

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY
SEATTLE UNIVERSITY

STMM 501. CHRISTOLOGY

SPRING QUARTER 2008
TUESDAYS, 1:30 – 4:20 P.M.
HUNTHAUSEN 100

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OR BY APPOINTMENT

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.Div. 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 expression of those doctrines, including multicultural and ecumenical.
2. An understanding of the interaction of religion and culture diachronically and synchronically within dogmatic and systematic reflection in the Christian tradition.
3. Ability to interpret the tradition for the present (hermeneutics).
4. Ability to reflect on one’s own theological method, to contrast it with other methods, and the ability to enable a community to reflect theologically.
5. Ability to integrate theology with pastoral practice.

Secondarily, competencies in Scripture (IA #s 1, 2, and 4) 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)
 - the distinctive christological emphases of one's own theological and/or denominational tradition, as well as those of the theological and/or denominational traditions of other members of the class;
- 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*.

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.

A few words about our texts:

- 1) *The Gospel of Mark* and "Man Facing Southeast" should orient us powerfully and viscerally to the issues of christology.
- 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.
- 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. Additional guidelines can be found in the Blue Pages.

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 April 8. 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 on April 29. [See Blue Pages]

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. Due May 13. [See Blue Pages]

E. Final Project. Each student will write an 10 page paper integrating the work of the course. This final paper is due by 12 noon on Tuesday, June 10 in the instructor's office (Hunthausen 215), or by email. [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

APRIL 1

– SEE LIST OF GOSPEL READINGS

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

1) 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!**

2) Prior to our second class session (April 8) 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. [A dubbed version will be on reserve in Lemieux Library as a fall-back.]

APRIL 8

– SEE LIST OF GOSPEL READINGS

A Visual and Visceral Introduction to Christology

Watch and be prepared to discuss:

Subiela, “Man Facing Southeast”

New Testament Sources of Christology

Read and be prepared to discuss:

Luttenberger, *Introduction to Christology*, pp. 29-55

[skim pp. 56-123]

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!**

Paper #1 Due [See Blue Pages]

VII. SCHEDULE OF CLASS SESSIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS (CONTINUED)

APRIL 15

– SEE LIST OF GOSPEL READINGS

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

Handouts and reserve material.

See Blue Pages for additional instructions concerning preparation for this class session.

APRIL 22

– SEE LIST OF GOSPEL READINGS

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?*

APRIL 29

– SEE LIST OF GOSPEL READINGS

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]

VII. SCHEDULE OF CLASS SESSIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS (CONTINUED)

MAY 6

– SEE LIST OF GOSPEL READINGS

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?*

MAY 13

– SEE LIST OF GOSPEL READINGS

Situating Contemporary Christology within a Multicultural Context

Student Poster Presentations [See Blue Pages]

Poster Due [See Blue Pages]

MAY 20

– SEE LIST OF GOSPEL READINGS

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!

MAY 27

– SEE LIST OF GOSPEL READINGS

Orthodox Christology and Its Contemporary Significance

Read and be prepared to discuss:

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

Review reading for, and notes from, April 15

VII. SCHEDULE OF CLASS SESSIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS (CONTINUED)

JUNE 3

– SEE LIST OF GOSPEL READINGS

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?*

JUNE 10 (NO CLASS SESSION!)

Final Project Due by 12 noon in Hunthausen 215, or by email

[See Blue Pages]