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Duke University Divinity School
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FIFTH YEAR STUDIES (Take off 20% unless otherwise noted, prices subject to change)

COS 512: Contemporary Theology

Textbooks:

- ___ William Placher, *A History of Christian Theology*, \$24.95
- ___ William Placher, *Readings in the History of Christian Theology, Vol. 2: From the Reformation to the Present*, \$24.95
- ___ Karl Barth, *Prayer*, \$12.95

Choose **One** of the following:

- ___ Teresa Berger, *Fragments of Real Presence*, \$24.95 (no discount)
- ___ James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, \$16.00
- ___ Gustavo Gutierrez, *On Job*, \$18.00

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Course of Study 512 – Contemporary Theology

Duke Divinity School, Summer 2008

Instructor: Brian Bantum
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E-Mail: bbantum@duke.edu

Overview

Christians have continually attempted to negotiate their faith within the worlds and contexts they find themselves. As these contexts change and encounter new ideas and ways of looking at the world Christian thinkers have continually been challenged with how to engage these new ideas through the Christian faith. In this course we will examine theology in the midst of the significant scientific, political, and social shifts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To this end we will explore some of the significant figures and themes of this time. In addition to these more foundational issues we will examine how theological inquiry becomes an important practice in the church's witness to the world.

Assignments

1. **Weekly Quizzes.** A quiz will be given the first two Fridays of class (July 4, 11) consisting of main points or identification key passages in that week's classes. They will be comprised of identification, multiple choice and one or two sentence responses. (15%)
2. **Pre-class Assignment.** Due July 1. (15%)
3. **Theological Reflection Paper-** Choose one of the following books (*Fragments of Real Presence*, *God of the Oppressed*, or *We Drink from our Own Wells*) and write a 5-6 page paper that identifies and discusses how that author is seeking to express the gospel in contemporary life. Be attentive to how the author seeks to re-articulate traditional theological categories such as salvation, Christology, etc. (35%)
4. **Final Exam.** July 22. The Final exam will be comprised of 3-5 short answer questions and one longer "essay-like" question. One of the questions will be:
How did Karl Barth and Ludwig Feuerbach differ in their accounts of "religion" based on their excerpts in *Readings in the History of Christian Theology, Volume 2* the handouts, and the lecture materials. (35%)

Readings

1. William Placher, *A History of Christian Theology*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983.
2. William Placher, *Readings in the History of Christian Theology, Vol. 2: From the Reformation to the Present*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988.
3. Karl Barth, *Prayer*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002.
4. Photocopied material to be given at various times during the course.

Choose **One** of the following:

1. Teresa Berger, *Fragments of Real Presence*. New York: Crossroads, 2002.
2. James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997.
3. Gustavo Gutierrez, *On Job*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987.

Week 1

Starting Points

- Introduction and important questions – "Why Theology?"
- The Rise of "Religion" (The Enlightenment, Natural Religion, and the Progress of Man) – Locke, Hume, Lessing, Kant
- The Recovery of Christianity? Challenges of 19th century science

The Search for Jesus and True Religion

-The Experience of Jesus – Schleiermacher

-Quiz #1 (July 4)

Week 2

-The Search for Jesus in the Nineteenth Century - Strauss and Feuerbach

-The paradox of Jesus – Kierkegaard

-The New History – Harnack and the Rise of Theological Liberalism

Recovery of the Word: Barth and the Rise of Neo-Orthodoxy

-*The Krisis*: Barth and Neo-Orthodoxy's engagements with *Religion, Jesus, Scripture*

-Quiz #2 (July 11)

Week 3

Theology after Barth and Still Wrestling with a changing World

-Theology and Scripture after Barth – Bultmann and new interpretations

-Exam Review Sheet Provided

-Theology and Society – Re-interpreting History (Niebuhr, the Social Gospel, and liberation theologies)

-Theology and Science (Again) Cobb and Process Theology

-Theological Reflection Paper Due (July 18)

Week 4

Theological Re-interpretations: New Directions in Theological Reflection

-Re-Reading Themselves: Feminist and Non-Western Theologies (African, Asian, Latin American)

-Final Exam (July 22)

-Concluding Remarks: Re-Reading Ourselves – Contemporary Christians, theological reflection, and Christian existence in a changing and strange world.

Duke Divinity School COS 512 – Contemporary Theology
Pre-assignment, July 2008

Course Description:

In this course we will examine theology in the midst of the significant scientific, political, and social shifts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To this end we will explore some of the significant figures and themes of this time. In addition to these more foundational issues we will examine how theological inquiry becomes an important practice in the church's witness to the world.

Texts:

William C Placher. *A History of Christian Theology*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983.

William C. Placher. *Readings in the History of Christian Theology, Vol. 2: From the Reformation to the Present*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988.

Karl Barth. *Prayer*. Louisville, KY : Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

Choose **one** of the following for a paper due July 18 (see syllabus for assignment):

James Cone, *God of the Oppressed*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997.

Gustavo Gutierrez, *On Job*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987.

Teresa Berger, *Fragments of Real Presence*. Crossroads Publishing, 2005.

Pre-class Assignment:

- 1) As you read... in 1-2 double-spaced pages reflect on the following questions: What is religion? How do we come to believe or disbelieve? Is Christianity a "religion?" How do we understand Scripture? What does Jesus save us from? How?
- 2) Read *A History of Christian Theology*, pages 237-315.
- 3) Read *Readings in the History of Christian Theology*, pages 82-203. Try to read each section with the appropriate chapter in *A History* (listed above). For instance read pages 82-106 in *Readings* after you have read pages 237-253 of *A History*. This will allow you to read the original sources in relation to their historical context.
- 4) Read *Prayer* by Karl Barth
- 5) Using any of the resources you have gathered while in Course of Study refresh your memory regarding some of the main categories and assertions in theological reflection such as: Christology, soteriology, the Trinity, etc. Placher is a helpful resource in identifying how these doctrines were formed and interpreted throughout Christian history. (*This is recommended, NOT required*)
- 6) After reading the assigned texts write another 1-2 double-spaced pages reflecting on the same questions noting how your ideas might have been changed, challenged or reaffirmed: What is religion? How do we come to believe or disbelieve? Is Christianity a "religion?" How do we understand Scripture? What does Jesus save us from? How? (These two sets of reflections will be evaluated based on their completion, not their content. Please try to work through the questions as best as you can.)
- 7) Choose one book to read from Cone, Gutierrez, or Berger. This book will be the basis a paper to be completed in the last two weeks of classes. As you read these texts pay particular attention to how the author thinks about Jesus, Scripture, or another major aspect of Christian belief.