

# **Approaches to Theology: Interfaith Public Theologies**

**TS530INT**

**Summer 2010 Intensive: July 19-23, 2010**

**Professor Michael S. Hogue**

## **Course Overview**

This reading and discussion based graduate-level workshop in theology is appropriate for both beginning and advanced theology students. It takes up complex theological questions in a pluralizing, globalizing interreligious world of increasingly vexing public moral challenges as the starting point for learning how to do theology. Several assumptions guide the form and content of this course: 1) All theology is contextual; 2) The contemporary context for theology is a pluralistic, globalizing context of increasingly complex public moral challenges; 3) To be religious amidst these conditions is necessarily to be inter-religious; 4) The pluralistic, global, and inter-religious context of contemporary life problematizes the normativity of theological work precisely at the moment when public moral challenges demand normative theological response.

These four assumptions generate a public theological task: to struggle toward a mode of theological normativity that is as publicly relevant and morally and politically efficacious as it is contextually attuned and inter-religiously informed. This task produces a number of questions that will be engaged in this course. Is it possible to identify as a multi-religious person or a religious hybrid? If so, how; if not, why not? What forms of life and moral engagements do multi-religious identities make possible? How are the nature and tasks of doing theology from the standpoint of religious hybridity reconceived? What normative challenges and possibilities are presented by doing theology not simply within a tradition, but by drawing normative theological resources (i.e., scriptural, symbolic, ritual, institutional, communal) more than one tradition? Is the normative strength of multi-religious or hybrid theology enhanced and emboldened or undermined and fragilized? What new problems and possibilities does a multi-religious or hybrid theological normativity present with respect to the challenges of addressing our public moral challenges and living in a pluralistic, globalizing, interreligious world?

## **Course Structure**

Animated by these questions and assumptions and task, this course endeavors to understand, critique, and appreciate the public theological implications of thinkers whose religious identities and affiliations either span different religious traditions or draw normative resources from interreligious study and practice. The work of the course is divided into two main sections.

The first section begins with introductory work on ideas about what it means to do theology. The next session of the course interprets some of the data on global religious pluralism. Following this, we will then proceed to examine several articulations of what it means to do *public theology*. The second section of the course comparatively analyzes select expressions of interfaith public theology, attempting both to understand them on their best terms as well as critically to test them in relation to insights drawn from the first section of the course.

## **Course Expectations**

Each student in this intensive course is expected to complete all readings before arriving for class on July 19. In addition, each student is expected to gain permission from the instructor to provide contextual material on at least one of the thinkers in the course. This contextual material should be drawn from brief research into the thinker's public engagements (e.g. academic leadership, social action, politics, inter-religious dialogue or advocacy...). These assignments will be based on a first-come / first-served policy, so please email me your selection as soon as you are able. As course instructor, I will lead each session with an initial summary of the text of the given thinker's arguments. There will then be time for questions and conversation. Following this, the lead student for the session will share her/his research into the thinker's public engagements with the rest of the class. This too will be followed by questions and discussion. Each student will be expected to write a 10-15pp paper that articulates three main insights they have gained from the course and how those insights will shape their continuing work in theological studies. Use the *Chicago Manual of Style* for proper research and citation methods. Student grades will be based on their contribution to the class, evaluated on the basis of in-class participation, presentations, and final papers.

## **Bibliography and Course Calendar**

**\*\*Suggested Guiding Questions for Readings:** 1) What is the gist of the argument the author is making? 2) Which sources (i.e., historical figures, institutional authorities, philosophical, religious, social and natural scientific texts) does the author draw from in order to make his/her case? 3) How does the author identify himself/herself professionally, religiously, socio-culturally? 4) Which moral and political challenges, if any, motivate the author's work? 5) Is there a relation between the rhetorical form of the text and the argument and sources used by the author? 6) Does the author respond to anticipated critiques of his/her project? What are these anticipated critiques, and how does the author engage them? 7) What practical and institutional challenges, if any, does the author anticipate?

**July 19, Monday, 9am-12: What's going on?**

\*Peruse in advance (you do not need to master all the graphs and charts, but pay attention especially to the summaries/digests and look over some of the numbers):

- 1) <http://www.americanreligionsurvey-aris.org/>
- 2) “Religious Change around the World” (PDF available from instructor)
- 3) “US Religious Landscape Survey” (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life), <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports>
- 4) READ: Abraham Joshua Heschel, “No Religion is an Island” <http://www.cs.auckland.ac.nz/~alan/chaplain/Heschel.html>

### **July 19, Monday, 130pm-430pm: Theology and Public Theology**

\*David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, “A Social Portrait of the Theologian: The Three Publics of Theology: Society, Academy, Church” (pp. 3-28).

\*Ronald F. Thiemann, *Constructing a Public Theology: The Church in a Pluralistic Culture*, “Toward an American Public Theology: Religion in a Pluralistic Democracy” (pp. 29-44).

\*Victor Anderson, “Contour of an American Public Theology” (unpublished lecture); ([www.livedtheology.org/pdfs/v\\_anderson.pdf](http://www.livedtheology.org/pdfs/v_anderson.pdf))

### **July 20, Tuesday, 9am-12: Hindu/Christian Selections I**

\*Diana Eck, *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banares*

### **July 20, Tuesday, 130pm-430pm: Hindu/Christian Selections II**

\*Mahatma Gandhi, *The Message of Jesus*

### **July 21, Wednesday, 9am-12: Christian-Buddhist Hybridity**

\*Paul F. Knitter, *Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian*

\*Paul F. Knitter, “The Vocation of an Interreligious Theologian” ([http://74.125.95.132/search?q=cache:fs\\_Cq-DXyVsJ:www.gla.ac.uk/media/media\\_45950\\_en.rtf+interreligious+theology&cd=7&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us](http://74.125.95.132/search?q=cache:fs_Cq-DXyVsJ:www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_45950_en.rtf+interreligious+theology&cd=7&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us))

### **July 21, Wednesday, 130pm-430pm: Buddhist/Christian Dialogue**

\*Rita M. Gross and Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Religious Feminism and the Future of the Planet: A Christian Buddhist Conversation*

**July 22, Thursday, 9am-12: Muslim-Humanist Perspectives**

\*Fethullah Gülen, *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*

\*B. Jill Carroll, *A Dialogue of Civilizations: Gülen's Islamic Ideals and Humanistic Discourse*

**July 22, Thursday, 130pm-430pm: Womanist-Process-African Traditional Theology**

\*Monica A. Coleman, *Making a Way Out of No Way: A Womanist Theology*

**July 23, Friday, 9am-12: Native American-Christian Theology**

\*George Tinker, *Spirit and Resistance: Political Theology and American Indian Liberation*

**July 23, Friday, 130-430: Summing Up!**

\*Read Hogue, "After the Secular: Toward a Pragmatic Public Theology" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (PDF available from instructor)

**Statement Regarding Adaptation or Accommodation**

Students experience learning challenges for a variety of reasons. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because you are differently abled, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. Likewise, see me if you encounter difficulty with the course or feel that you could be performing at a higher level, or have a learning style issue that provides a challenge. As an instructor, my obligation is to ensure that the work you encounter is relevant to your needs and accessible. Unless you come to see me about these or other related issues, I will assume your learning needs are being met.