

SYLLABUS

CHMN 390 **Theological Foundations of Christian Ministry** Spring, 2012

Instructor: Irv Brendlinger, Ph.D.

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Appointments may be made through Religion Department administrative assistant.

Course Description: Three hours credit. A study of the relationships of theology to Christian ministry. This course explores the ways in which particular theologies affect the practice of ministry in the church. The course begins by looking at major theological assumptions, such as the nature of God and humanity, then moves to specialized theological perspectives such as theodicy, the priesthood of believers and Liberation Theology, and concludes with students exploring their unique denominational distinctives. In each arena, implications for actual ministry are examined.

Texts: Readings will be assigned from a variety of primary and secondary source materials.

Course Objectives Students will be able to:

1. articulate the major theological positions of the Christian faith.
2. explore the relationships between theological positions and actual ministry.
3. identify inconsistencies between thought and practice by critically examining implications.
4. refine and reprioritize their own theological positions.
5. explain doctrines unique to their own denominations, indicating strengths and weaknesses in terms of practical ministry.

Student Learning Activities

- active participation in class lectures and discussions
- thorough reading of assigned materials
- viewing interviews with respected Christian leaders
- research and writing of reflective papers
- participation in examinations

Course Requirements

1. reading of assignments as per course calendar.
2. writing of five papers as specified in the course calendar. Descriptions and dates due are listed in the calendar. Papers are to be typed, double spaced and properly referenced where applicable.
3. examinations. There will be a midterm and a final examination. These will be short answer and essay.

Evaluation:

Midterm examination 20%

Final examination 20%

Papers and presentations 60%

Individual point values comprising the above 60%

Phillips book review 10 points

Theodicy book review 10 points

Theodicy class pres. 10 points

Depravity paper 10 points

Free Will paper 10 points

Denominational paper 10 points

Class presentation 10 points

Borderline course grades will be influenced by the student's consistent preparedness and constructive participation.

Assignments are due at the **beginning** of class on the specified dates (in paper form, not on disk). Late work will receive half credit, if no more than two weeks late. No work will be accepted after the last day of class. No exceptions.

Exams taken at times other than scheduled in the course calendar must be approved and rescheduled in advance by the instructor.

Course Calendar with due dates for assigned reading and papers:

Week 1	Jan 10 Jan 12	Course intro, Exploring "theology" The task of theology; dogma, doctrine, theology
Week 2	Jan 17, 19	Theological Foundations ... Perspective <i>Dead Poets Society</i>
Week 3	Jan 24 Jan 26	reading: J.B. Phillips, <i>Your God is Too Small</i> ; Paper: 4 - 6 page response to Phillips. This is to be a brief summary of what he attempts to do (both directions), followed by what you perceive to be implications for ministry of the various views he presents. Phillips discussion continued
Week 4	Jan 31 Feb 2	The Sovereignty of God reading: Donald Bloesch, <i>Essentials of Evangelical Theology</i> , Vol. I, chapter III.
Week 5	Feb 7 Feb 9	The Will of God (in the face of tragedy) Faces on Faith
Week 6	Feb 14 & 16	Theodicy: Student papers, presentations & discussion Students will be assigned one of the following books. After reading it, they will write a review/response paper (4 - 6 pages) developing the major thesis of the author, the implicit theology related to human suffering and the implications this has on ministering to those in difficult circumstances. Students will share their discoveries in class presentations. Papers are due the day of presentation. <i>Allen, Diogenes, Traces of God in a Frequently Hostile World</i> <i>Komp, Diane M., Why Me?</i> <i>Kushner, Harold, When Bad Things Happen to Good People</i> <i>Lewis, C.S., The Problem of Pain</i> <i>Lewis, C.S., A Grief Observed &, Wolterstorff, Nicholas, Lament For a Son</i> <i>McGrath, Alister E., Suffering & God</i> <i>Sittser, Jerry, When God Doesn't Answer Prayer (or) A Grace Disguised</i> <i>Stackhouse, John, G. Jr., Can God Be Trusted?</i> <i>Truesdale, Al, If God is God Then Why? Letters from Oklahoma City</i> <i>Wiersbe, Warren, Why Me? When Bad Things Happen to God's People</i> <i>Wise, Robert, When There Is No Miracle</i> <i>Yancey, Philip, Where is God When It Hurts?</i> <i>Yancey, Philip, Disappointment With God</i>
Week 7	Feb 21 & 23	Theodicy presentations and discussion concluded
Week 8	Feb 28 Mar 1	Faces on Faith Midterm examination
Week 9	Mar 6 Mar 8	No class: professor at Wesleyan Theological Conference The Nature of Humankind, <i>Imago Dei</i> , reading: Gen 1 - 3 and Psalm 8
Week 10	Mar 13	Human Depravity? <i>Imago Dei?</i> reading: Bloesch, Vol. I, chapter V

- Position Paper on Human Depravity**, 4 - 6 pages. Augustine and Pelagius took different positions on this issue. Briefly describe each of their positions. Then state which position you take and support it. Finally, describe the implications your view has on ministry. In class be prepared to defend orally your view and to criticize the opposing view in terms of ministry issues. A good introduction is Justo Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, Vol 2.
- Mar 15 **reading:** Karl Barth: "No!"
Faces on Faith
- Week 11 March 20 Human Freedom: Calvin vs. Arminius
Position Paper on Predestination/Free Choice, 4 - 6 pages.
After investigating the positions of both Calvin and Arminius state briefly those positions. Then state your position and support it. Finally, describe the implications your view has on ministry. In class be prepared to defend your view orally and critique the opposing view in terms of ministry issues.
- March 22 The Priesthood of All Believers
reading: Martin Luther, "*The Freedom of a Christian*," in *Martin Luther, Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger, pp 42 - 85. Also in *Three Treatises*. No paper is required, but take notes on the reading to enhance class discussion.
- Spring Break, March 26 - April 1
- Week 12 Apr 3 & 5 Liberation Theology, *Romero*
- Week 13 Apr 10 & 12 **Student presentations (and papers) on a selected theological distinctive of their denomination.** Students are to select an issue (doctrinal or theological perspective) unique to their denomination, or of particular interest to them and explore it in terms of background, content and application/implications for ministry. (Note: This project is NOT to be an overview, or introduction to a denomination. Rather, it is an exploration of **one specific distinctive**.) The papers, 4 – 6 pages in length, will be the basis for class presentations.
- Week 14 Apr 17 & 19 Student presentations, continued
Course review
No work will be accepted after the last class period, Thurs., 19th April.

Final examination: Thursday, April 26, 8AM

Perspective: "He who knows nothing, loves nothing. He who can do nothing understands nothing. He who understands nothing is worthless. But he who understands also loves, notices, sees.... The more knowledge is inherent in a thing, the greater the love... Anyone who imagines that all fruits ripen at the same time as strawberries knows nothing about grapes." Paracelsus

"What you profess to believe has direct implications on life and ministry. Know what you believe. Know why you believe it. Be willing to examine what you believe and the implications it has on ministry."

"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth." Jesus

Note: If you have specific physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please contact the Disability Services Office early in the term so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide current documentation of your disability to Disability Services. For more information, contact Rick Muthiah, Director of Disability Services (ext. 2314 or rmuthiah@georgefox.edu), or go to ds.georgefox.edu for more information.