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

Fall 2009 3 Units  
Professor Robert González  
M/W 1:05-2:30PM  
Phone: 626.833.1398  
Darling Lib 403  
Email: mexicanrag@earthlink.net  
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 time and place to meet. Please note that it is better to contact me at the earthlink email address than the apu.edu address.

Azusa Pacific Mission Statement: Azusa Pacific University is an evangelical Christian community of disciples and scholars who seek to advance the word 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 requirements 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 students in this class should be able to…
- think like a theologian
- identify the key features of recent theological movements and their relation to past movements
- explain the interplay of historical particulars and thought that typifies theology
- critically engage and analyze the ideas presented and developed in class
- identify key figures and streams of thought that have contributed to the changing face of theological work

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 so it is expected that they will demonstrate that they understand that disciplined Christian faith is multiform: it is personal, social, spiritual, historical, doctrinal, biblical, practical, and takes shape in the network of relations that make 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, demonstrate 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 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:
The following texts are available in the APU bookstore:


If you are a theology major, I suggest that you buy as many of the following that are available and affordable. Otherwise, they will be emailed to you throughout the course and are freely 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 **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.
One 6-8 page Paper reflecting on a conceptual theme of *The Road* as it relates to theological concerns. Due **October 26th**.

One **Paper** offering a brief theological analysis on a specific problem or perspective of your choosing. The course material may 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 **October 19th**.

**The final draft is due Dec. 9th.**

**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 communicate the main ideas that the author is trying to convey and how they do so. You may do more than one presentation but only your highest grade counts toward your final grade. Provide a brief hardcopy outline of your presentation for each class member.

**Presentation Guidelines**

The purpose of the presentation is to examine the theology and thought of a particular thinker as we find it in a given text. You will make your presentation to the rest of us in a way that both reveals your understanding of the text and serves as a part of the lecture and discussion of that class session. To successfully communicate the substance of the material you will need to briefly examine the context and background of the theologian studied. Your emphasis should not be on biographical information, nor should it simply be a summary of the readings; you will explain the contribution and place of the theologian’s thought in the broader scope of theological work and be responsible for directing discussion of the material.

To do this you will…

- … sign up for at least one presentation.
- … provide a written outline for everyone in class. The outline should present the general content of the material as well as the overall direction of your analysis.
- … prepare written source material that will allow you to give a substantial presentation
- (Imagine it lasting approximately 30 minutes). You will not read directly from it, so it does not need to be written as an essay. However it does need to be substantial enough to show your preparation.
- … assess the material as you understand it in your presentation.
- … be prepared for any questions that come up during your presentation.
- … be able to lead the presentation in a way that fosters discussion but does not veer so far afield your points are lost.
Focus your presentation on primarily answering the questions: What are the theological claims being made? What do these claims assume or critique? How do these claims demonstrate the good news of the Word confronting the world?

You will be evaluated not only on the evidence of your preparation (familiarity with the subject, analysis, being able to draw connections and contrasts with others) but on your ability to further the theological task by engaging the class in discussion as well.

Feel free to use any media you choose as long as the above criteria are met.

Also see the attached grading rubric.

**Final Exam** over the material of the semester covered in readings, lectures, and student presentations.

**FINAL WEDNESDAY December 16, 12:15-2:15PM**

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 a broader theological picture.

Reading Responses/*The Road* Response 25%
Class Presentation 20%
Paper 25%
Final Exam 25%
Participation 5%

Grades will be based upon the following scale and a standard distribution:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90-100</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>80-89</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>70-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Below 59</td>
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**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**

**Sept. 9**
Course overview and perspective
Theological Background of Modernity

**Week 2**

**Sept. 14**
Hegel 205-253
1. What is the source of the distinction Hegel makes between love and law, and what difference does this make for the distinction between Judaism and Christianity?
Schleiermacher 1-21
2. How does Schleiermacher distinguish religion from philosophy and ethics and what does he identify as its (religion’s) source?

**Sept. 16**
Kierkegaard 189-251
3. What is subjectivity and why does Kierkegaard say truth is subjectivity?

(Last day to add/drop classes Sept. 18)
Week 3
Sept. 21
Rahner: 44-89
4. For Rahner, how is it that knowledge of God is experienced but also transcendent?
Kelly “Have You Ever Seen a Miracle?” “Children of The Light,” in The Eternal Promise
5. What is spiritual maturity for Kelly and why is this miraculous?

Sept. 23
Ch. 1-3 in Althaus-Reid, et al,
7. Broadly, what are the existential conditions of contemporary theological work?
Gutierrez 23-34
7. According to Gutierrez, what is the task and purpose of theology?

Week 4
Sept. 28
Hauerwas A Community of Character 9-35
8. 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?
Barth Evangelical Theology 3-59
9. What is the object of theology and why would it resist systematization?

Sept. 30
Barth Evangelical Theology 63-105
10. According to Barth, what is faith?
Barth Evangelical Theology 109-156
11. How does Barth identify and propose to overcome the various threats to theology?

Week 5
Oct. 5
Barth Evangelical Theology 159-206
12. What is the work evangelical theology does for and in the community?
Geertz 42-67
13. What is the distinction Geertz makes between anti-relativism and anti-anti-relativism;
why does he make this distinction?

Oct. 7
Martey in Althaus-Reid, et al, 80-93
14. How does Martey’s essay demonstrate the dialectic or ongoing nature of the
theological task?
Barth The Humanity of God (essay II)
15. For Barth, how and why do the theological “mistakes” of the past inform our present
theological work?
Week 6
Oct. 12
Barth *The Humanity of God* (essay II)
16. According to Barth, how and why does God’s deity include His humanity?

Oct. 14 STUDY DAY

Week 7
Oct. 19
PAPER PROPOSALS DUE
Barth *The Humanity of God* (essay III)
17. What does Barth mean by saying God’s freedom is not unlimited possibility and what does this mean for the freedom of humanity?
Kelly All of Chapter 3 (Essays 1-4)
18. How does “negative space” correspond to silence and “hastening into the world” in Christian existence?

Oct. 21
Kelly “American Christianity,” “Christians and Decided Christians,” “Excerpts from the Richard Cary Lecture,” in *The Eternal Promise*
19. Considering the inward nature of spirituality, why does Kelly claim that the Gospel must have a social expression?
Geffrê in Althaus-Reid 39-51
20. According to Geffrê, what are the opportunities for religious transformation possible within Modernity?

Week 8
Oct. 26
Discussion of theological themes in *The Road*/ Papers due,

Oct. 28
Hauerwas *After Christendom* Intro, 13-68
21. 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?
Sung in Althaus-Reid, et al, 67-79
22. According to Sung, what is the faith/ethic implicit in neo-liberalism and how might it be overcome?

Week 9
Nov. 2
Hauerwas *After Christendom* 69-92
23. 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?
Hopkins in Althaus-Reid, et al, 94-101
24. According to Hopkins, how do neo-conservative and liberal theologies in the US support a religion of monopoly capitalism and what is the prophetic response?
Nov. 4
Hauerwas *After Christendom* 93-111
25. What is the discipline Hauerwas claims is essential to being the church, why?

**Week 10**

Nov. 9
Hauerwas *After Christendom* 113-131
26. What is the difference between a Christian and non-Christian understanding of marriage and what does this have to do with Christian politics?
Althaus-Reid in Althaus-Reid, et al, 23-38
27. According to Althaus-Reid, why is every theology a sexual act?

Nov. 11
Hauerwas *After Christendom* 133-152
28. According to Hauerwas, to what is the church a witness and why is this witness necessary? (NOTE: It is not “non-believers”.)
Kelly “The Gathered Meeting” in *The Eternal Promise*
29. How and why does Kelly suggest mysticism as he describes it cannot be an individual affair?
*(Last day to withdraw from classes Nov. 13th)*

**Week 11**

Nov. 16
Kelly: “The Quaker Discovery” in *The Eternal Promise.*
30. What is immediacy of revelation and how is it expressed concretely?
Kirk-Duggan in Emilie Townes 140-166
31. According to Kirk-Duggan, how do blues and gospels exist theologically?

Nov. 18
Kelly “Religion for a Distraught World” & “Where are the Signs of Hope?” in *The Eternal Promise*
32. How does Kelly's description of religious/religiously-motivated action in the world demonstrate a type of sacramentality?
Massey in Althaus-Reid, et al, 107-117
33. How does the example illustrated by Massey demonstrate the act of “doing theology”?

**Week 12**

Nov. 23
Cone. *God of the Oppressed*
34. Why does Cone describe “secular” black experience as part of black theological discourse?
Cone. *Liberation: A Black Theology of Liberation*
35. 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”?
Nov. 25
Jordan 328-337
36. How is the apparent absence of rhetoric achieved in theological language and why is
this dangerous?
Kelly “Quakers and Symbolism,” in The Eternal Promise
37. What are the problems Kelly identifies with symbols but why are they nonetheless
necessary and helpful?

Week 13
Nov. 30
Támez in Althaus-Reid, et al, 102-106
38. According to Támez, why is it fundamental to discuss the gender of God?
Dec. 2
Hauerwas: Sanctify Them In Truth
39. According to Hauerwas, why is friendship an epistemological enterprise and what
does this have to do with homosexuality?

Week 14
Dec. 7
Deifelt in Althaus-Reid, et al, 118-130
40. How is religious language dangerously ideological?
Ruether 95-107
41. 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?
Dec. 9
Petrella in Althaus-Reid, et al, 162-177
42. Considering Petrella’s argument about the social sciences, why might theology be left
behind for the sake of God’s saving work?

PAPERS DUE

Week 15
FINAL: WEDNESDAY December 16, 12:15-2:15PM

This is the clause that acknowledges that the nature of our existence may require changes
be made to the syllabus during the semester.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation Rubric</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Familiarity with Material/ Overall Evidence of Preparation</strong></td>
<td>Evidence of careful preparation and thoughtful reading of the material. Clarification/explanation of obscure or technical concepts</td>
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<td>Out of 5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Contextual Analysis/ Historical Conditions</strong></td>
<td>Description of the theologian’s historical context and its relation to their thought.</td>
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<td>Out of 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theological Summary</strong></td>
<td>Understanding of the material “as it is.” An attempt at describing the thought/theology on its own terms, presenting the theological claims apart from critical analysis. Were the main points of the text clearly communicated to the class?</td>
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<td>Out of 5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Theological Analysis</strong></td>
<td>Assessment of the merits and shortcomings of the material from an “external” perspective.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fostering Discussion and Interaction</strong></td>
<td>Did you keep other students engaged in the material through questions/challenges? To what degree did the presentation elicit reactions and questions?</td>
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