

Theology in an Ecumenical Context (3 credits)
HUNT 100 –Monday afternoons, 1:30pm – 4:20pm.

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Course Description:

This course invites students to approach theology from an ecumenical perspective. It includes an overview of the major ecclesial communities within Christianity and an introduction to interfaith dialogue. The course explores the work of the modern ecumenical movement to overcome divisions among and within the churches and to make more visible the God-given unity of the Church through dialogue, advocacy, and action for the common good. Students learn through readings, lectures, discussion, papers, and interact with one another, faculty, and guests from a variety of ecclesial communities.

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 afternoon'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--○.

Class one:	Monday afternoon, March 30, 2009
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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
- *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 for the paper on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* [the text & commentary]

- Michael Kinnamon, *Why It Matters*
- Confessional Statements -- pp 165-193
- Gordon Lathrop, "Lima Liturgy and Beyond"
- ❖ Library Resources—Church Responses to BEM [six volumes]

Class two:**April 6, 2009****Introducing Ecumenism:**

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

Readings:

Kinnamon text: ch 2 (23-34) and ch 4 (51-64)

- WCC, "Called to be the One Church"
- Sandra Beardsall, "Talking to Strangers"
- Martin Van Elderen, "The Ecumenical Movement"
- Michael Kinnamon, "We have come this far by faith..."

Class three:**April 13, 2009****Encountering Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism:**

- Guest presenters from Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic communities.

Readings Campbell, chapters 1 and 2.**Class four:****BEM papers due****April 20, 2009****Encountering Reformation and Union Churches**

- Guest presenters from Reformation and Union communities.

Readings Campbell, chapter 3.

- John Thomas, "Contemporary Commitment and Catholic Substance"
- WCC, "A Formula of Agreement"

Class five:**April 27, 2009****Encountering Evangelical and Free Churches**

- Guest presenters from Evangelical and Free Church communities.

Readings Campbell, chapter 4.

- Douglas Jacobsen, "Pietism and the Postmodern Context"

Class six:**May 4, 2009****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 11, 2009****Interreligious Encounter and Christian Ecumenism**

- Attending to religions of the East
- Jewish and Christian relationships
- Christian and Muslim relationships

Readings

Kinnamon text: ch 8 (99-108)

Mary Boys, *Jewish Christian Dialogue***Class eight:****May 18, 2009****Issues Dividing Church and Society,**

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

Readings

Kinnamon text: ch 3 (37-49)

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

Class nine:**[no class May 25]****June 1, 2009****Ecumenism in practice**

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

Readings

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

- Phyllis Anderson, "Formation of an Ecumenical Consciousness"

Class ten:	synthesis papers due	June 8, 2009
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Spiritual ecumenism

- spiritual ecumenism: what comes first
- the role of prayer and sharing worship in everyday life
- sharing synthesis papers and class evaluation

Readings

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

- Stephen Sundborg, “IETS and the Mission of Seattle University”
- Gláucia Vasconcelos Wilkey, “Where Life Unites.”

Assignments

1. **The first written assignment** is due on April 20 (the 4th class).

A hard copy version of the paper must be handed in.

Prepare an 8 to 10 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. What does BEM actually say, how do the churches react the same or differently to that and what is your own reflection on the matter? You may need to choose only a limited piece of the sections under Baptism or Eucharist or 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 or three 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 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** (hard copy, 12-15 pages double spaced) is due on June 8, the final class. Include in your synthesis of this quarter’s work some comments about the following:

a. Name some strengths and weaknesses of your own ecclesial community (or one you chose for this piece) 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?
- 1) ministry within the church?
- 2) the quest for peace and justice in the world?

Grading Criteria

1. Attendance—Punctuality is a lovely gift to exchange with the other class members. 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. Participation also includes a demonstrable familiarity with assigned readings for any particular class session.
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, but is still an academic paper [cf. Guidelines for Writing Papers in the Student Handbook]. 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.