THEO 363 Contemporary Christian Thought
Azusa Pacific University: Undergraduate School of Religion

Spring 2008 3 units
T,Th 8:05-9:30 AM
Duke 113
Professor Robert González
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Office Hours: If you need to meet with me at a time other than immediately before or after class contact me so we can arrange a meeting

Azusa Pacific University 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.

Course Description: This course explores recent Christian thinking concerning the important issues facing the Church in the modern world. Emphasis is placed on the 20th century and today’s Western, post-Christian culture. Meets general studies core doctrine requirement for God’s Word and the Christian Response. Prerequisite: three units of biblical studies and CMIN 108, PHIL 220, UBBL 100, and UBBL 230 or equivalent.

Student Learning Outcomes:
Some people spend the majority of their lives exploring the topics of this class, with that in mind by the end of our 15 weeks together students in this class should be able to…
• … think like a theologian
• … identify the key features of recent theological movements and its contrast with the past
• … explain the interplay of historical particulars and thought that typify contemporary Christian theology
• … critically engage and analyze the ideas presented and developed in class
• … explain how theology is integrated into the devotional life of the thinkers examined and expressed in the lives of people
• … identify key figures and streams of thought that have contributed to the changing face of theological thought

THEO Desired Faith Integration Outcome: All in all students will be asked to demonstrate that they have given thoughtful consideration to certain current and historical issues in light of the church’s scriptures and traditions. As they do so it is expected that they will demonstrate that they understand that informed and disciplined Christian faith is multiform: it is personal, social, spiritual, historical, doctrinal, biblical, practical, and takes shape in the network of relations that makes up the life of the church. Students will come to greater clarity concerning the personal and social relevance and spiritual richness that informed and disciplined theological discourse may bring to their lives among others in the time and space in which they live. This is coherent with the university-wide student learning goals that graduates should articulate a Christian view of truth and life; should apply scriptural reasoning to problems; should appreciate, understand, and love the church; should practice love for all persons, appreciating personal and cultural differences, demonstrating truth-telling and grace in their relationships; and articulate the importance of fellowship between persons- locally and globally.
THEO Desired Learning Outcomes:

1. Undergraduate students will demonstrate an ability to give thoughtful consideration to the issues of the past and present 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.
Required Texts/Readings:
Available in Bookstore:


If you are a Theology major I recommend that you find and buy as many of the titles as you can afford.

Readings Available online at- <http://groups.apu.edu/theophil>


**Course Requirements:**
Reading the material before class and participating in thoughtful reflection and discussion of the ideas and challenges found in each.

15 one-page, single-spaced Reading Responses reflecting upon the main points of a day’s readings. The Reading response questions are listed in the syllabus on the day they are due. Your grade will be based on how well and succinctly you address the topic. You may turn in as many as you like but your top 15 will count toward your final grade.

1 Paper reflecting briefly on the nature of theology’s place in the world as reflected in the course material but focusing on one specific thinker. The course material should serve as a primary source but outside research is expected. The paper should be no more than 10, and no less than 8 pages exclusive of any cover page or endnotes. Use a 12-point Times font for the body. Please use the Turabian method for citation using either endnotes or footnotes. Do not use parenthetical references. Please, please, please, cite your sources. A one-page proposal with preliminary sources is due **February 14th** (it’s my Valentine’s gift to you).

The final draft is due **April 22nd**.

1 Class Presentation on one of the readings for a given class. The presentation should not simply be a summary of the material but should present the main idea or ideas that the author is trying to convey and how they do so. You may do more than one presentation but only one will count toward your final grade. Provide a brief and succinct hardcopy outline of your presentation for each class member.

Final Exam over the material of the semester covered in readings, lectures, and student presentations. **FINAL TUESDAY April 29th, 7:30-9:30 AM**

Any student in this course who has a disability that might prevent them from fully demonstrating their abilities should meet with an advisor in the Learning Enrichment Center (ext 3849) as soon as possible to initiate disability verification and discuss accommodations that might be necessary to ensure full participation in the successful completion of course requirements.

Students are encouraged to make use of the resources available at the Writing Center offices located in the Marshburn Library on East Campus. The Writing Center is available to help students with all aspects of their writing projects.
Grading:
Grades will be determined by how well you demonstrate your familiarity and engagement with the ideas and material covered. It is not necessary that you accept or agree with any of the ideas covered or developed in class, but that you struggle to understand the place and role of the ideas in the broader theological picture.
Reading Responses 20%
Class Presentation 20%
Paper 25%
Final Exam 30%
Participation 5%

Grades will be based upon the following scale and a standard distribution:
90-100    A
80-89     B
70-79     C
60-69     D
Below 59  F

Course Policies:
Attendance: The nature of theology and this class require your participation. Missing anymore than 4.5 hours will negatively affect your ability to participate well and therefore your grade.
Make up work: Late work will not be accepted and make up exams will not be given.
Incomplete: Except in extreme cases it is better to drop or withdraw from a class than imagine that the coursework will be completed after the semester has ended and a new one begun. If you anticipate not being able to complete the class work, drop or withdraw from the class.
Academic Integrity- “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 instructor but rather as an act that is fundamentally inconsistent with the mission and purpose 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.” That is to say, cheating is bad for you. Any instance of cheating will at least result in a failing grade for the course.
Course Schedule:

Week 1
Jan. 8
Course overview and background
Theological Background of Modernity
Jan. 10
Theological Background of Modernity/Post-Modernity

Week 2
Jan. 15
Hegel 205-280
1. What is the source of the distinction Hegel makes between love and the law, and what difference does this make for the distinction between Judaism and Christianity?

Jan. 17
Schleiermacher 1-21
2. How does Schleiermacher distinguish religion from science and morality and what does he identify as its source?

(Last day to add/drop from classes January 18th)

Week 3
Jan. 22
Rahner: 44-89
3. How and why does Rahner say all knowledge of God is an a posteriori knowledge and also transcendental?

Jan. 24
Kelly: “The Quaker Discovery” in The Eternal Promise
4. What is immediacy of revelation and how is it expressed concretely?

Week 4
Jan. 29
Barth Evangelical Theology 3-59
5. According to Barth, what is systematization and why does the object of theology resist systematization?
Barth Evangelical Theology 63-105
6. How does Barth describe faith and what appear to be its limitations?

Jan. 31
Barth Evangelical Theology 109-156
7. How does Barth identify and propose to overcome the various threats to theology?
Barth Evangelical Theology 159-206
8. What is the work evangelical theology does for and in the community?

Week 5
Feb. 5
Kierkegaard 189-251
9. What is subjectivity and why does Kierkegaard say truth is subjectivity?
Kelly “The Gathered Meeting” in The Eternal Promise
10. How and why does Kelly suggest mysticism as he describes it cannot be an individual affair?
Feb. 7
Barth *The Humanity of God* (essays I-II)
11. According to Barth, how and why does God’s deity include His humanity?

**Week 6**

Feb. 12
Barth *The Humanity of God* (essay III)
12. What does Barth mean by saying God’s freedom is not unlimited possibility and what does this mean for the freedom of humanity?

Feb. 14
Kelly “American Christianity,” “Christians and Decided Christians,” “Excerpts from the Richard Cary Lecture,” in *The Eternal Promise*
13. Considering the inward nature of spirituality, why does Kelly claim that the Gospel must have a social expression?

**PAPER PROPOSALS DUE**

**Week 7**

Feb. 19
Hauerwas *After Christendom* 13-68
13. According to Hauerwas, what is the difference between a tactical and a strategic position and why must the church’s position be a tactical one?

Feb. 21
Hauerwas *After Christendom* 69-92
15. What does Hauerwas say is the difference between freedom of religion and the freedom of the church and why is it a problem to confuse the two?

**Week 8**

Feb. 26
Hauerwas *After Christendom* 93-111
16. What is the discipline Hauerwas claims is essential to being the church, why?

Feb. 28
Hauerwas *After Christendom* 113-131
17. What is the difference between a Christian and non-Christian understanding of marriage and what does this have to do with Christian politics?

**Week 9**

March 4
Hauerwas *After Christendom* 133-152
18. According to Hauerwas to what is the church a witness and why is this witness necessary?

March 6
Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* 9-35, 89-110
19. What does Hauerwas mean by saying the church is a narrative community, that is, what does he mean by narrative and why does it matter to theology?

**Week 10**

March 11
Kelly All of Chapter 3 (Essays 1-4)
20. How does “negative space” correspond to silence and “hastening into the world” in Christianity?

**March 13**
Kelly “Have You Ever Seen a Miracle?” “Children of The Light,” in *The Eternal Promise*

21. What is spiritual maturity for Kelly and why is this miraculous?

*(Last day to withdraw from classes March 14th)*

**Week 11**
**March 25**
Cone. *God of the Oppressed*
23. Why does Cone describe “secular” black experience as part of black theological discourse?

**March 27**
Cone. *Liberation: A Black Theology of Liberation*
24. What does Cone mean by saying Jesus is “the eternal event of liberation in the divine person who makes freedom a constituent of human existence”?

**Week 12**
**April 1**
Kelly “Quakers and Symbolism,” in *The Eternal Promise*
22. What are the problems Kelly identifies with symbols but why are they nonetheless necessary and helpful?

**April 3**
Kelly “Religion for a Distraught World” & “Where are the Signs of Hope?” in *The Eternal Promise*
25. How does Kelly's description of religious/religiously-motivated action in the world demonstrate a type of sacramentality?

**Week 13**
**April 8**
Ruether 95-107
26. Why does Ruether claim it is essential for Christian theology that we not conceive of the crucifixion as something to be sought and accepted as a means of redemption?

**April 10**
Kirk-Duggan in Emilie Townes 140-166
27. According to the reading in Kirk-Duggan, how does music serve a theologically instructive and creative role?

**Week 14**
**April 15**
Jordan 328-337
28. How does Jordan describe language as colonized by imperialism and how is it resisted?

**April 17**
Hauerwas: *Sanctify Them In Truth*
29. According to Hauerwas, why is friendship an epistemological enterprise and what does this have to do with homosexuality?
30. According to Gutierrez, what is the task and purpose of theology?

**PAPERS DUE**

April 24

Geertz 42-67

31. What is the distinction Geertz makes between anti-relativism and anti-anti-relativism: why does he make this distinction?

**Week 16**

FINAL TUESDAY April 29, 7:30-9:30 AM