The Department of Theology and Philosophy exists to help undergraduate students to become complete people who reason and think reflectively about responses to the world. The department seeks to equip and encourage undergraduate students to become effective and faithful as scholars and servants by bringing them into fruitful engagement with a broad range of theological and philosophical resources and developing in them suitable analytical, reflective, and expressive skills.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course, *Theologies of Liberation*, explores the rise of theological movements of social/political/economic liberation. This course invites its students to consider the ways theology has been done recently among those outside the European mainstream, particularly among the oppressed and marginalized. It considers their critiques of—and novel contributions to—traditional Christian theology. Among the many liberation theologies from which this course draws are those that have emerged among and speak to the Latin American poor, African Americans, women, and other marginalized groups throughout the world. Whenever possible the course will include an experiential learning component in which students will visit and dialogue with individuals, families, and intentional communities currently involved in liberationist approaches to theology and social change.

COURSE RATIONALE

*Theologies of Liberation* is the natural link between the socio-political experiences of marginalized peoples and the theological models constructed out of that experience. It is not at its heart the construction of Western theologians, nor a mere variant of “liberal theology.” Theologies of liberation are multifaceted phenomena, and manifest as black, Latino/Chicano and Amerindian theologies in the U.S., as Latin American theology, as feminist theology, as South African black theology, and as various analogous theological movements in other parts of Africa, Asia, the South Pacific, and elsewhere. For all intents and purposes, all theologies of liberation are theologies outside the trajectory of Western culture or in important ways consonant with that theology. Particularly in their Latin American variety (see especially Gustavo Gutiérrez), theologies of liberation protest the inability of the Western church and the missionary circles it has sanctioned—both Catholic and Protestant—to grapple with the problems of systematic injustice. They are uncomfortable with the many evangelical churches which tend to claim a privileged position above the flux and conflicts of history, merely

---

1 “Intentional community” is a general term for planned residential communities where residents have greater social interaction compared to other groups of houses or apartments. They typically hold a common vision and share responsibilities and resources. In this case the term refers to communities that gather intentionally to promote practices consonant with the kinds of liberation that this course will explore.
spelling out gospel principles without challenging societal and political macrostructures. This is precisely where the social critique of various ethnic-based movements in the U.S. and their theologizing counterparts in very different cultural contexts coalesce.

**ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES**

- The implications of liberation perspectives on their Christian self-identity and cultural practice, integrating theological knowledge and praxis to consider possible resolutions to current and historical issues in light of the church’s scriptures and traditions, expressed both orally and in writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Learning Outcome</th>
<th>IDEA Objective</th>
<th>Assignments Used to Assess</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“By the end of this course, students should be able to……”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulate and critically engage historical, doctrinal, biblical, and practical aspects of the Christian faith, demonstrating a comprehension of the contextual nature of Christian theology through sensitivity to multifaceted analysis of the major personalities and the historical developments of liberation theologies, noting key events/developments that have influenced its shape and course</td>
<td>ESSENTIAL: Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments and points of view</td>
<td>Class discussions, reading response papers, final oral exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critically engage the most important contemporary theological, socio-political, and economic issues addressed by liberation theologies</td>
<td>ESSENTIAL: Gaining factual knowledge</td>
<td>Readings, class discussions, midterm exam, final exam, reading response papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulate their own critical conclusions as to liberation theologies in light of the doctrine and practice of the reign of God, skillfully incorporating transdisciplinary and transcultural perspectives, expressed both orally and in writing</td>
<td>ESSENTIAL: Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments and points of view</td>
<td>Reading response papers, class discussions, final oral exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critically engage and articulate the implications of liberation perspectives on their Christian self-identity and cultural practice, integrating theological knowledge and praxis to consider possible resolutions to current and historical issues in light of the church’s scriptures and traditions, expressed both orally and in writing</td>
<td>IMPORTANT: Learning to apply course material (to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions)</td>
<td>Reading response papers, midterm exam, final oral exam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students are responsible to obtain regular access to the following required materials:

**REQUIRED**

**RECOMMENDED**

**LEARNING PROCESSES / ASSIGNMENTS**

1. **14 weekly reading reports**

   We will read an average of 40 pages in preparation for each class session. Process that material by doing the following:

   (a) **Read** the articles carefully enough to identify the authors’ main ideas. What is s/he trying to persuade you of? What specific quotes from the author encapsulate a point or insight that is especially meaningful to you?

   (b) **Relate** that ideas (above) to what you already know and feel about the focus issue. What have you personally experienced (seen, heard about) related to the concept? How do you respond on an emotional level?

   (c) **Formulate** at least two questions that relate to the readings or select quotations, but are not directly answered in the readings themselves. Doing so provides evidence of your ability to integrate insights from the readings, and to ask for deeper understanding of the issue not available through the readings themselves. These questions will form the pool from which the professor will construct midterm and final exam question options. There are several types of questions that you might formulate:
   - Questions that compare and contrast ideas and arguments between and among the readings
   - Questions that probe the underlying assumptions that an author uses to make her or his argument
   - Questions that illuminate the strengths, weaknesses or contradictions of an author’s argument
   - Questions that ask class members to think about the implications of these ideas for one’s personal lifestyle or for society at large
   - Questions that link arguments from current readings with those we have already read together
   - Questions that invite class members to assess how the readings influence their positions on the issue
Please do NOT pose questions like: “I’m left wondering why things are this way or what I can do about ….” Go deeper into the realities themselves without trying to rush to solutions.

The actual length of each Reading Report will be around one – two full pages. The questions will drive our class discussions, as well as question-and-answer sessions with community leaders during our site visits. They must be typed and will be turned in at the start of the last class session each week. (Please don’t write questions during class!). Reports are scored (5 pts maximum) on the basis of:

**Scoring Rubric / grading standards for Papers**

**Completeness (50%):**
- Does the paper identify and encapsulate the main (thesis) ideas presented in related reading(s) that focus on historical, doctrinal, biblical, and practical aspects of the Christian faith? (25%)
- Does the paper include quotes from the author(s) cited in Chicago / Turabian format to illustrate those main points, cited in Chicago/Turabian format? (10%)
- Mechanics: Is the paper accurate in terms of grammar, spelling, punctuation, syntax? (15%)

**Analytic depth (50%):**
- Does the paper respond to the discussion question(s) listed for the assignment, demonstrating a comprehension of the contextual nature of Christian theology and church history by making connections to a larger social context and life issues? (25%)
- Does the paper raise questions that probe for deeper understanding beyond what is presented in the readings themselves, thoughtfully considering possible resolutions to current and historical issues in light of the church’s scriptures and traditions? (25%)

2. **2 film viewing and analytic reports**

Students will view at least two films and compose a typed, 2-3 page analytic paper organized in two sections (description and interpretation).

— *America Beyond the Color Line* (2004). Author Henry Louis Gates Jr. explores the status of black America at the start of the 21st century in this documentary. Gates travels to the East Coast, the Deep South, inner-city Chicago and Hollywood for a close look at the current issues facing today’s black communities. He also interviews everyday African Americans as well as influential leaders and celebrities including Colin Powell and Jesse Jackson.

- **Describe:** the historical and socio-political context of the film. How does it represent social and political themes taken up by liberation theologies, especially as articulated by James Cone? What mix of cultural assumptions and spiritual values/commitments affect black communities as depicted in this documentary?

- **Interpret:** How does the film depict the challenge of conscience that confronts us all in a world convulsed by power, greed, and violence? How is the fierce, conflict-ridden world we see on the screen similar to the one in which we live today? What transforming acts of conscience are revealed?


- **Describe:** the historical and socio-political context of the film (e.g., El Salvador’s wealthy European oligarchy, the military controllers, the complacent bishops, and the country’s guerrilla resistance movement). How does the film depict Romero’s inner struggle and outward transformation from timid academic into thundering prophet?

---

• Interpret: How does the situation in El Salvador represent social and political themes taken up by liberation theologies? How are Romero’s responses to crises reflective of particular theological values and perspectives?

Video reports are scored (5 pts maximum) on the basis of completeness and analytic depth.

3. **Community visits/class discussion**

Supplementing our classroom process, we will travel as a group to meet with community groups in Los Angeles who are involved in deliberate, organized efforts to change the economic, social, cultural or environmental situation on a distinctly Christian liberationist basis. During the visit, you will be expected to listen attentively to a brief overview of their work, and then to ask the kind of questions that clarify or deepen the understanding you carry with you from life experience and class readings and discussions. Notes taken during these visits will aid you in integrating and preserving key insights.

4. **Exams, Quizzes**

There will be two exams, each calling for an understanding of the texts of the course. The first exam will cover the texts assigned to be read from the beginning of the course in written essay format during the midterm exam class session (no notes nor books), the second will cover the texts assigned to be read since the first exam as a group oral exam with books permitted but not notes. Questions for these exams will be guided by the questions raised in the weekly reading response papers, which, in edited form may provide the pool from which exam questions are drawn. The professor may also use these or questions from preparatory questions distributed in class and online to guide your reading to administer “pop quizzes” as needed to ensure reading accountability to maximize the quality of class discussion.

**EVALUATION & GRADING**

Students’ final grades will be determined by point values that represent the quality of their work.

1. **Reading & Video Analysis Reports.** 16 total @ 5 points each = 80 pts. (40% total)

2. **Exams.** 2 exams @ 50 pts each = 100 pts. (25% each or 50% total)

3. **Quizzes / Participation in Discussion** Participation (attendance and active questioning) is mandatory. If needed, the professor may use questions drawn from student weekly reading responses or from the preparatory questions (distributed in class and online to guide your reading) to administer “pop quizzes” as needed to ensure reading accountability to maximize the quality of class discussion. **Community Visit Participation** is also mandatory and considered as part of this portion of the course grade. (2 pt x 5 units = 10 pt. or 10% total)

*Grades will be calculated on a 100-point scale as follows:*

100%-94% (A); 93%-90% (A-); 89-87% (B+); 86-84 s (B); 83-80% (B-); 79-77% (C+); 76-74% (C); 73-70% (C-); 69-67% (D+); 66-64% (D); 63-60% (D-); below 60% (F)

**Grade Expectations**

Teaching and learning involve a true partnership, with responsibilities incumbent on both teachers and learners. As your teacher I am your sister in Christ, but as your evaluator I try to be impartial and objective. Given the difference in our ages and backgrounds, we may see the meaning of grades very
differently. For me, grading is a complex and difficult process. Human beings are much more than what they reveal to others or produce. For the purposes of this academic course, however, the final grade will primarily (though not exclusively) reflect the quality of the work you submit for evaluation. The quality of that work, in turn, reflects a combination of your talent, effort and achievement, not effort alone.

Different students may earn very different scores on an assignment, even though they expend the same amount of time and energy. The variation in scores is related to numerous factors that distinguish “A” work from “B” and “C” work in this upper-division university-level course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Outstanding performance: virtually perfect attendance; always prepared for class with all assignments completed; shows intrinsic interest in the class and subject; asks penetrating questions or offers thoughtful reflections in class; demonstrates exceptional intelligence and insight with unusual creativity; earns high scores on course assignments—usually the highest in the class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Above average student in terms of attendance, preparation, attitude, initiative in asking questions, time management, and assignment quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Average or typical student in terms of attendance, preparation, attitude, initiative in asking questions, time management, and assignment quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Below average or atypical student in terms of attendance, preparation, attitude, initiative in asking questions, time management, and assignment quality — minimally passing in performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Repeat course. Inadequate/insufficient performance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COURSE POLICIES

- **Workload.** The course consists of 15 weeks @ 3 hours/wk, for a total of approximately 40-45 hours of in-class time. The standard formula for undergraduate out-of-class work is 2 hours for every hour in class per week (or $2 \times 3 = 6 \text{ hours each week}$). Reading and community assignments have been selected to require a learner of average ability 5-6 hours each week to complete well.

- **Class attendance.** Class will begin and end at the time specified in the Class Schedule. Attendance is expected at all sessions, and roll will be taken at each class meeting. If you are not present, you can’t contribute; without your contribution the learning process for all suffers. The only “excused” absences are for emergency circumstances of which I’m informed. Otherwise, each absence will be penalized 2 pts. Students missing a particular class session will be responsible for all information discussed during that session. Any students coming late or leaving early will be marked “tardy.” Three tardies will constitute one absence.

- **Assignment completion.** All course assignments are due on the specified date. No late or make-up assignments will be accepted unless approved by the instructor on the basis of unavoidable circumstances. This strictness regarding the submission of completed assignments is to guard you from procrastination and falling behind in your coursework.

---

4 Pluses and minuses will be determined within the broad categories outlined below.
• **Support services.** Students in this course who have a disability that might prevent them from fully demonstrating their abilities should contact the program director and course instructor as soon as possible to initiate disability verification and discuss accommodations that may be necessary to ensure your full participation in the successful completion of course requirements. Written documentation of the disability, along with a request for accommodation, should be presented to the course instructor at the beginning of the course, or as soon as the disability has been diagnosed.

• An **eCompanion** website is available at http://online.apu.edu to enhance course learning and track your grade. Login instructions are available at http://groups.apu.edu/~dlce/Student/Student.HTM.

• **Academic integrity.** Honesty is fundamental in all academic activities, and those privileged to be members of a university community have a special obligation to observe the highest standards of honesty and a right to expect the same standards of all others. Academic misconduct in any form is inimical to the purposes and functions of the University and therefore is unacceptable and rigorously proscribed. Academic misconduct includes (a) cheating (using unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise), plagiarism, falsification of records, unauthorized possession of examinations, intimidation, and any and all other actions that may improperly affect the evaluation of a student's academic performance or achievement; (b) assisting others in any such act; or (c) attempting to engage in such acts. Carefully review the APU policy on academic dishonesty in the Student Handbook before beginning course assignments. The consequences for students found involved in cheating or plagiarism in this course will be nothing less than a failing grade for the assignment in question and may include a failing grade for the course.

• **My Commitment to You.** I, as your instructor, commit myself to preparing a relevant and challenging curriculum, to being available to encourage and problem-solve when needed, to score student products carefully and fairly, and, in the event of an unforeseen absence, to notify the class by email. Though I don't anticipate doing so, I retain the right to change (modify, substitute, delete) course assignments and their point values.

**Course Schedule**

**Th 9/10/09 Course Introduction**

- Getting to know each other
- Understanding course content and processes

**Week 1:**

- A first substantial exposure to Asian liberation theology.
- A consideration of the way traditional Christology is re-thought from that perspective.

* **Preparation:**
  * Read: Song ix – 57 (Tu 9/15), Song 58 – 100 (Th 9/17).
  * Complete: Reading report 1 (Th 9/17).

**Week 2:**

- A continuation of what was begun in week 1.
- A consideration of the way traditional atonement theory is re-thought from an Asian perspective.

* **Preparation:**
  * Read: Song 101 – 165 (Tu 9/22), Song 166 – 233 (Th 9/24).
  * Complete: Reading report 2 (Th 9/24).
### Week 3:
- A first substantial exposure to feminist liberation theology.
- A consideration of the way feminist thought differs from traditional theology.

**Preparation:**
* Read: Ruether Ch 1-2 (Tu 9/29), Ch 3-4 (Th 10/1).
* Complete: Reading report 3 (Th 10/1).

### Week 4:
- A careful examination of the way one doctrine after another is given a novel formulation within a frame of reference that begins and ends with a commitment to the well-being of women.

**Preparation:**
* Read: Ruether Ch 5-6 (Tu 10/6), Ch 7-8 (Th 10/8).
* Complete: Reading report 4 (Th 10/8).

### Week 5:
- A continuation of what was begun in weeks 3 and 4.
- A consideration of ways in which Song and Johnson agree and disagree.

**Preparation:**
* Read: Ruether Ch 9-10 & Postscript (Tu 10/13).
* Complete: Reading report 5 (Tu 10/13), Exam I (Th 10/15).

### Week 6:
- An examination of alternative perspectives from women of color.
- A careful consideration of the particularities of such a reading.

**Preparation:**
* Read: Isasi-Diaz Preface, Introduction, Ch 1 (Tu 10/20), Isasi-Diaz Ch 2-3 (Th 10/22).
* Complete: Reading report 6 (Th 10/22).

### Week 7:
- A continuation of what was begun on week 6.
- A critical analysis of the notion of mujerista theology.

**Preparation:**
* Read: Isasi-Diaz Ch 4-5 (Tu 10/27), Isasi-Diaz Ch 6-7 (Th 10/29).
* Complete: Reading report 7 (Th 10/29).

### Week 8:
- A consideration of the differences between Isasi-Diaz and Ruether.
- An encounter with persons who work for and embody the liberation that is the concern of this course as a whole and of those in particular we will study the last weeks of the course.

**Preparation:**
* Read: Isasi-Diaz Ch 8-10 & After words (Tu 11/3).
* Complete: Reading report 8 (Tu 11/3), community visit or guest speaker (Th 11/5).
**Week 9:**
- A first substantial exposure to black liberation theology.
- A consideration of the possibility of thinking all of theology in the light of the struggle against slavery and racism and the struggle for freedom.

**Preparation:**
* Read: Cone ix – 35 (Tu 11/10), Cone 36 – 83 (Th 11/12). During each session, we will view parts of *America Beyond the Color Line*.
* Complete: Reading report 9 (Th 11/12).

**Week 10:**
- A continuation of what was begun on week 9.
- A consideration of black theology’s critique of ideology.

**Preparation:**
* Read: Cone 83 – 126 (Tu 11/17), Cone 127 – 178 (Th 11/19). Conclude viewing *Beyond the Color Line*.
* Complete: Reading report 10 and Film report 1 (both due Th 11/19).

**Week 11:**
- A first substantial exposure to Latin American liberation theology and a consideration of how it has inspired other modes of liberation theology.
- A consideration of the similarities and differences between black and Latin American liberation theologies as the world’s first two manifestations of liberation theology.

**Preparation:**
* Read: Cone 179 – 225 (Tu 11/24), THANKSGIVING BREAK 11/26 NO CLASS
* Complete: Reading report 11 (Tu 11/24).
* Prepare for video report #1 to be submitted 4/4.

**Week 12:**
- A continuation of our study of Latin American liberation theology.
- A consideration of the weaknesses of “developmental” approaches to Latin American poverty.

**Preparation:**
* Read: Gutiérrez Prefaces, Introductions & Ch 1-4; View Romero for Film report 2 (Tu 12/1); Gutiérrez Ch 5-9 (Th 12/3)
* Complete: Film report 2; Reading report 12 (both due Th 12/3).

**Week 13:**
- A continuation of the study of Latin American liberation theology.
- A consideration of the place of the category of history in theology.

**Preparation:**
* Read: Gutiérrez Ch 10-13 & Conclusion (Tu 12/8), Read: Nangle and complete Reading report 14 (Th 12/10).
* Complete: Reading report 13 (Gutierrez, Tu 12/8); Complete Reading report 14 (Nangle, Th 12/10)

**Week 14:**
- A retrospective synoptic view of liberation theology.
- A re-examination of the difference of liberation from traditional theology.
Assignment:

* Take Final Exam (Exam II): 12:15-2:15pm Th 12/17/09
Course Bibliography


STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name (please print): _______________________________________________________

APU Box Number __________________ E-Mail ________________________________

Phone Number (APU) __________________ Work _____________________________

Home Address ______________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

ACADEMIC GOALS AND BACKGROUND

Are you comfortable with computer work such as word processing, email, internet research, submission of assignments via email attachment, conversion of files to Rich or plain Text Format (.rtf or .txt), and / or use of eCompanion websites for supplemental course work (Threaded Discussions, PowerPoint viewing, emailing classmates, etc.)? Which have you used before, and how comfortable are you with them?
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

Major __________________________ Why you chose this major ____________________________

Check the syllabus to see the prerequisites required for the course. Have you completed them?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ In Process
(If you checked “no” or “in process” above, you may be asked to take the course at a later date.)

Previous Bible/Religion courses completed ________________________________________________

Are you a:
___ Senior  ___ Junior  ___ Sophomore  ___ Frosh  Anticipated Grad Date _________________

Career Plans ________________________________________________________________

What would be three goals you would like to pursue through taking this course?

1. ________________________________________________________________________________

2. ________________________________________________________________________________

3. ________________________________________________________________________________

What area(s) or question(s) in biblical/religious studies most interest you?
Where, at this point, does the study of the Bible, religion, or Christianity fit into what you want to do with your life, if at all?

What were your best and worst learning experiences? What were you being asked to do? What is the ideal kind of course in which you learn best?

What is/are the best way(s) for me to assess what you’ve learned over the course of the semester, based on your individual learning style?

What are the standards to which you expect a teacher to be accountable?

Please reflect upon and sign the following Academic Integrity Pledge:

- “As a student at this Christ-centered university, I will uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. I will not lie, cheat, or steal in my academic endeavors, nor will I accept the actions of those who do. I will conduct myself responsibly and honorably in all my academic activities as an Azusa Pacific University student in this course this semester.”

Signed: ____________________________ Date: __________________