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THEO 303 – THEOLOGY AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Azusa Pacific University, Haggard School of Theology, Undergraduate Department of Theology and Philosophy
Fall 2009, MWF 2:10-3:05, 3 units

The following statements on this page are required by the University and the Department

THE APU MISSION STATEMENT: “Azusa Pacific University is an evangelical Christian community of disciples and scholars who seek to advance the work of God in the world through academic excellence in liberal arts and professional programs of higher education that encourage students to develop a Christian perspective of truth and life.”

DESIRED LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. Undergraduate students will demonstrate an ability to give thoughtful consideration to current and historical issues in the light of the church’s Scriptures and traditions.
2. Graduates should demonstrate a practice of continual intellectual growth through personal scholarship and development.

DESIRED FAITH INTEGRATION OUTCOME: Most students will demonstrate growth in the ability to think critically about the historical, doctrinal, biblical and practical aspects of the Christian faith, including appreciation, understanding, and valuing the Church. Students will grow into a greater awareness of the personal and social relevance and spiritual richness that informed, disciplined theological reflection can bring to their Christian existence and their own impact upon the world in which they live. This is an application of the university-wide student learning goals that graduates should be able to articulate a Christian worldview of truth and life; should be able to apply biblically-based ethical reasoning skills to problems; should appreciate, understand, and value the Church; should practice a respect for the worth of all persons, with appreciation of individual and cultural differences, demonstrating truth-telling and grace in their relationships; and should be able to articulate the importance of extending genuine community to all peoples locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.

***NOTE:** The Department of Theology is involved in assessing student learning, and your paper may be chosen for this. If your paper is one of those randomly selected for evaluation, your name will be removed so that the process is completely anonymous and does not affect your grade.

THE APU ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY: “The mission of Azusa Pacific University includes cultivating in each student not only the academic skills that are required for a university degree, but also the characteristics of academic integrity that are integral to a sound Christian education. It is therefore part of the mission of the university to nurture in each student a sense of moral responsibility consistent with the biblical teachings of honesty and accountability. Furthermore, a breach of academic integrity is viewed not merely as a private matter between the student and an instructor but rather as an act which is fundamentally inconsistent with the purpose and mission of the entire university. A complete copy of the Academic Integrity Policy is available in the Office of Student Life, the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs, and online.

Expectations for this course regarding academic integrity in this class are consistent with those outlined in the academic integrity policy unless specific instructions in this syllabus allow exceptions.

Consequences for violations of academic integrity in this class are consistent with those outlined in the academic integrity policy; see specific instructions in this syllabus.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course provides an introduction to the doctrines of the Christian church, focusing on the Christian life and its relationship to theology. The course approaches theology from an inductive method in the Wesleyan tradition, helping the student learn to think theologically from the Scriptures, orthodox ecumenical tradition, experience, and reason. *Meets general studies core doctrine requirement for God's Word and the Christian Response. Prerequisite(s): three units of biblical studies and CMIN 108, or instructor's permission.* (catalog)

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To gain an appreciation for the history and development of the Christian faith since its inception.*
2. To acquire a foundational understanding of basic Christian beliefs so that one can think "Christianly" (with some sophistication) about life and the world.
3. To learn about the various traditions represented within the Christian faith and to be enriched by traditions other than one's own.
4. To experience the struggle of doing theology.
5. To relate Christian beliefs to the issues that arise in the fallen cosmos in which we find ourselves as disciples of Jesus who belong to the Kingdom of God.
6. To learn what it means to perform the Scriptures "on the streets" and to learn what it means to be a member of the church of the martyrs.

*See Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City*, pp. 26-27 ("...if you can't tell me where the church has been, you have no business telling me where it ought to go.")

COURSE TEXTS:

Justo González. *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective*. Abingdon. (JG)
 Roger E. Olson. *The Mosaic of Christian Belief*. InterVarsity Press. (RO)
 Gregory Boyd & Paul Eddy. *Across the Spectrum*. Baker. (BE)
 Ben Quash & Michael Ward (eds). *Heresies and How to Avoid Them*. SPCK/Hendrickson. (QW)
 Dennis Okholm. *THEO 303 Course Pack*.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Attend class regularly and participate. NOTE: Always bring the Course Pack (since it contains the lecture outlines); sometimes I'll tell you bring one of our other books to class.
2. Read assigned portions of the textbooks.
3. Decide what view you take on one of the Boyd/Eddy issues listed below. Use what you learn from the BE chapter to make a case for one position (among the options covered in the chapter) which you support more than the other options. You can write this up as an essay, an imaginary dialogue, the outline of a presentation, etc. From the material in the chapter make your case using (1) Scripture [the "norming norm"] and (2) church tradition; in addition, with help from the chapter and your own thought processes, make the case *also* with appeal to (3) reason and (4) experience. Due at the *beginning* of the class period. (You only do one of these during the semester. Your choice.)
 Options:
 1. Does God know *everything* that is going to happen in the future? (BE c. 3; due **October 2**)
 2. Did God create the universe in six 24-hour days or did he use evolution or did he do it in some other way? (BE c. 4; due **October 28**)

3. Does everything [including 9/11 and the Nazi Holocaust] happen because God wills it? (BE c. 2; **November 4**)
 4. Does God predestine people to be saved? (BE, c. 9; due **November 11**)
 5. Can people who do not respond positively to the Gospel in this life be “saved”? (BE, 12; **November 13**)
 6. Is it okay for a woman to be the head pastor of a church? (BE, c. 16; due **December 2**)
 7. Should we baptize infants? (BE, c. 14; **December 4**)
4. Write a 1000-word (double-spaced) essay reflecting on the first 87 pages of González’s *Mañana*. Write: (1) an introductory paragraph; (2) a paragraph (with specifics) indicating the value of *his* minority perspective; (3) a paragraph unpacking what he means by “guilty innocence”; (4) a paragraph explaining what he means by “reading the Bible in Spanish”; and (5) a concluding paragraph expressing your response (positive and/or negative) to what he has written.
Due on **September 18**.
5. Watch the movie “Stranger than Fiction” (starring Will Ferrell). Write a 1000-word essay engaging in some theological reflection about this movie. Background: Emma Thompson’s character is a God-figure (note the glimmering white loft high in the sky where she writes her novel) and Will Farrell’s character is a kind of Christ-figure (with a required death written into the script, a kind of Gethsemane wrestling with his fate, a sacrificial death, and a kind of resurrection). (Do not take these characters literally. They are merely types or figures.) If the novelist is a bit like God determining history, and particularly Harold Crick’s history, discuss how the movie illustrates the theological issue of God’s predetermination of events and our human freedom. (If you want to make it even more interesting, include a consideration of whether Jesus—typified by Harold Crick here—had a choice or whether God could have written a different ending to Jesus’ story.) The best papers will engage in this reflection using what has been learned in course readings and lectures. Due on **November 6**.
6. Read one of the following short stories by Flannery O’Connor: “Parker’s Back”; “The Artificial Nigger”; “The Displaced Person”; or “Revelation.” Write a 1000-word (double-spaced) essay analyzing the story theologically. *Specifically*, you should identify what O’Connor is focusing on with regard to the Christian faith. Use material in our course textbooks and class lectures to discuss the theological topic(s) O’Connor seems to deal with in the story. Include succinct and poignant quotes from the story and from appropriate textbook material to support your essay. *At the end of your paper make sure you indicate the bibliographical source for the O’Connor story you chose. You may also consult secondary sources after you have read and thought about the story, but be sure not to plagiarize and be sure to site any quotes or ideas you use from those secondary sources.* Due on **December 9**.
7. Attend a Christian worship service and submit a completed evaluation form (attached). If you are a Protestant, the service must be either a Roman Catholic Mass or an Eastern Orthodox Liturgy; if you were reared in the RC or EO church, the service must be a Protestant denomination that is completely unfamiliar to you. (If you have no history with the Christian church attend a Christian worship service that is completely “out of the box” for you.) Turn it in no later than **December 2**.
8. Compose a statement of faith (not to exceed 1 single-spaced page). It should include some expression of your belief (at this moment—a “progress report”) regarding each of the following: (1) the nature of Scripture and its interpretation, (2) the Trinity, (3) creation, (4) sin, (5) the person and work of Christ, (6) the Holy Spirit, (7) the church, (8) the sacraments/ordinances, (9) the church’s relationship to the Kingdom of God, and (10) the hope of the life to come (eschatology). It will be graded on thoroughness (i.e., you covered all ten) and consistency, *not* on agreement with the professor’s views! This is *your* statement of where *you* stand on these topics—even if your stance is to disown them. For full credit, make sure you deal with each of the ten items; you can list them if you’d like. This is due **at the time of the final exam** (turned in with the final exam).
9. Pass three exams. The exams will focus on the material read, lectured on, and discussed since the previous exam; the final will include a few questions from previous exams. These exams are scheduled for the beginning of class on the following dates: **October 12; November 16; December 18 @ 7:30 a.m.**

NOTE: Essays will be graded with the following in mind: (1) How well did you represent the material being analyzed? (2) How insightful was your analysis? (3) Did you use good grammar and writing style? (4) Was there an aesthetic appeal to your essay (e.g., Did it flow well? Was it well organized?)

Summary of Due Dates:

9/18	Gonzalez essay		12/2	Worship Service Evaluations
10/12	Exam #1		12/9	O'Connor essay
11/6	Stranger than Fiction essay		12/18	Final Exam & Statement of Faith
11/16	Exam #2		Various	Boyd/Eddy essay (do only one)

RELATIVE WEIGHT OF ASSIGNMENTS:

Boyd/Eddy essay	10% of final grade
González essay	15% "
<i>Stranger than Fiction</i> essay	10% "
O'Connor short story essay	10% "
Worship Evaluation	05% "
Statement of Faith	05% "
Each exam	15% "

GRADING SCALE:

A	100-96%	B+	89-87%	C+	79-77%	D	69-60%
A-	95-90%	B-	86-84%	C-	76-74%		
			83-80%		73-70%		

COURSE POLICIES:

Attendance: I do not ordinarily take attendance in class, but it is essential that you attend class. Excessive absences will affect your test scores. I reserve the right to penalize your grade if you have excessive unexcused absences. If you are absent you are responsible to find out what you missed and to make up any work affected by your absence. (Attendance *may* be taken randomly.)

Class decorum: In the interests of creating an optimal atmosphere for learning and out of respect for your peers, please observe the following during class sessions:

- (1) Do not eat food during the class period. Drinks are okay.
- (2) If you have a cell phone please turn it off.
- (3) Refrain from "coming and going." Please do not get up and leave during the class period unless you've let me know you have to leave early, the building is on fire, or you hear voices in the basement of the building (which this building does not have and, in which case, you probably do need to be somewhere else besides this class). Get your drinks and use the restroom *before* the class session begins.
- (4) Do not use a computer in the classroom.

Late work: If you miss one of the exams you can take it at another time if you missed it because of an *excused* absence (e.g., life-threatening illness, required university sponsored event); arrangements must be made with me before the exam (by phone or email if an illness). (Only in the case of an illness for which you have a physician's written note can you make arrangements *after* the exam.) Written assignments are due at the beginning of the class period; after that they are considered late and the grade will be reduced by a letter grade for each day late. (Saturday and Sunday count as one day.)

Cheating and Plagiarism: Cheating is the use of someone else's work which the student represents as his or her own. Plagiarism is the use of ideas and information (not commonly known) from a specific source without giving credit to that source by allusion, footnoting, or bibliography; it also involves the verbatim use of material that one passes off as one's own. Cheating or plagiarism will result in an automatic "F" for the assignment or exam, and it will be reported to the administration.

Sundays: "Business as usual" should not be an option on Sundays (except in cases of unforeseeable circumstances). Please plan ahead in all of your work, and reserve Sundays ("Little Easters") for worship, rest, recreation, and celebration! God made you that way (*viz.*, to work six and rest one) and God expects you to live your life accordingly for your own benefit (Deut 6:24). Note that no assignments or exams are due on Mondays, with the exception of the exam on 10/12 and 11/16 (due to the timing of the Fall and Thanksgiving breaks).

Submitting papers: Written work should be submitted to me in a hardcopy format unless you have made other arrangements with me and the circumstances warrant an exception. I only accept emailed work if you have made prior arrangements with me.

Students with disabilities: Students who have a disability that might prevent them from fully demonstrating their learning should meet with an advisor in the Learning Enrichment Center as soon as possible to initiate disability verification and discuss accommodations that may be necessary to ensure full participation in the class and the successful completion of course requirements. It also helps for me to know at the beginning of the semester of any special needs.

COURSE OUTLINE AND ASSIGNMENT DATES:

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment	Due at class time
9/9	Who are we and what are we doing here?		
9/11-18	What is the "Christian faith"? What is theology? What is the cultural context?	RO, c. 1; JG, Foreword, cc. 1-5	González essay due on 9/18
9/21-30	What are the sources for and the results of doing theology?	RO, cc. 2-4; QW, Prologue & Epilogue, cc. 7, 10; study the spectrum re: inspiration in BE, c. 1	
10/2-9	Who is God?	RO, cc. 5-6; JG, cc. 6-7; QW, cc. 1, 6, 12; study the spectrum re: God's foreknowledge in BE, c. 3	BE #1 – 10/2
10/12			Exam #1
10/19-23	Who is Jesus Christ?	RO, c. 10; JG, c. 10; QW, cc. 2-5; study the spectrum re: the incarnation in BE, c. 7	
10/26-11/6	How did the world come into existence, what keeps it going, and what is a human being?	RO, cc. 7-9; JG, cc. 8-9; QW, c. 9; study the spectrum re: creation in BE, c. 4, the image of God in BE, c. 5, and divine providence in BE, c. 2	<i>Stranger than Fiction</i> essay due on 11/6 BE #2 – 10/28 BE #3 – 11/4
11/9-14	What did Christ do for humans?	RO, cc. 11-12; study the spectrum re: nature of the atonement in BE, c. 8, and predestination in BE, c. 9.	BE #4 – 11/11 BE #5 – 11/13
11/16			Exam #2
11/18	Who is the Holy Spirit and what does the Holy Spirit do in our lives? (Read detailed course pack for this unit and come prepared to discuss.)	Review RO, c. 12; study the spectrum re: views of sanctification in BE, c. 10, and spiritual gifts in BE, c. 15	
11/20-12/7	What is the church?	RO, c. 13; JG, c. 11; QW, c. 8; study the spectrum re:	BE #6 – 12/2 BE #7 – 12/4

		baptism in BE, c. 14, the Lord's Supper in BE, c. 13, and women in ministry in BE, c. 16	Worship Service Evaluations due by 12/2
12/3-5	What is the future of the world and of individual humans?	RO, cc. 14-15; study the spectrum re: hell in BE, c. 18 and the end times in BE, c. 17	O'Connor essay due on 12/9
12/18 @ 7:30 a.m.			Statement of Faith & The Final Exam

c. = chapter / cc. = chapters

At your own pace you should read the texts for each topic *during* the dates we cover the topic.

YOUR NAME _____

WORSHIP SERVICE EVALUATION

NB: Participate fully in the worship service; fill out this form *after* you have worshipped (*not* while). Be as observant as possible: e.g., look around at what is inside the church building; pay attention to movement and ceremony, not just to what is said. (E.g., perhaps the Bible is treated with respect by being paraded or kissed; perhaps Christ's saving work is communicated through what is hanging on the walls as well as through what is preached or eaten; perhaps prayers or the presence of God is symbolized by the ascending smoke of incense) (Use the back only if needed. Only 1 page please!) **Due at the beginning of class on December 2.**

1. Where did you go? (church & location) _____
2. When did you go? _____ (date)
3. What about this worship service was new in your experience?
4. If you knew nothing about God before you participated in this worship service, what would you think about God after having experienced worship in this church? (far away? chummy? judging? etc.?)
5. Were you made conscious of sin? How?
6. How was the salvific work of Christ communicated?
7. What role did the people play in this service? Were you made conscious of the community of believers? Were you given the sense that this church was part of something larger than itself (in terms of the past and/or the world)?
8. Were you ever aware of the Holy Spirit? (Was he talked about? experienced in some way? etc.?) If so, how was the Spirit related to Christ?
9. What role did Scripture play? (orally, visually, etc.)

10. What would be your impression of the church of Jesus Christ if this one worship service was all you had to go on? (e.g., it is far removed from the world, interested only in saving souls, concerned for justice in society...) Did this church seem to exist for itself or for mission to the world?