

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY
SEATTLE UNIVERSITY
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

STMM 501. CHRISTOLOGY

SPRING QUARTER 2009
SATURDAYS, 9:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M. AND SUNDAYS, 10:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.
MARCH 28-29, APRIL 25-26, MAY 16-17

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SYLLABUS

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the praxis, identity, and significance of Jesus of Nazareth: his deeds, his words, his death and resurrection. We will examine the historical development of christological images and concepts from the New Testament through the creeds and councils of the fourth and fifth centuries to the medieval, reformation, and modern periods. We will also evaluate several contemporary christologies that foreground the multicultural and ecological context of theology today. Three basic questions will guide us: Who is Jesus? How does Jesus save us? How do we relate to Jesus?

II. S.T.M. COMPETENCIES ADDRESSED IN THIS COURSE

This course primarily addresses the “theological” competencies put forward for the M.A.P.S. degree, especially those listed in section IB:

An ability to reflect theologically on the basic themes of the Christian tradition.

1. A knowledge of the central doctrines of the Christian tradition and various theological expressions of those doctrines in the areas of theological anthropology, sin, grace, and Christology. This knowledge includes ecumenical and multicultural contributions.
2. An understanding of the interaction of religion and culture diachronically (across various historical periods) and synchronically (within any one historical period) within dogmatic and systematic reflection in the Christian tradition.
3. Ability to interpret the tradition for the present pastoral life of the church.
4. Ability to reflect on one’s own pastoral ministry within a culturally diverse context.

Secondarily, competencies in Scripture (IA #s 1 and 2) are also addressed.

III. COURSE OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this course are for each student to develop:

- 1) an understanding of the basic issues raised and addressed by Christian faith in Jesus Christ;
- 2) an understanding of the historical development of Christology, with a focus on
 - the New Testament, the creeds and councils of the fourth and fifth centuries, the medieval, reformation, and modern periods
 - the wider cultural context of the most important images of Jesus Christ (for example, the King of Kings, Christ Crucified, the Liberator);
- 3) an understanding of the contemporary significance of Christian faith in Jesus Christ, specifically
 - an acquaintance with the christological options of some important recent theologians, especially those that situate the meaning of Jesus Christ within multicultural and ecological contexts;
 - a sense of how Christian faith in Jesus Christ is enacted in worship, preaching, and other pastoral activities;
- 4) an understanding of the contours of lived experience of Jesus Christ, both historically and in one's own life and ministry;
- 5) an ability to think critically and empathetically and to express oneself clearly and creatively both orally and in writing;
- 6) an ability to reflect upon self, nature, society, and God more appropriately and to live out one's own life more responsibly as a result of this encounter with the Christian theological tradition;
- 7) a sensitivity to the difference gender makes (and does not make) in human experience and to the ways race, class, and culture deepen and complicate accounts of human experience;
- 8) an appreciation for musical and visual expressions of Christian faith in Jesus Christ.
- 9) an appreciation for the centrality of the person of Jesus Christ in Christian life and thought, as well as for the tendency of Jesus Christ to elude complete assimilation into any established cultural order.

IV. TEXTS

The Bible (any modern translation).

Kempe, Margery. *The Book of Margery Kempe*. (ISBN: 0-14-043251-5)
Translated by B.A. Windeatt. New York: Penguin Books, 1985.

Luttenberger, Gerard. *An Introduction to Christology: In the Gospels and the Early Church*. Mystic, Ct.: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998.

McFague, Sallie. *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*.
Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture*. New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 1999.

Subiela, Eliseo (writer and director). "Man Facing Southeast [Hombre Mirando al Sudeste]." Filmdallas Pictures, 1987.

One other book chosen by students (individually or in groups) from a list provided by the instructor. [List available during the first weekend.]

A few words about our texts:

- 1) *The Gospel of Mark* and the film "Man Facing Southeast" should orient us powerfully and viscerally to the issues of christology on March 28.
- 2) Two of our textbooks give comprehensive treatments of a range of christological materials and expressions. Pelikan's book offers a gallery of eighteen portraits of Jesus from across the history of Christianity; from "Jesus the Rabbi" in the Jewish-Christian context of the 1st century to "Jesus the Man Who Belongs to the World" in the multicultural, interreligious setting of the 20th century. Luttenberger's book focuses on the four gospels, their distinct portrayals of Jesus, the contemporary significance of New Testament experiences of and language about Jesus, and the emergence/divergence of the orthodox Christology of the 4th and 5th centuries from New Testament sources.
- 3) We will read and discuss the autobiography of Margery Kempe, an English Christian woman of the late 14th and early 15th centuries, in order to attend to the lived experience of Jesus Christ, both hers and ours. I would prefer you use the Penguin Classics edition (see above) – it's in modern English!
- 4) The course will include creative and constructive christological proposals by contemporary theologians. All students will read the book by McFague, in which she examines the "Christic" shape of the body of God within an ecological theology. Each student (or group of students) will choose, read, and present a different book from a list provided by the instructor that develops an account of Jesus' praxis, identity, and significance from outside a European-American cultural context.

V. PROCEDURES AND ASSIGNMENTS

A. Attendance. Class sessions are the primary means by which the instructor and students can share the material introduced in the assigned texts and other activities. Therefore, attendance at all sessions of the course is essential.

B. Reading, Preparation for Class Sessions, and In-Class Participation. Each student is responsible for having read the material assigned for each session of the course and should be prepared to discuss their reading in class. Each student is also responsible for being an active participant in class sessions. Activities will include lectures, large group discussions, and small group work.

C. Gathering Prayer Leadership. Each student (perhaps with a partner or two) will take leadership for a brief gathering prayer for one of the sessions of the course, and will reflect in writing about the choices the group made in crafting their prayer. See page 8 of this syllabus for additional guidelines. Volunteers for the three sessions of the first weekend are needed – please email the instructor!

D. Papers. Each student will write two short papers (3 pages, each) on assigned topics. Paper #1 will involve comparing/contrasting *The Gospel of Mark* and the film “Man Facing Southeast” on a christological theme, issue, or question. This paper is due on Monday, April 6 by email. Paper #2 will be a response to the autobiography of Margery Kempe and an assessment of the student’s own experience of Jesus Christ. This paper is due in hardcopy during the second weekend on April 26. [Additional guidelines on all written assignments, the Blue Pages, will be handed out during the first weekend.]

E. Poster. Each student (or group of students) will present to the rest of the class the contents, impact, and importance of one of a series of books on christology from beyond the European-American culture context in the form of a poster. Powerpoint presentations are welcome. Presented during the third weekend, on May 16. [See Blue Pages]

E. Final Project. Each student will write a 10 page paper integrating the work of the course. This final paper is due by email on Monday, June 8. [See Blue Pages]

VI. COMPUTATION OF FINAL GRADE

Paper #1	15%
Paper #2	15%
Poster	15%
Final Project	45%
Class Preparation and Participation (including Prayer Leadership)	10%

VII. SCHEDULE OF CLASS SESSIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS

WEEKEND # 1

CLASS SESSION 1: SATURDAY MORNING, MARCH 28 (9:00AM-12:00PM)

Getting Acquainted and Getting Oriented to Christology

Introductions and Course Organization

Read and be prepared to discuss:

Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries*, Introduction

Luttenberger, *Introduction to Christology*, pp. 1-28

An Elemental Introduction to Christology

Prior to this first class session, set aside at least 45 undisturbed minutes and read the *Gospel of Mark* through from beginning to end, *as if for the first time*, trying as much as possible to ignore your preconceptions about Jesus. Read *Mark* as a story; consider and be prepared to discuss your answers to the following questions about its main character:

What does Jesus do? What is done to Jesus? What does Jesus say (what groups does he address)? What is said about Jesus (what titles are attributed to him)? **Bring Bibles to class!**

CLASS SESSION 2: SATURDAY AFTERNOON, MARCH 28 (1:30-4:00PM)

A Visual and Visceral Introduction to Christology

Prior to this second class session, watch the film "Man Facing Southeast," written and directed by Eliseo Subiela, Filmdallas Pictures, 1987; this Argentinian film can be rented from most large video stores with substantial foreign film collections. Try to find the subtitled, rather than the dubbed, version.

New Testament Sources of Christology

Read and be prepared to discuss:

Luttenberger, *Introduction to Christology*, pp. 29-123

Focus questions:

1) Which one of the four gospels' portraits of Jesus immediately appeals to you in your own life of faith and feels "comfortable?" Why?

2) Which one of the four gospels' portraits of Jesus repels you in some way and feels alien or "uncomfortable?" Why?

3) Sit with your "discomfort" for a while and ask yourself if there is something to be learned about the limitations or blindspots in your own current life of faith. Now consider this same set of questions in relationship to your primary community of faith. **Bring Bibles to class!**

CLASS SESSION 3: SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 29 (10:00AM-1:00PM)

New Testament Sources of Christology (continued)

Read and be prepared to discuss:

Luttenberger, *Introduction to Christology*, pp. 29-123

Christology from the New Testament to the Councils of the 4th and 5th Centuries

Read and be prepared to discuss:

Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries*, Chapters 1-7

VII. SCHEDULE OF CLASS SESSIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS (CONTINUED)

PAPER #1 DUE BY EMAIL – MONDAY, APRIL 6

[See Blue Pages]

WEEKEND #2

CLASS SESSION 4: SATURDAY MORNING, APRIL 25 (9:00AM-12:00PM)

Contemporary Significance of New Testament Christology

Read and be prepared to discuss:

Luttenberger, *Introduction to Christology*, pp. 125-260

Focus questions:

- 1) *Prior to doing this reading, which specific teaching or parable of Jesus was most significant to you? What impact does Luttenberger's discussion of the kingdom of God have on your understanding of this teaching/parable?*
- 2) *What place does the healing/exorcising work of Jesus have in your understanding of him?*
- 3) *Was it necessary for Jesus to die on the cross?*
- 4) *Do you, how do you, experience Jesus as alive today?*

Bring Bibles to class!

Orthodox Christology and Its Contemporary Significance

Read and be prepared to discuss:

Luttenberger, *Introduction to Christology*, pp. 261-331

CLASS SESSION 5: SATURDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 25 (1:30-4:00PM)

Orthodox Christology and Its Contemporary Significance (continued)

Read and be prepared to discuss:

Luttenberger, *Introduction to Christology*, pp. 261-331

Christologies of the Medieval and Renaissance Periods

Read and be prepared to discuss:

Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries*, Chapters 8-12

Focus questions:

- 1) *What for you was the most delight-full or attractive idea, topic, or issue in this reading? Why?*
- 2) *What for you was the most troubling, challenging, or repellent idea, topic, or issue in this reading? Why?*
- 3) *What was the most use-full, relevant, or applicable idea, topic, or issue in this reading to your own life of faith, your community of faith, or your ministry? Why?*

VII. SCHEDULE OF CLASS SESSIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS (CONTINUED)

CLASS SESSION 6: SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 26 (10:00AM-1:00PM)

Margery Kempe's Lived Experience of Jesus Christ

Read as much as possible:

Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, pp. 31-261

[DO NOT SKIP: chapters 1-22, 26-36, 41, 45-55, 60, 67, 72-82, 85-86]

PAPER #2 DUE [See Blue Pages]

WEEKEND #3

CLASS SESSION 7: SATURDAY MORNING, MAY 16 (9:00AM-12:00PM)

Reformation and Modern Christologies

Read and be prepared to discuss:

Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries*, Chapters 13-18

Focus questions:

- 1) *What for you was the most delight-full or attractive idea, topic, or issue in this reading? Why?*
- 2) *What for you was the most troubling, challenging, or repellent idea, topic, or issue in this reading? Why?*
- 3) *What was the most use-full, relevant, or applicable idea, topic, or issue in this reading to your own life of faith, your community of faith, or your ministry? Why?*

CLASS SESSION 8: SATURDAY AFTERNOON, MAY 16 (1:30-4:00PM)

Situating Contemporary Christology within a Multicultural Context

Student Poster Presentations [See Blue Pages]

POSTER DUE [See Blue Pages]

CLASS SESSION 9: SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 17 (10:00AM-1:00PM)

Situating Contemporary Christology within an Ecological and Theological Context

Read and be prepared to discuss:

McFague, *The Body of God*, pp. vii-xiv, 1-25, 26-30, [skim 30-60], 60-63, 64-66, [skim 67-96], 96-97, 98-195 [skim 196-212]

Focus questions:

- 1) *Complete one or more of the "ecology exercises" and be prepared to discuss the results and insights that came from it (them).*
- 2) *How would you assess the strengths and weaknesses of McFague's christology in light of everything else we have studied this quarter?*

FINAL PROJECT DUE BY EMAIL – MONDAY, JUNE 8

[See Blue Pages]

VIII. GUIDELINES FOR GATHERING PRAYER LEADERSHIP

- Work individually or in groups of two or three.
- Brief prayers, 5 minute maximum.
- Hand in to the instructor a copy of your words (if possible), along with a brief written statement of why you chose to do what you did in the prayer (300 words – one page).
- Try in your prayer to find some connection to our common life within the class/school and/or to the day/season/local, national, international situation. **Please be sure, as part of your prayer, to read the gospel lesson appointed for your particular session.**

LIST OF GOSPEL READINGS

All but one of these readings is from the *Revised Common Lectionary*. The Saturday readings are intended for the Daily Office (morning and evening prayer), while those for Sunday come from the Sunday Eucharistic lectionary. The reading for our morning session on April 25 is appointed for Holy Eucharist on the Feast of St. Mark the Evangelist in the lectionary of the *Book of Common Prayer* of the Episcopal Church.

MARCH 28 – SATURDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

MORNING SESSION (YEAR 1): JOHN 6:60-71

AFTERNOON SESSION (YEAR 2): MARK 9:14-29

MARCH 29 – THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

(YEAR B): JOHN 12:20-33

APRIL 25 – ST. MARK THE EVANGELIST

MORNING SESSION: MARK 1:1-15

APRIL 25 – SATURDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF EASTER

AFTERNOON SESSION (YEAR 1): LUKE 4:1-13

APRIL 26 – THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

(YEAR B): LUKE 24:36B-48

MAY 16 – SATURDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF EASTER

MORNING SESSION (YEAR 1): LUKE 9:1-17

AFTERNOON SESSION (YEAR 2): MATTHEW 7:13-21

MAY 17 – THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

(YEAR B): JOHN 15:9-17