholicity?
    - 4) the quest for peace and justice in the world?

**Grading Criteria**

1. **attendance**—There could be an excusing reason for not being present; advance notice is welcome. The student has the responsibility for getting information about what went on in the session missed.
2. **participation**—This means more than attentiveness. Interacting with instructors and guests as well as generous give and take in discussion groups are included.
3. **BEM paper**—This important **research** venture should provide grounding in an important ecumenical aspect of one's own faith tradition/ecclesial community and offer the chance for learning what the "gift exchange" might mean in relation to another church. This paper demands careful theological thinking about the church's faith and liturgy, but also careful expression to communicate these nuances in a way that engages the reader.

4. final synthesis paper – This is not a research venture. The ingredients for this paper should be inside the student after reviewing and reflecting on the quarter's work. The outline of issues for this paper given in the syllabus only names talking points. The best order and flow of the paper might arrange the elements in a more engaging manner. The best papers will combine convincing and specific details to support arguments and claims; elements of creativity and imagination will shine through the whole exercise.
5. determining a grade – Successful completion of the four factors outlined above would yield a **B** grade. A superior achievement in one or more of these areas will notch the grade upward. An outstanding achievement across the board will reach an **A**.
6. grading weight – Clearly the two major papers, especially the final synthesis, will carry the most weight in determining the final grade. A strong class performance should match the written work and will often effect final outcomes by a plus or minus.