

School of Theology & Ministry
Seattle University
901 12th Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98122-1090
Spring Quarter, 2009

Course Information

STMA 521 Theologies of Liberation
Hunthausen Hall, Room 100
Thursdays: 9:00-11:50 a.m.
fwb@seattleu.edu

Instructor

Flora Wilson Bridges, Ph.D.
Hunthausen, 214, 296-5337
Office Hours: Wednesdays
1:30-3:30 & by appointment

Required Texts:

Abelove, Henry, Barale, Michele Aina, Halperin, David M. Editors. *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*. New York, NY: Routledge Press, 1993.
Cone, James. *God of the Oppressed*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997.
Douglas, Kelly Brown. *What's Faith Got to do With It? Black Bodies/Christian Souls*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005.
McFague, Sallie. *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World, and Global Warming*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2008.
Aquino, Maria Pilar, Machado, Daisy L., Rodriguez, Jeanette, Editors. *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology: Religion and Justice*. Austin, TX: University of Texas, 2002.

Also Required:

Read one text or article or select a film of your own choosing that is about one of the theologies above. This liberation theology may be explicit or implicit in the film. Make every attempt to dialogue with someone who is within the social or cultural context of your theology of choice.

Recommended Texts:

Clifford, Anne M. *Introducing Feminist Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002.
Grant, Jacquelyn. *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus*. American Academy of Religion, 1989.
Gutierrez, Gustavo. *Gustavo Gutierrez: Essential Writings*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996.
Kidwell, Clara Sue, Noley, Homer, Tinker, George, Wallace, Jace. *A Native American Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001.

Koyama, Kosuke. *Water Buffalo Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999.
McFague, Sallie. *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological Nuclear Age*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987.
Suzuki, David. *The Sacred Balance: Rediscovering Our Place in Nature*. Vancouver: CA: Greystone Books, 2007.

Course Description:

The overall goal of this course is to educate students to become more sensitive, culturally competent, compassionate, and effective church leaders and citizens of the world by increasing their knowledge and understanding of the human struggle to “locate” the will of God and, therefore, discern the faithful human response in the midst of unspeakable suffering. The course content is made up of the works of leading contemporary liberation theologians. The authors of these texts commonly hold the belief that earlier theologies draw too heavily upon solely white, male, European definitions of theology. We will join the themes of story and suffering to liberation—both that articulated by these theologians and our own—as we critically reflect upon and analyze the conditions of the disinherited and the disenfranchised as they seek to construct new approaches to the gospel marked by a concern for liberation.

Course Objectives:

- 1) Familiarize students with the crucial role that social and historical context plays in framing the questions liberation theologians address to God and the Bible as well as the mode of the answers provided.
- 2) Enable students to move to deeper theological consideration through analyzing the methodologies, epistemologies, and linguistic deconstructions of liberation theologians.
- 3) Help students learn how to become more aware of, question, and confront the major modern issues of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation from a theological perspective as they dialogue with the questions and answers raised by liberation theology.
- 4) Help students uncover the theological and philosophical assumptions which underlie their own notions of God and religious experience through examining their own experience and cultural symbols and images;
- 5) Encourage students toward a greater sense of social and personal responsibility for creating a just society or one that includes rather than excludes the marginalized and oppressed.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Class Participation: You are required to attend all classes. Please note that much that determines your grade is dependent upon mutual discussion and interaction. Absence from class (with the exception of medical emergencies) will result in the loss of one grade level (for example, your grade will be lowered from an “A” to an “A-“). Please do not ask the instructor for excused absences. You are also required to demonstrate effective group skills by actively contributing to group discussions and using constructive peer feedback that includes honesty, challenge, and mutual respect. This also includes lively discussion and timely reading of the assigned texts that reflects *critical* theological and cultural assessment.

Theological Research Paper: 50% of Grade. This paper will consist of two parts. Part I (ten double-spaced pages) will be a thorough and scholarly critical analysis of the work of a liberation theologian of your own choice. Part II (ten double-spaced pages) of the paper will consist of your own constructive liberation theology that reflects your own experience of God and the world. This theology will use the theological methodology of your theologian of choice. In preparation for this paper, you must not only be knowledgeable of the texts we are studying this quarter, you will need to also draw upon other texts on the kind of liberation theology you are both researching and constructing for this assignment.

Group Presentations: 50% of Grade. Students will present in groups of five (one group will include six people) for one hour for each group on one of the assigned liberation theologies for the quarter per group. This presentation must include visual materials outlining your presentation. This may include power point slides, music, film clips, sermons, prayers, etc. that help to describe and explore your particular liberation theology.

Grading Criteria:

Class Participation/Group Skills. Students are graded on the use of effective communication skills in class, punctual and regular attendance, active participation in the healthy development of the class that includes talking in class about the course material and displaying attitudes of mutual respect.

Scholastic Performance: Students are graded on the demonstrated ability to think in a rigorously critical and theological manner about the course material, the demonstrated ability to write (research paper) and speak (class discussions and oral presentations) in a way that shows they have a scholarly and compassionate comprehension of the course material.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

CLASS ONE: Thursday, April 2

Introduction to the Course: Self-Introductions, Review of the Syllabus

CLASS TWO: Thursday, April 9

Reading Assignment: *God of the Oppressed*

Discuss Cone

CLASS THREE: Thursday, April 16

Reading Assignment: *What's Faith Got to Do With It?*

Discuss Douglas

CLASS FOUR: Thursday, April 23

Reading Assignment: *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*

Discuss Abelove

***Tuesday, April 28,**

Lecture by Dr. Sallie McFague, 7:00 p.m., Pigott Auditorium

CLASS FIVE: Thursday, April 30

Reading Assignment: *A New Climate for Theology*

Discuss McFague

CLASS SIX: Thursday, May 7

Reading Assignment: *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology*

Discuss Aquino, Machado, and Rodriguez

CLASS SEVEN: Thursday, May 14

Groups One and Two Present:

Cone: Bruce, Jane, Julie, M.L., Hilary; **Douglas:** Denise, Jessie W., LaVerne, Molly, Karen

CLASS EIGHT: Thursday, May 21

Groups Three and Four Present:

Rodriguez: Beth, Michelle, Adriana, Shelby, Daniel; **Abelard:** Rob, Jessie T., Sharon, Meredith, Erika

CLASS NINE: Thursday, May 28

Group Five Presents, **Final Papers Due**

McFague: Sheila, Ruth, Katie, Gretchen, Daniel

CLASS TEN: Thursday, June 4: Discuss Your Theology, Evaluations

