

## **STMA 592: Theology and Practice of Baptism: *Walking Wet***

Syllabus for Spring, 2005

Instructor: the Reverend Dr. Gláucia Vasconcelos Wilkey

### **I. Course Description**

This course engages students in reflecting on baptism as the source of Christian identity and as the defining center for ecclesiology. Thus Baptism and its connection to life in the church and the church in the public arena will be explored. The theology and the practice of baptism will be examined from perspectives provided by history and historical church documents, theology, and cultural and ecclesial contexts. We will reflect on the connections between Bath, Word, and Table; on the recovery of the ministry of the Catechumenate for the life of the church; on the implications of baptism for the ecumenical vision; on the seasons and the spaces for baptism; and on the practice of baptism on each student's ecclesial community. Class will develop a sense of the theology and practice of Christian rites of initiation, the connections between baptism and life passages, particularly confirmation, ordination, healing, anointing, and funeral rites.

### **II. STM Competencies Addressed in this Class**

1. Scripture: ability to interpret theology (of baptism) in such way that it continues to live today.
2. Ability to reflect theologically on the basic themes of Christian Tradition: ability to interpret the tradition for the present (hermeneutics); ability to enable a community to reflect theologically; ability to integrate theology with pastoral [liturgical] practice.
3. Ability to interpret the moral tradition within one's ecclesial community and to enable the community to face moral issues in a manner that brings dialogue between the heritage of faith [liturgical/baptismal life and practice] and those issues [moral life/ethics].
4. An understanding of the interaction of religion and culture; ability to lead a community in articulating, celebrating and living the faith heritage [baptismal life and practice] in its present cultural context.
5. An understanding of the role and the nature of symbol in worship: knowledge of the tradition in relation to sacramental theology, liturgical method, worship elements and structures; ability to help a community to articulate and live its faith within the culturally diverse context of the contemporary church.
6. Understanding of ministerial identity: the ability to integrate theological content with practical pastoral experience; knowledge of one's church polity on baptism and the leadership skills and pastoral practice implied in that polity.
7. Ability to guide and direct a Christian community in its mission: ability to function as a change agent-to use and mediate the range of social process on changing old habits and forge new visions in a way that contributes to the common good; knowledge and ability to work within one's faith tradition.
8. An awareness, development and expression of one's personal [and corporate baptismal] spirituality: an ability to articulate one's baptism as relationship with God and the church, as it is informed by theological reflection in one's social context.
9. The ability to preside ("lead worship") in baptism and related rites.

### **II. Objectives for the Course**

- To trace the biblical, theological, and historical roots of baptism, related rites and the other sacraments (or ordinances) of the church, and on baptism as a life-long process rather than a one time event.
- To reflect on and celebrate the given unity of the Christian Church in baptism, and studying the implications of baptism for the ecumenical vision.
- To reflect on the communal nature of all of liturgy and sacramental practice.
- To attend to what is "common" in diverse ecclesial traditions on baptism, and what is "particular" in each student's church's life: to familiarize students with the resources on baptism in his/her own denominational context and life.
- To reflect on the connections between baptism, anointing, pastoral care, life passages, funeral rites, the moral life and current national and world's crisis.

### III. Procedures

- Class will meet on Tuesdays from 5:45 p.m. to 8: 35 p.m., September 27-November 29, 2005, in Hunthausen Hall, Room # 100. These classes are preceded by Evening Services in the Ecumenical Chapel. Students will be *encouraged* to exercise a leadership role in the *Service of Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Vows* to be held on Tuesday, October 25.
- Lectures, student-led discussion on assigned readings, presentations by guests, hands-on baptismal experiences will be part of the shared learning processes, as will singing of hymns, recitation of poetry, and reflection on visual sacred/liturgical arts. Handouts with lectures' outlines, copies of documents, etc, will be distributed each day as needed.
- At the end of each class students will be asked to write two brief responses to two questions from the professor (learning assessment). Questions will relate to the readings for the day and the discussions in the day's session.
- Each day one or two students will be asked to dismiss class with a blessing (5-8 minutes in length). This prayer may take various formats: this may be sung, enacted, or spoken; or it may be silent contemplation on a liturgical visual art on baptism. However, whichever form students choose, the prayer must express the student's own ecclesial community's theology; when spoken or sung, the texts/songs must come from resources published for/in use in her/his church/denominational life. Copyright issues will need attention in duplicating materials.
- Final paper will be due December 2, to be presented in hardcopy or email attachment formats. Papers may be placed in the professor's mailbox in STM's office area *before* 4:00 p.m. that day.

### IV. Final Classes, October 22 and 29:

- On Tuesday, October 22, class will be divided into four groups. Each group will be given one movement of worship to concentrate on for discussion on the following question: *How is this liturgical moment shaped by baptism and how does it, in turn, shape a baptismal ecclesiology?* Group will present a report to the whole class (15 minutes per group). Each group will also prepare a set of three questions to bring for the instructor's response on the final class meeting. *On Tuesday, October 29, the class will present the chosen questions to instructor for discussion in this session.*

### V. Grading/Evaluation

- Class participation (50%). This participation includes but is not limited to: presence and punctuality; demonstrated familiarity with reading assignments; reports on written or listening/viewing assignments; reports on visits to churches and reflections/critique of spaces and practices.
- Final paper (50%). Students are to prepare an 8-10 page theological reflection paper on one of the subjects listed on the first day of class. Guidelines for the writing of papers can be found in STM's *Student Manual* in the document "Student Guide to Editing and Style."
- Seattle University's parameters will be used in grading. For example, a letter grade "B" indicates a good performance, meaning that student complied with all requirements as specified in syllabus; accordingly, "B+" will indicate a little extra work from student. "A-" indicates that student went above and beyond the requirements; "A" indicates *superior* performance by student.

**Note:** Professor is to be notified of all absences prior to day student cannot be in class. One justifiable absence is understandable. *More than one absence will negatively impact student's grade, as will lateness in arriving in class (exceptions: situations of emergency).*

## VI. Topics for Daily Discussion, and Reading Assignments

### **Session I: September 27, the 19<sup>th</sup> Week After Pentecost, Year A: Vincent de Paul.**

I. Introduction to the Course: Hopes, visions, goals, and objectives of the course. The power of water: pictures of the Tsunami in Asia; of New Orleans and environs; images and sounds from *Re-Examining Baptismal Fonts*. The “Deep River” of baptism. Practical concerns: copyright issues, academic honesty, format for final papers, etc. Significant jargons: Liturgy, Worship, Sacrament, Ordinances, Baptism, Rites of Initiation, Catechumenate, Confirmation, and Preparation. Baptism as the River of Life: “learning to Walk Wet,” as the center of the course. II. Discussion of the syllabus as contract; introduction of resources, books, films, list of spaces to be visited. III. The work of liturgical learning and contextualization: necessary application of class work, readings, etc, to students’ own traditions as “translation.” The diversity in class: each student’s contributions as gift-exchange. IV. Small Group discussion: relate the story of your baptism OR a baptism-related event that impacted your sense of the presence of God in your life. Share one of the stories with whole class. **Assignments For Session II, October 4:** 1) Johnson, 35-57, *The Origin of Christian Baptism*; 2) Tammany, xii-xvi and 1-36; 3) Lathrop, 54-83; 4) Kavanagh, 3-31; 5) Stevick, *By Water and the Word*, 188-208

### **Session II: October 4, the 20<sup>th</sup> Week After Pentecost, Year A: St. Francis of Assisi and Theodore Fliedner**

I. Baptism: Historical and biblical foundations: Justin’s “patterns of these holy things:” connections between Jewish ritual washing traditions and early Christian practices. The Early Church, the Bible and early practices (Stevick’s reading); *Ordo* of baptism in today’s churches: ordo of seasons, of spaces, of the liturgy itself; study of comparative chart on baptismal practices in various churches and implications. II. Small group discussion: a sermon for Baptism for the Lord’s Day, a litany and a prayer at the Font/Pool on baptismal celebration: what do these texts say theologically? What life implications do they suggest, inspire, reveal, or shape? **Assignments for Session III, October 11:** 1) Lathrop, 1-53; 2) Best/Heller, 13-35. 3) Tammany, 38-59. 4) GVV, *The Ordo of Liturgical Space*. 5) Watch the Movie “Whale Rider” for discussion: How is this story a possible metaphor for baptism? (See more questions for thought and discussion in the next block)

### **Session III: October 11, the 21<sup>st</sup> Week After Pentecost, Year A: Saints at STM**

I. Baptismal Images from Lathrop and Best/Heller. II. Baptismal seasons and spaces. II. Baptism, Culture, and Rites of Passage in the *Chicago Statement on Worship and Culture*. III. Small group discussion: What are the metaphors in “Whale Rider?” What cultural contexts needed affirming? Which needed challenge? What were the ties to the water world for that cultural group and how were those ties reinforced or weakened by the community? What are the applications for this course? **Assignments for Session IV, October 18:** 1) Lathrop, 180-203; 2) Best/Heller, 36-96; 3) Kavanagh, 35-70.

### **Session IV: October 18, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Week After Pentecost, Year A: Saint Luke**

#### **Evangelist**

I. Video: *Re-Examining Baptismal Fonts*. What questions do this video and its speaker raise for your own understanding and your church’s practice of baptism? How to inspire/ elicit change to a deeper baptismal theology and practice in your life and ministry place? II. Small groups discussion on the week’s readings: group work on principal points for larger group sharing. Focus: theological/ecumenical consensus on baptism. **Assignments for Session V, October 25:** 1) Johnson, 82-100; 118-147; Batchelder, *Committing a Crime of Passion: Baptism and the Triduum..*

**Session V: October 25, the 23rd Week After Pentecost, Year A: James of Jerusalem**

I. Baptism in Free Churches: Theology and practice. Meaning of the word “Ordinance.” II. The seasons of Baptism: the centrality of the Easter baptismal event. III. Small group discussions: Baptismal practice that generates life habits: walking wet as a mandate to Christians. Ideas taken from the weeks’ readings in report to whole class. **Assignments for Session VI, November 1:** 1) Johnson, 274-309; 2) Kavanagh, 153-201. 3) Batchelder paper; 4) Tammany, 61-106. **Volunteers needed to do the sprinkling (“asperges”) at beginning of “All Saints” Liturgy before class next week!! ALSO: YOU MUST BRING TOWELS AND EXTRA CLOTHES TO THIS EVENT: YOU WILL GET WET IN THIS COMING CLASS!!**

**Session VI: November 1, the 24th Week After Pentecost, Year A: All Saints Day**

I. Baptism and Life passages: texts and actions of funeral rites: study of various ecclesial communities’ resources, theological premises and practical guides for presiding in such events. II. Practicing baptism: hands-on shared practicing of sprinkling, “dousing,” submersing and immersing baptismal candidates (“how to”). **Assignments for Session VII, November 8:** 1) Tammany, 107- 198; 2) *Baptism, Rites of Passage*. . .27-145. 3) Batchelder paper. *Recovering a Forgotten Way of Being Church*. . **Bring your church’s hymnal to class next week.**

**Session VII: November 8, the 25th Week After Pentecost, Year A: Saints at STM**

I. Baptismal formation: the Catechumenate as envisioned by Batchelder: 1) Lecture; 2) Small groups discussion: possibilities for students’ own contexts. II. Singing of Baptism: theology in song in the hymn books of class churches. **Assignments for Session VIII, November 15:** Stevick, *By Water and the Word*, 7-18; GVW, *The Four Rivers*. **Prepare to share theology, accounts, pictures, etc, of baptism, resources and baptismal preparation in your own church. Be ready to name what you affirm in those practices and what you question or say “no” to in those practices. Also reflect on your role on initiating changes. Prepare a written outline of your presentation.**

**Session VIII: November 15, the 26th Week After Pentecost, Year A: Saints in Our Lives Outside of STM**

I. Ecumenical Gift Exchange: *Baptism and baptismal preparation in the context of each of the students’ ecclesial traditions: Sharing of Principal Foundations and Resources*. II. Implications of baptism for ecclesial and global living. **Assignments for Sessions IX and X, November 22 and 29: see p. 2 in this syllabus.** Begin writing final paper. If needed, see professor for help in paper preparation.

**VI. Bibliography**

**Required Texts:**

*Baptism, Rites of Passage, and Culture*. Lutheran World Federation Studies. Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 1999. ISBN: 3-906706-71-0

T. F. Best and Dagmar Heller, Editors. *Becoming a Christian: The Ecumenical Implications of Our Common Baptism*. Faith and Order Paper No. 184, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999.

Maxwell E. Johnson, Editor, *Living Water, Sealing Spirit: Readings on Christian Initiation*. A Pueblo Book. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995. ISBN: 0-8146-6140-8

Aidan Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism: the Rite of Christian Initiation*. Chicago: The Liturgical Press, 1992. ISBN: 0-8146-6036-3

Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things: a Liturgical Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993  
ISBN: 0-8006-2727-X

Klara Tammany, *Living Water: Baptism as a Way of Life*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2002; ISBN: 0-89869-362-4

Gail Ramshaw, *Words Around the Font*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994  
ISBN: 1-56854-063-9

Daniel B. Stevick, *By Water and the Word: The Scriptures of Baptism*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1997. ISBN: 0-89869-296-2

### **Optional Texts**

Benedict Jr., Daniel T. *Come to the Waters: Baptism & Our Ministry of Welcoming Seekers & Making Disciples*. Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1996.

Bernstein, Eleanor Ed. *Disciples at the Crossroads: Perspectives on Worship and Church Leadership*. The Liturgical Press, 1993.

Marianne Micks, *Deep Water: An Introduction to Baptism*. Boston: Cowley Publications, 1996. ISBN: 1-56101-126-6

Laurence H. Stookey, *Baptism: Christ's Act in the Church*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982  
ISBN: 0-687-02364-5

### **Videos**

*Re-Examining Baptismal Fonts: Baptismal Space for the Contemporary Church*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991  
ISBN: 0-8146-7848-3

*This is the Night*. VHS 30 minutes. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1992.

Film: *Whale Rider*. A film by Niki Caro. Columbia Tristar, 02271. South Pacific Pictures Productions Ltd, 2002

**Class Reader:** Selected Essays, Gláucia Vasconcelos Wilkey

**Denominationally-specific Books of Worship or Manuals for Worship will be required of all students.**

---

**For questions or concerns email or call:**

**The Rev. Dr. Gláucia Vasconcelos Wilkey: [gyw@seattleu.edu](mailto:gyw@seattleu.edu) (206) 296-5335**