AZUSA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY
HAGGARD SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

SENIOR SEMINAR: THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL ISSUES
THEO496 (02)

Course Instruction Plan

Professor: Craig Keen                                    Spring 2008
Office: Duke 242                                         3 Units
Times of Meeting: TR 4:20 – 5:45 p.m.
Place of Meeting: Duke 123

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 senior seminar is designed for those who wish to further their
understanding of an important issue facing Christians today. The course consists of a
seminar format, including a major paper and oral presentation. Students combine Christian
theology, biblical studies, and ethics to examine various ways in which the Christian faith can
be lived out today. Meets the general studies senior seminar requirement. Prerequisites: three units of 300-
level theology; CMIN108; PHIL210 or PHIL220; UBBL 100; UBBL230 (or equivalent), and upper
division writing intensive course.

Course Eschata:

Students are asked to work thoughtfully in this course in the light of a certain “end.” It is
expected that such work will yield some degree of understanding of . . .

1. The historical tissue of Christian thought.
2. The significance of social place in human thought and life.
3. The plight of the marginalized in the world.
4. The concrete and particular patterns of interaction that are at work in theology.
5. The bodily nature of theology.
6. The dynamics of prayer and worship that constitute theology.
7. The mystery that plays at the heart of Christian thought.
8. The history of Jesus as the beginning, end, and native soil of doctrine.
9. The hunger of life.
10. The trinitary structure of theological thinking.
11. The scripture that emerges at the source of theological formulation.
12. The church as a uniquely holy public region of action.
Student Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course students are to demonstrate that they have reached the following teloi. By the end of the course students are to . . .

1. Articulate ideas that have come to have particular importance in the intellectual history of the church.
2. Lay out reasons why the church has taken a stand in relation to these ideas.
3. Articulate ideas of peculiar importance within contemporary theological discourse.
4. Lay out reasons why these ideas have become important.
5. Synthesize these historic and contemporary ideas into a coherent pattern of ideas.
6. Read substantive theological texts with significant understanding and bring that understanding to written and oral discourse.
7. Gain facility in the use of a variety of texts—such as the church’s scriptures, traditions, peculiar modes of thought, and one’s own life-history—in order to think, write, and speak theologically.
8. Write an informed and well-organized senior thesis using a standard research manual.¹

Textbooks:

Required Textbooks:


Recommended Text:


Course Procedure and Requirements:

1. This course is a study of the weightiest of theological ideas and deeds. Through the weeks of our time together we will work to understand the church’s teachings and practices as they are given to the patterns of God’s entry into human life and God’s

¹Presentations, written questions, thesis, and informal class participation will be used to evaluate items 1 – 7; the thesis will be used also to evaluate item 8.
expropriation of that life in the bodily life, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus. That is, this course is a study of the conception of the vital rhythms of the loving relation that moves between God and God’s creatures. The point of this course is to think the thought that the holiness that makes the church is the freedom that binds God to us and us to God. To think such a thought with some degree of adequacy calls for care and humility. It calls for labor and prayer. The structure of this course provides an opportunity to approach the ideas of holiness, the church, and bodily action with that kind of intelligence and gratitude.

2. The objectives of the course will be met quite well, if we spend our time this semester attending and responding to the issues raised in assigned readings and in class discussion. The texts introduce the reader to the patterns and rhythms of peculiarly Christian practice. The one by John Wesley is a response to the call to holiness that vibrates everywhere in scripture. The one by John Howard Yoder gives us a picture of a life that trusts in God’s sovereignty particularly in a violent world. The one by Alexander Schmemann asks us to think of the church as a movement of human lives, daily interacting in the face of the embodied coming of God. The one by Robin Young remembers the radical form of worship that characterized the early church. The one by Cavanaugh hopes that a similarly radical form of worship might characterize the church once again—though in a very different theological situation. The point of studying these books, however, is not for us to come to agree with what they say. Much of what they say is perhaps agreeable; some of it is perhaps not. In either case these books do their work so well and they do it with such devotion that it seems fitting to say that they simply are to be heard and understood, even when that comes hard. These are not just books. They are words of life. Perhaps by reading them we might come to live a little more than we would have otherwise.

3. The assignment toward which all the work of this course is headed is the senior thesis, a roughly 7,500 word paper that in this case is to confront a contemporary social issue (a) in a significantly theological manner (b) intent on a particular course of action. The question in this course, however, is not to be “what should I as a private, individual Christian to do in the face of issue ‘x’?” The question is to be “what is a church to do in response to the suffering of the world as it comes to light in ‘x’?” Therefore, the work we do together the first two months of this course is to provide the frame of reference for the writing of one’s thesis. Again, each thesis is to shift the locus of ethical thinking away from the modern subject (with its mythic autonomous agency and rights) to that ecclesial liturgical event that we too casually call “the church.” The social issue upon which one turns one’s attention in one’s thesis is to be chosen carefully—and in consultation with the professor. APU asks that these theses “include all of the following elements: [1] an obvious thesis on a debatable contention; [2] convincing and well-supported arguments in defense of the thesis; [3] full and fair consideration of opposing positions; [4] judicious use of primary and secondary source material; [5] good organization with an effective introduction, clear divisions, smooth transitions, and a strong conclusion; [5] stylistic finesse in clarity, tone, word choice, sentence structure, and paragraph construction; [6] correct and consistent use of a standard citation form; [and 7] mastery of standard grammar,
Each thesis is to begin by laying out the ecclesial context by which thought concerning the matter chosen for special treatment is to be oriented. That is, the opening of each thesis is to be a certain kind of ecclesiology, a certain kind of clarification of the meaning of “church.” The texts of this course are to provide the chief resources for this section. All of them are to be used extensively in this section. The second section of the thesis is to be a clarification of the particular social problem or set of problems that is to be addressed from the ideas with which the thesis has begun. Finally, the third section of the thesis is to lay out in some detail—drawing explicitly from the ideas worked out in section one—how the church is to respond. (In order to keep this last section from being excessively idealized or abstract, it might be good to provide accounts of churches’ responses to similar problems, insofar as those are able to be documented.)

The final draft of one’s thesis is due on the day of one’s final report (see below).

4. Every student is to be prepared by prior study and careful thought to enter into class discussion by asking questions, making comments, and otherwise discussing the ideas under examination. Not only does such public dialogue tend to improve the quality of one’s education, give evidence of one’s preparedness for class and understanding of the course’s issues, it also adds an important social dimension to the course which makes our work together more significant and vital. This class is understood from the beginning to be for the education of its students, to be addressed to their issues, to be responsive to their questions. It is particularly important, therefore, that no one

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2 APU’s General Studies Council also suggests the following guidelines for all sections of the Senior Seminar:

“(I) Purpose of the Senior Seminar requirement: (a) [to] apply Christian principles to contemporary society, (b) [to] integrate the student’s educational experiences from a basis in the liberal arts, (c) [to] assist in the transition from the academic realm to general society, [and] (d) [to] provide direction for oral and written articulation of a Christian perspective. (II) Course description: This senior level General Studies class prepares the student to understand and express a Christian perspective in the contemporary world. (III) . . . ‘Senior Seminar: Faith and Social Issues’ sections will relate Christianity to contemporary social problems. . . . (IV) Necessary components for each section include: (a) biblical/theological materials and/or perspectives, (b) ethical/philosophical materials and/or perspectives, (c) interdisciplinary resources and/or perspectives beyond the student’s major, [and] (d) writing instruction for argumentative rhetoric. (V) Requirements for students: (a) a senior thesis or a collaborative writing project requiring individual contributions to the argument . . . , [requiring] clarity of writing, effective integration of ideas, and creative resolution of social concerns, (b) a general expectation will be a scholarly rigorous paper of 5,000-7,500 words, (c) an oral defense of thesis or collaborative project which will be included in the evaluation of student’s performance, [and] (d) the participation in examination of other students’ theses. (VI) Requirements for each section: (a) a maximum enrollment of 20 students, (b) each section of the Senior Seminar will be open to all majors rather than restricted to any single major because of the importance of student interdisciplinary contribution, (c) faculty for the Senior Seminar will be full time faculty. (VII) Prerequisites for the course: (a) senior standing, (b) completion of the majority of the units required for God’s Word and the Christian Response.”

3 Students are strongly encouraged to address flesh and blood social issues that are as serious as life and death.

4 The Department of Theology and Philosophy is involved in assessing student learning. One or more papers submitted for the fulfillment of an assignment in this course may be randomly chosen as a part of this departmental evaluation. It is possible that your paper will be one of them. If so, your name will be removed so that the process will be completely anonymous. Your grade for this course will not be affected.
coast, but that everyone hear and speak responsively to the discourse that happens in every class session. Indeed, students will be understood to be full participants in this course and are expected to stand with the professor as its teachers and will have teaching responsibilities nearly every session.

5. **Class Presentations:** To make a place for such teaching students will be assigned the task of leading class discussions. Those presenting the same day are to work together as a group. Each presentation is to be the length of one class session. Each group is to provide the rest of the members of the class with a thorough (electronic) outline of the material being presented. A presentation will be evaluated according to how well the following is accomplished: (1) the group is to demonstrate a good understanding of the material under consideration; (2) the group is to present ideas clearly and coherently; (3) the group is to respond well to class questions and comments, engaging the class, evoking questions and comments over the assigned material; (4) the group is to distribute a thorough outline that exhaustively covers the assigned material (so that the oral presentation need not).

Although reading the texts of the course and the documents that outline them will deliver considerable information, the point of what goes on in class during presentations is not chiefly information delivery, but the evocation of thought and understanding. The professor will be an active participant in the discussion that unfolds around presentations. However, the ideas moving around presentations, not the professor, will be the centerpiece of class sessions. Each student is to present at least twice during the semester. Again, each presenter is responsible for all the material to be presented that day. Although, obviously, presenters are to be unusually well prepared for class, every student is to be well prepared in order to engage in careful study of the material, to discuss the material with the presenter, the professor, and others. Class presentations and class participation (when not presenting) will both be evaluated as a part of the course grade.

The schedule for presentations is as follows:

a. January 10: John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*

   1. 
   2. 
   3.

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5 Each outline is to have roughly one page for every ten pages of presented text (but no outline should be less than 1000 words). A presenter is not to read her outline.

6 Each presenter in a group is to provide the professor on the day of presentation with a report (1) of the amount of time he or she spent working on the presentation apart from group meetings, (2) of the amount of time he or she spent on the presentation in group meetings, and (3) of the involvement of each other group member in preparation for the presentation (insofar as it can be determined). These reports will also contribute to the determination of one’s grade for the presentation.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 15</td>
<td>John Howard Yoder</td>
<td><em>The Politics of Jesus</em></td>
<td>vii – 88</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 17</td>
<td>John Howard Yoder</td>
<td><em>The Politics of Jesus</em></td>
<td>89 – 161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 22</td>
<td>John Howard Yoder</td>
<td><em>The Politics of Jesus</em></td>
<td>162 – 247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 24</td>
<td>Alexander Schmemann</td>
<td><em>For the Life of the World</em></td>
<td>7 – 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 29</td>
<td>Alexander Schmemann</td>
<td><em>For the Life of the World</em></td>
<td>81 – 151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 31</td>
<td>Robin Young</td>
<td><em>In Procession Before the World</em></td>
<td>iii – 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 5</td>
<td>Where are we?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>February 7</td>
<td>William Cavanaugh</td>
<td><em>Torture and Eucharist</em></td>
<td>ix – 34</td>
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</tbody>
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[o. February 28:  Where are we?] 

   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

[John Wright is in town.]

   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

[r. March 11:  Where are we?] 

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7 Attending John’s lecture will cancel any single absence.
Before the beginning of each of these class sessions (except the ones set off in brackets) each student not presenting is to turn in a typed list of at least 5 questions, distributed to cover the whole section assigned to be read for that day, submitted electronically. They will be taken to indicate the degree to which a student has engaged the ideas laid out in a section of text. They are to be the kinds of questions one would ask in a serious discussion of serious issues. Each question is to include a parenthetical reference to the specific page(s) from which the question has arisen. These questions are to be written carefully and are to deal with the most significant issues of the section. Although these questions will not be given letter grades, they will be used as indicators of the student’s readiness for class.

At the end of the question sheet the student is to indicate how much of the assigned material was studied, i.e., read closely at least once.

All of our sessions April 1 – 10 will be set aside to give direct aid and succor to the writing of senior theses. The sessions April 15 – 29 will be set aside for more formal thesis presentations. The first, ecclesiological section of the thesis is due on April 3. This first section is to be serious work, even if minor revisions are made to it before the final draft of the thesis is completed. Indeed it may well be the final form of that portion of the thesis.

Our schedule for these sessions is this:

a. April 1: A meeting for preliminary progress reports from every member of the class.

b. April 3 – 10: Slightly lengthier progress reports from members of the class.

April 3:
April 8:
April 10:

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8 Questions turned in after the beginning of a class session will be reduced in value.

9 The report is to be: “I closely read __% of the material assigned to be read for today.” It is expected that 100% will be reported. The score earned for weekly questions will be adjusted at the end of the term according to the average percentage of reading. That is, anything short of 100% will reduce one’s grade (partial credit will be given for having read the assigned material, if a reading report is turned in late). Presenters are also to report the percentage of the material that they have closely read (trust me, there are reasons for this).
c. April 15 – 29: Final thesis reports from members of the class.  

April 15:

April 17:

April 22:

April 24:

April 29 (4:45 – 6:45 p.m.):

6. Grades will be determined by the professor as seems fitting, using quantifiable and non-quantifiable factors. However, the following scale will be used as guidance: 90 – 100: A; 80 – 89: B; 70 – 79: C; 60 – 69: D; 0 – 59: F. Other factors will be considered as well. Since this is a seminar in which discussion is extraordinarily important, one is simply not to be absent from class. One who attends class, but sits quietly, will receive a “C” for the day. One who misses class will receive a zero. (Excessive “tardies” will be taken to be equivalent at least to one absence.)

7. Work is not to be turned in late except under quite extraordinary circumstances (hospitalization, death in the family, etc.). Whenever it is possible, the student is to report to the professor well in advance any such extraordinary circumstances that might affect the student’s compliance with the schedule of the course. If a student cannot do the work for this course when it is scheduled to be done, she should assume that her work will not be able to be done at all. If some complication qualifies as inadequate for full exception to the prohibition of late work, but is yet adequate for some exception, the work will be accepted, but the grade recorded for it will be reduced.

8. Contributions of the assignments to the course grade:

a. The thesis: 50%.

b. Class presentations: 20%.

c. Written questions: 15%.

d. Informal class contributions: 15%.

9. Any student in this course who has a disability that might prevent her from fully demonstrating her abilities should meet with an advisor in the Learning Enrichment Center as soon as possible to initiate disability verification and discuss.

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10 Each final report is to concentrate on the last section of the student’s thesis, showing how a particular ecclesiology has been brought to bear on a social issue. That is, the social issue is to be laid out only on the way to an explanation of how it has been addressed ecclesiologically in the thesis.

11 Pluses and minuses will be determined within these larger categories.

12 This point is qualified for daily questions (see above).

13 If the professor is not able to determine that one’s final report has been well prepared, the score that would otherwise have been awarded to one’s thesis will be reduced.
accommodations that might be necessary to ensure your full participation in the successful completion of course requirements.

10. **Professor contact information:**
APU telephone extension: (626.815.6000) 5635.
Home telephone number: 626.815.2855.
Cell telephone number: 626.755.4173.
Email address: ckeen@apu.edu.
Informal consultations: MWF by appointment.

11. **Addenda:**
   a. **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 the 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.

   b. **THEO Desired Learning Outcomes:**

   1. Undergraduate students will demonstrate an ability to give thoughtful consideration to the issues of the past and the 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.

   It is our desire that 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.

c. From APU’s “Academic Integrity” policy statement: “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 are consistent with those outlined in the academic integrity policy. Consequences for violations of academic integrity in this course are consistent with those outlined in the academic integrity policy.
STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET
THEO 496 Senior Seminar: Theology and Social Issues
Craig Keen, Professor
Spring 2008

1. Name:__________________________________________________(Please print)

2. APU box no.______________________________ Email:___________________

3. Phone no. (       )___________________________       (        )_________________
   Residence/Campus    Work

1. Home address:______________________________________________________
   Home phone: (         )_________________________________________________

☐ I am a commuter, please phone me if class is suddenly canceled.

2. Major:___________________________ Why did you choose this major?________
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________

3. Previous courses taken in theology or church history:________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________

4. Previous courses taken in bible:_________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________

5. Previous courses taken in philosophy:____________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________

9. Present standing: ___Sr.   ___Jr.   ___Soph.   ___Frosh   Grad. Date_________

10. Career plans:_________________________________________________________

11. Is there some particular question you would like me to answer during this course?__
    ____________________________________________________________________

12. Is there anything you would like me to know about you?_____________________
    ____________________________________________________________________

(Continue on the back, if you’d like.)