

**Foundations of Christian Worship**  
**North Park Theological Seminary**  
**THEO 5120-1I, Spring 2024**  
**3 credit hours**

Instructor: David Bjorlin

Phone: 773-244-5238

\*Email: [dbjorlin@northpark.edu](mailto:dbjorlin@northpark.edu)

Virtual Office Hours: By appointment

*\*preferred method: barring any unforeseen circumstances, I will respond to any emails within 48 hours.*

### **Course Description:**

An Introduction to Christian Worship examines the history, theology, and practices of Christian worship from an ecumenical perspective. The main goals of the class are to: (1) introduce the discipline of liturgical studies; (2) develop foundations and skills for worship leadership; and (3) foster theological/pastoral reflection and evaluation of the liturgical life of faith communities.

### **Course Learning Objectives:**

North Park University uses the IDEA course rating system to measure student progress towards learning objectives and to measure student satisfaction with their overall learning experience. These course evaluations are administered at the end of the term, and you will be notified by email when they are ready for you to complete. The results of these evaluations are very important to us and we use them for ongoing efforts to improve the quality of our online courses.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a theology and practice of Christian worship that is historically, liturgically, and culturally coherent;
2. observe and constructively critique one's own tradition of Christian worship on the basis of the historical, theological, cultural, and practical norms of Christian worship;
3. articulate key issues (historical, theological, ecumenical) pertaining to the sacrament of baptism and the eucharist;
4. describe the theological, historical, and practical connections between word and sacrament;
5. illustrate the connection between the worshiping life of the church and its theological beliefs and ethical actions;

6. design a worship service that takes into account historical, theological, social/pastoral, and cultural factors;
7. analyze the main components of liturgical inculturation and engage the diversity of Christian worship.

## Required Texts

1. Duck, Ruth. *Worship for the Whole People of God: Vital Worship for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2013. (either edition is fine)
2. Stookey, Laurence Hull. *Calendar: Christ's Time for the Church*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.
3. Van Opstal, Sandra Maria. *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016.
4. *Covenant Book of Worship*. Chicago: Covenant Publications, 2003.

## Assessments

### Feedback/Grading Timeline

For all assessments besides online discussions (which is discussed below), you can expect written feedback and grades within a week of the due date and/or submission.

## Grading

### Overview of Assessment Grading

Week Due	Assignment Name	Points
1	Discussion 1.1	5
2	Discussion 2.1	5
3	Discussion 3.1	5
3	Field Observation Report	21
4	Discussion 4.1	5
5	Discussion 5.1	5
5	Quiz 5.1	0
6	Discussion 6.1	5
7	Discussion 7.1	5
8	Discussion 8.1	5
8	Quiz 8.1	0
10	Discussion 10.1	5
10	Worship Inculturation and Adaptation	15
11	Discussion 11.1	5
12	Discussion 12.1	5
12	Quiz 12.1	0
13	Discussion 13.1	5
13	Sacraments and the Arts Project	17
14	Discussion 14.1	5
15	Discussion 15.1	5

16	Discussion 16.1	5
16	Quiz 16.1	0
17	Worship Design	23
	<b>TOTAL:</b>	151

<b>Assignment Type:</b>	<b>Weight:</b>
Discussions	25%
Field Observation Report	15%
Worship and Inculturation Project	20%
Sacraments and Arts Project	15%
Worship Service Design	25%
Quizzes	0%

The grading scale for the course will be as follows:

A	100-93%
A-	92.9-90%
B+	89.9-87
B	86.9-83
B-	82.9-80%
C+	79.9-77%
C	76.9-73%
C-	72.9-70%
D+	69.9-67%
D	66.9-63%
D-	62.9-60%

Each of the assignments below will be graded using a rubric (discussion rubric below and rubrics for all other assessments can be found on Canvas). The points you receive will be divided by the total points possible and then multiplied by the weighted percentage for each assessment to give your total for each assessment. For example, if you receive a 10 out of 12 points on your book review (worth 10% of your grade), your total points for that assessment would be 8.3 (10/12 x 10).

### **Late Policy**

With exceptions for sickness and emergencies, assignments turned in late will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., a B will drop to a B-) for each day over the deadline. After a week, the highest score you can receive on an assignment is 50%.

### **Quizzes (0%)**

You will take four quizzes in Weeks 5, 8, 12, and 16. These quizzes are closed book and must be completed, but they are not graded. Instead, they serve as part of student

and teacher self-assessment to determine whether knowledge is being retained and general concepts are being grasped.

### **Weekly Online Discussions (25%)**

Each week's readings and assignments will become accessible on the Sunday of the week at 12 p.m. (noon). This will ensure that all students are working on the same material for responses/group discussions. Each week will require reading from textbooks and other posted materials. Based on that reading, you will be required to write a series of 400-500-word essays that will be posted in the discussion board. You will be divided into groups of three or four depending on the size of the class to facilitate this process. Once you have posted your own materials, you are to read and comment on the postings of the other members of your group. You will make one comment and pose one question. This will, I trust, produce a conversation. I will also read every student post and comment at least every other week on your post. Each week ***your posts are due by midnight on Saturday to give your colleagues time to respond by Tuesday at midnight.*** Part of your learning, as with any class, is your interaction with one another. As can be seen below, each post and response will be worth a total of five points (3 points for the initial post and 2 points for the response). The rubric below shows what the typical three point, two point, and one point posts look like. These will be graded each week and recorded in the Canvas grade book so you can follow your progress. Your final percentage grade (total points earned/total points possible) will be calculated and worth 25% of your final grade. All other assignments are due by midnight on the day indicated on the syllabus.

**To help everyone understand the discussion grading system without penalty, you will be able to resubmit any of your first three discussion posts/comments for re-grading if you would like to improve your grade. Because Canvas's Discussion Forum does not allow for resubmissions, you will simply email me your revised essay, and I will send it back with comments and an updated grade.**

### **Response Time and Feedback on Discussions:**

I will respond to your initial discussion essays by the following Monday and your responses on the following Wednesday. While I read every essay and response, you can expect a direct written response (in addition to the rubric grade) from me on your initial essay at least every other week. However, if you would like specific feedback on any essay or wonder why you received the grade you did, please do not hesitate to reach out, and I will respond within 48 hours.

### Initial Posting Rubric

3 Points	2 Points	1 Point
-Discussion is substantive and relates to key principles of the assignment	Reference made to key principles but is not sufficiently integrated	Inadequate or no reference to key principles; no evidence that student understood the principles
-Uses relevant examples	Examples are used but not integrated effectively into response	No examples provided
Posted by the deadline	NA	Posted within one day of the deadline
Syntax is appropriate, terminology used accurately and appropriately, language is understandable and concise, organization is logical	Only 3 of these are present - Syntax is appropriate, terminology used accurately and appropriately, language is understandable and concise, organization is logical	Only 2 or fewer are present: Syntax is appropriate, terminology used accurately and appropriately, language is understandable and concise, organization is logical

### Response Posting Rubric

2 pts - Meets Standards	1 pt - Approaches Standards
Reply includes 2 statements that further or clarify the discussion such as: - relating a personal experience - summarizing the peer's post - offering further resources - making additional tie-ins to course material Etc.	Reply includes 1 statement that furthers or clarifies the discussion such as: - relating a personal experience - summarizing the peer's post - offering further resources - making additional tie-ins to course material Etc.
Reply includes 2 positive statements that are compliments or that acted as encouragement to the peer	Reply includes 1 positive statement that is a compliment or that acted as encouragement to the peer

### Sacraments and the Arts Project (20%) – Due: Apr. 17, 11:59 p.m.

For your project, you have two options:

- 1) Based on readings and class discussion on the sacraments, create an original piece of art (poem, painting, sculpture, hymn/song, photograph, dance, etc.) that expresses your theology of the sacraments more generally or your theology of baptism or the eucharist specifically.

Along with the piece, you will submit a 750-word interpretive guide that includes:

- a. why you chose the artistic medium you chose and how that assists your interpretation;
  - b. your definition of the sacraments;
  - c. your theological understanding of the sacrament(s) you chose;
  - d. and how your piece communicates this theological understanding;
  - e. and the citation of at least two sources.
- 2) Based on readings and class discussion on the sacraments, you will choose a piece of art (poem, painting, sculpture, hymn/song, photograph, dance, etc.) that deals with the sacraments specifically or sacramentality more generally and write a 1250-1500-word analysis that includes:
- a. a brief description of the author/piece;
  - b. the historic context of the piece (where? when? why was this piece made?);
  - c. the reason (spiritual, theological, aesthetic) you chose this piece;
  - d. a theological analysis that describes the sacramental vision of the piece;
  - e. how the work could be used in a worship service;
  - f. and the citation of at least three sources.

### **Field Observation Report and Worship Design (60%)**

#### **Part 1 (15%): Field Observation Report (1500 words maximum) - Due: Jan. 31, 11:59 p.m.**

Choose a Christian worshipping community with which you are quite familiar.

1. Describe the social, cultural, and economic makeup of the community.
2. Identify its ecclesiastical affiliation, noting factors from the community's history that may have influenced its worship practices.
3. Describe the worship space, using James White's descriptions if needed or helpful (see Week 3 module for White reading). Include photos if possible.
4. Identify the leaders and their "style" of leadership while presiding, reading, praying, leading singing, preaching, and celebrating sacraments/ordinances.
5. Describe the principle "non-verbal" languages you find present among the leaders and within the assembly (e.g., how is the body used by leaders and assembly in worship?)
6. Comment upon what you discern to be the "high" and "low" points of the congregation's participation (i.e., where is the congregation most actively and least actively participating in the service?)

#### **Part II (20%): Worship Inculturation and Adaptation – Due: March 20, 11:59 p.m.**

Analyze a cultural worship tradition outside of one's own tradition through secondary resource and site visits. In light of your findings on the cultural tradition, adapt the liturgy

described in your field report so that it would help incorporate this tradition into the liturgical life of your church.

There are three parts to this assignment.

1. Research secondary sources on the worship of your chosen cultural tradition to ascertain its main characteristics/distinctives. You can choose any type of culture (ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, geographic, etc.), just remember that part of the assignment is finding secondary research on the subject, so getting too specific (e.g., Chicago hipsters) will make your task very difficult. You will need to find at least four total sources (books or journal articles) for your secondary research.
2. Two site visits to worship services from the chosen cultural context (recorded services do count as long as they are *complete* services and not just the sermon).
3. Write a paper (maximum 1500 words) that gives a brief summary of secondary source research on the chosen culture, compares and contrasts this research with what was observed during site visits, and explains several adaptations that could be made to the liturgy (as described in the field observation report) to better represent the worshiping context of your chosen culture. If it is helpful, imagine that the church of your field report and the church tradition you visited/studied are in the same neighborhood. The church you visited is closing, and a large contingent of the population begins attending your church. How would you adapt your liturgy in light of the new population? (1500 word maximum)

### **Part III (25%): Worship Service Design with Commentary – Due: May 9, 11:59 p.m.**

Design a complete service of worship for the congregation used for the Field Observation Report.

1. The service will be designed to reflect the readings (Revised Common Lectionary, Year C) for one Sunday in Ordinary Time (note: you do not have to use all four of the readings! You can focus on one or two, but you should choose from the same week):
  - a. Isaiah 1:10-18; Psalm 32:1-7; 2 Thess. 1:1-4, 11-12; Luke 19:1-10
  - b. Job 19:23-27a; Palm 17:1-9; 2 Thess. 2:1-5, 13-17; Luke 20:27-38
  - c. Malachi 4:1-2a; Psalm 98; 2 Thess. 3:6-13; Luke 21:5-19
2. The service will include:
  - a. one original prayer of confession or opening prayer;
  - b. one original prayer of thanksgiving or prayer of intercession;
  - c. one or more of the readings for the day of the church year listed above;
  - d. a one-two paragraph summary of the sermon focus;
  - e. the celebration of one sacrament (communion and/or baptism)

3. Provide the complete text of the liturgy as the worship leader(s) would have it (first line titles and tunes for all hymns/songs, full wording for all other elements). It is not necessary to type out hymn/song texts, ecumenical creeds, and scripture lessons.
4. In the commentary for the order of service, be sure to discuss:
  - a. Why a particular element is placed where it is in the order (e.g., How does it relate to that which precedes and follows? How does it fit into the overall framework of the service?)
  - b. Why the content of the element is appropriate to the service (e.g., why a particular hymn or song was chosen)
  - c. Why changes were made (if any) from the form currently in use by the community.

## **Accommodations**

Your experience in this class is important to me. North Park is committed to creating inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have already established your accommodations, please share your accommodation letter with me so we can discuss how your accommodations will be implemented in this course. If you have not yet established services and have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations, please email the Disability Access Specialist or contact by phone (773-244-5737). Student Engagement facilitates the interactive process that establishes reasonable accommodations.

## **Title XI**

Students who believe they may have experienced sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking should contact the Title IX Coordinator (773) 244-5664 or [TitleIX@northpark.edu](mailto:TitleIX@northpark.edu) to learn more about reporting options, resources, and support services.

As members of the North Park faculty, we are concerned about the well-being and development of our students and are available to discuss any concerns. Faculty members are private resources meaning we are legally obligated to share information about the behavior reported above with the University's Title IX coordinator. If you are unsure whether you want your concerns disclosed to the Title IX Coordinator, we encourage you to contact Counseling Support Services at (773) 244-4897 or [counseling@northpark.edu](mailto:counseling@northpark.edu).

Please refer to North Park's [Safe Community](#) site for reporting, contact information, and further details.



## **Academic Honesty**

Academic Honesty: In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park University is committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion.

Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Plagiarism – the use of another’s work as one’s own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the internet.
2. Copying another’s answers on an examination.
3. Deliberately allowing another to copy one’s answers or work.
4. Using one’s own work from previous assignments or other class assignments.
5. Signing an attendance roster for another who is not present.
6. Use of ChatGPT or other AI composition software to impersonate individual assignments.

In the special instance of group work, the instructor will make clear their expectations with respect to individual vs. collaborative work. A violation of these expectations may be considered cheating as well.

For further information on this subject you may refer to the Academic Dishonesty section of the University’s online catalog.

## **Incomplete Grades**

If, due to extenuating circumstances (specifically, pregnancy, illness, personal and family issues, military assignment, etc.), a student anticipates they will be unable to complete course work within the allotted time, that student may request a grade of incomplete from the course instructor before the last week of class clearly stating the reason(s) for this request. Overscheduling and/or lack of self-discipline are not considered extenuating circumstances. If the request is timely and meets the criteria, student and instructor will submit the incomplete grade form and the grade for that class will be listed as “I” until the last day of the following semester. If coursework is not submitted by the last day of the following semester the listing of “I” will automatically be changed to “F.” For the full policy, see page 15 of the [Seminary Academic Catalog](#).