

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY
SEATTLE UNIVERSITY
901 12TH AVENUE, P.O. BOX 222000
SEATTLE, WA 98122-1090

STMM 501.02 CHRISTOLOGY
3 CREDITS

WINTER QUARTER 2010
FRIDAYS, 9:00 – 11:50 A.M.
HUNTHAUSEN 100

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SYLLABUS

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

A survey of theological reflection on Jesus of Nazareth, his life, his teaching, his death and resurrection. The course examines the New Testament, early Christian theologians, the important conciliar definitions, the scholastic synthesis, and contemporary discussion. It covers three main questions: Who is Jesus? How does Jesus save us? How do we relate to Jesus?

II. S.T.M. LEARNING COMPETENCIES FOR THIS COURSE

This course primarily addresses the “theological” learning outcomes put forward for the MAPS degree (and the corresponding learning outcomes for the M.Div. degree):

- 1) An ability to reflect theologically on the basic themes of the Christian tradition.
- 2) Knowledge of the interaction of religious/spiritual experience and culture in their ecumenical and multicultural dimensions.
- 3) Ability to read scriptural texts critically.

III. COURSE OBJECTIVES

As a result of taking this course (if we have all been successful), each student will be able to demonstrate:

- 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 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;
- 6) an ability to think critically and empathetically and to express oneself insightfully and creatively both orally and in writing;
- 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.

McFague, Sallie. *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*.

Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.

Migliore, Daniel. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Second Edition. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004.

Nolan, Albert. *Jesus Before Christianity*.

25th Anniversary Edition. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001.

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

Spence, Alan. *Christology: A Guide for the Perplexed*.

London and New York: T & T Clark, 2008.

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

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) Jaroslav Pelikan's book offers us 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.
- 3) Drawing on New Testament materials, Albert Nolan provides a clear, concise, and compelling account of Jesus, his life and ministry, his teaching, and his death on the cross within their original historical context.
- 4) Similarly, Alan Spence seeks to contextualize the development of orthodox christology (expressed in the councils and creeds of the 4th and 5th centuries CE) historically, theologically, and pastorally.
- 5) 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.
- 6) The course will include creative and constructive christological proposals by two contemporary theologians. Daniel Migliore attempts to retrieve and restate the contemporary significance of orthodox Christology, paying special attention to our multicultural and interreligious context. Sallie McFague examines and articulates the "Christic" shape of the body of God within an ecological theology.
- 7) We will NOT be reading ALL of Spence, Kempe, Migliore, or McFague.

V. SCHEDULE OF CLASS SESSIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS

CLASS SESSION 1: JANUARY 8

(THIS WEEK, MANY CHRISTIANS COMMEMORATE – THE EPIPHANY OF JESUS CHRIST)

Getting Acquainted and Getting Oriented to Christology

Introductions and Course Organization

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 (January 15) 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/services with substantial foreign film collections. Try to find the subtitled, rather than the dubbed, version.

3) Begin reading Nolan’s book.

CLASS SESSION 2: JANUARY 15

(THIS WEEK – THE BAPTISM OF JESUS CHRIST)

A Visual and Visceral Introduction to Christology

Watch and be prepared to discuss:

Subiela, “Man Facing Southeast”

Gospel Sources of Christology

Presentation by the instructor

Background 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

Continue reading Nolan’s book.

CLASS SESSION 3: JANUARY 22

(THIS WEEK – THE CONFESSION OF ST. PETER)

New Testament Christology: Who was Jesus? What did he say and do?

Why was he put to death?

Read and be prepared to discuss:

Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*, pp. ix-xii, 1-171

V. SCHEDULE OF CLASS SESSIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS (CONTINUED)

CLASS SESSION 4: JANUARY 29

(THIS WEEK – THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL)

The Development of Orthodox Christology and Its Contemporary Significance

Read and be prepared to discuss:

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

Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, pp. 163-196.

Focus questions for Migliore:

- 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 5: FEBRUARY 5

(THIS WEEK – THE PRESENTATION OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE)

The Development of Orthodox Christology and Its Contemporary Significance

Read and be prepared to discuss:

Spence, *Christology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, pp. ix-x, 3-73
Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, pp. 197-222

FEBRUARY 12 – NO CLASS SESSION: PRESIDENTS' DAY HOLIDAY

CLASS SESSION 6: FEBRUARY 19

(THIS WEEK – ASH WEDNESDAY AND THE BEGINNING OF LENT)

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?*

V. SCHEDULE OF CLASS SESSIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS (CONTINUED)

CLASS SESSION 7: FEBRUARY 26 (THE WEEK OF LENT 1)

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

CLASS SESSION 8: MARCH 5 (THE WEEK OF LENT 2)

Reformation and Modern Christologies

Read and be prepared to discuss:

Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries*, Chapters 13-18
Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, pp. 301-329

CLASS SESSION 9: MARCH 12 (THE WEEK OF LENT 3)

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

VI. PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES FOR 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, punctual 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 presentations by the instructor, large group discussions, and small group work.

VI. PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES FOR ASSIGNMENTS (CONTINUED)

C. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ALL WRITTEN WORK. First of all, please follow the required S.T.M. writing guide: Lynn Quitman Troyka and Douglas Hesse, *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*, 9th ed. (Upper Saddle Brook, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2009). Beyond these guidelines, be aware that I always look for a seemingly paradoxical combination of two factors in papers written for my S.T.M. courses.

On the one hand, I am hoping for you to put your own individual gifts and insights into words as creatively and winsomely as possible; I simply do not know how to create a checklist or set of guidelines to encourage you to be yourself. So, I will simply say: be yourself, let your papers express who you are!

On the other hand, I am hoping that any reasonably intelligent reader could pick up your paper at random – in the park or on the bus – and make sense of it. So, your written work does need to follow basic rules of good writing. A successful paper must:

- 1) advance a thesis – a basic point – that is easily identifiable, plausible, novel, compelling, insightful, and crystal clear [see Part One, Chapter 2 of *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*];
- 2) display a structure or organization of materials that is solid, evident, understandable, and appropriate to your thesis – in particular, transitions from point to point must be smooth, each paragraph must have its own topic sentence, and all paragraphs must somehow advance your thesis [see Part One, Chapter 3 of *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*];
- 3) make use of appropriate evidence to support your points – do not just make assertions, but offer your reader reasons why s/he should accept your assertions and, thereby, embrace your thesis (such evidence may come from other texts and artifacts, judiciously selected, as well as your own experience, carefully articulated) [see Part One, Chapters 4 and 5 of *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*];
- 4) reflect sound argumentation – all ideas should flow together smoothly, you might anticipate and answer counterarguments to your thesis, as well as making novel connections to other experiences and ideas [see Part One, Chapters 4 and 5 of *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*];
- 5) demonstrate good mechanics – sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, style of citation of sources, and spelling [see Parts Two through Five of *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*, as needed, and make consistent use of one of the three style guides (MLA, APA, or Chicago) provided in Part Five, Chapters 34-36].

Papers should be “typed,” double-spaced, on standard 8½ x 11” paper. Use 1” margins all around (do not justify right margins); 12 pt. type. Staple the paper in the top left-hand corner. Please do not use plastic covers or binders. Keep a hard copy of your work – other than the one you hand in!

VI. PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES FOR ASSIGNMENTS (CONTINUED)

D. PAPER #1.

Compare and contrast *The Gospel of Mark* and “Man Facing Southeast” on one carefully chosen and clearly defined christological theme, issue, or question. What do I mean by a “christological theme, issue, or question?” Well, how about: Jesus’ miracles, Jesus’ teaching, Jesus’ suffering and death, Jesus’ relationships to women, to the poor, to the sick, to the mad, to the possessed; Jesus and the presence (or absence) of God; Jesus and political power, political oppression; Jesus’ awareness of his own mission; Jesus’ trial; etc., etc. Be sure to consider the ways in which the film both explores elements of the gospel account of Jesus and diverges from *The Gospel of Mark* or fails to express some crucial feature you see in the gospel narrative. Also, you should argue an interpretive point. Do not just give a list of similarities and differences between the gospel and the film, but advance an interpretation of what those similarities and differences mean.

I would encourage you to work toward a paper that is very tightly focused on the christological themes/issues/questions that arise from the intersection of the gospel and Subiela’s film. In particular, try to avoid writing in your paper about the process you went through to get to and through the writing of the paper. Leave the process behind in your study/office; let that process, as important as it is, be the ladder or the path that delivered you to the conclusions about *Mark* and “Man Facing Southeast” that do appear in the paper.

Please follow the general guidelines for written work given above. This paper should be 1000 words in length (3 typed, double-spaced pages) and is due at the beginning of class on **Friday, January 15.**

E. PAPER #2.

I suspect that almost all of you will have some strong reactions to the life-story of Margery Kempe as we encounter it in the assigned readings for February 26. Some of you may identify strongly with Margery Kempe or be drawn to her; others will find her troubling or repellent.

Your assignment is to write a reflection paper that seeks: 1) to **name and understand the most significant aspect of your reaction to Margery Kempe’s lived experience of Jesus Christ** and 2) to use that reaction as the occasion to **assess the roots and character of your own experience of Jesus Christ**. As you read Kempe’s life-story and work with it, I would encourage you to try as hard as you can to sit with and listen to Kempe as “other,” letting her be herself (remember the basic principles of the “Pastoral Care Skills” class – if you’ve already taken it) and be open to the ways her story may cast new light on your own faith and practice.

Paper #2 should be 1000 words in length (3 typed, double-spaced pages) and is due at the beginning of class on **Friday, February 26.** Follow the general guidelines given above.

VI. PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES FOR ASSIGNMENTS (CONTINUED)

F. FINAL PROJECT.

All three synoptic gospels describe a conversation between Jesus and his disciples in which Jesus asks two questions:

Who do people say that I am?
Who do you say that I am?

In this final written assignment, I invite you to answer both of these two questions, thereby demonstrating an integration of our study of christology with your own thinking, faith experience, and ministerial practice.

Ultimately, it is the answer to the second question that matters the most – your own attempt to do christology, to articulate and argue for your own understanding of Jesus Christ (“Who do you say that I am?”). But for the purposes of this assignment, please develop your own christology in dialogue with some substantial material from our study of views of Jesus Christ in the Christian tradition (“Who do people say that I am?”). The assigned readings from Nolan and/or Pelikan and/or Spence offer rich resources for such a dialogue – and I will expect to see evidence that you have understood appropriate portions of one (or more) of these texts.

Two options:

You might (not you must!) choose to focus your work with Jesus’ two questions by choosing a “living presentation” of Jesus Christ in art, literature, music, theology, liturgy, a Christian community, etc., etc., and describe, analyze, and evaluate it in dialogue with your own christology. Some “presentations” (or “artifacts”) that occur to me (use them to stimulate your own creativity) are: images of Jesus Christ (crucifixes, paintings) on the Seattle University campus, or in the collection of the Seattle Art Museum; hymns to/about Jesus Christ in your Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopalian, Methodist, Baptist, . . . hymnal; interview members of the Jesuit community at S.U. concerning their understanding of Jesus Christ; classic films on the life of Jesus (“King of Kings,” “The Greatest Story Ever Told,” “Jesus of Nazareth”) or controversial films such as “The Last Temptation of Christ” or “Hail Mary”; musicals such as “Godspell” and “Jesus Christ Superstar”; Jesus Christ in the work of some recent writer of fiction or nonfiction; the presentation of Jesus Christ in the preaching of a local priest or minister you are familiar with; the presentation of Jesus Christ in a particular liturgy or liturgies from your denominational tradition; the images of Jesus Christ in a church building (or buildings) in the Puget Sound (stained glass, sculpture, painting); stories about Jesus Christ in *Time* or *Newsweek* magazine over the past decade. Although I am primarily interested in your own theological reflection in dialogue with this “artifact,” find out as much as you can about your “living presentation.” For example, don’t just walk into University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, glance around for five minutes, and start writing your paper. Find out if the church has ever published a brochure on its stained glass windows or the sculpture of the Last Supper that is at the front of the sanctuary; or

interview one of the pastors about these images. (“Who do people say that I am?)

Or, you might (again, not you must!) evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the constructive christological proposal offered by Daniel Migliore or Sallie McFague in the reading we did from his or her book and use that evaluation as a resource in the formulation of your own christology. (“Who do people say that I am?)

But if you choose one of these options, be sure to end up answering the other question, “Who do you say that I am?”

And, finally, do not try to do too much – do not try to argue for a “complete” christology, pick some important aspect or characteristic of Jesus to focus upon: Jesus the teacher, Jesus the healer, Jesus the critic of established religious authority, Jesus’ death on the cross, Jesus’ resurrection, etc., etc., or some root image of the sort Pelikan identifies: The Rabbi, the Cosmic Christ, the Teacher of Common Sense, the Man Who Belongs to the World, etc., etc.

Make sense? Please let me approve a topic for this final project before you get too far into your work – I may be able to help steer you away some pitfalls or dead ends. And don’t wait too long to begin thinking about this assignment. Thanks!

As always, follow the general guidelines for written work given above. This final paper should be 3000 words in length (10 typed, double-spaced pages) and is due at the beginning of class on **Friday, March 12**.

VII. COMPUTATION OF FINAL GRADE

Class Attendance, Preparation, and Participation	30 points
Paper #1	35
Paper #2	35
Final Project	100
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TOTAL	200 points

Final letter grades for the course will be close to the following scale:

A	=	185-200 points
A-	=	180-184
B+	=	175-179
B	=	165-174
B-	=	160-164
C+	=	155-159

and so on.