

**Foundations of Christian Worship – THEO 5120-01**  
**North Park Theological Seminary**  
**Fall 2024, Tuesdays 5:45-7:15**  
(3 credit hours, \*syllabus subject to minor changes)

Instructor: David Bjorlin, PhD  
Phone: 218-590-2953  
\*Email: [dbjorlin@northpark.edu](mailto:dbjorlin@northpark.edu)  
Office Hours: TBD

*\*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 Objectives**

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*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2021.
2. Stookey, Laurence Hull. *Calendar: Christ's Time for the Church*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.
3. Cone, James. *The Spirituals and the Blues*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991.
4. *Covenant Book of Worship*. Chicago: Covenant Publications, 2003. (or your denomination's book of worship).

## Assessments

### Attendance and Participation (10%)

Regular attendance and participation in class discussion is expected, especially since our synchronous time together will largely be classroom discussion. For those who register to join the class in person, you must attend all classes in person to be counted as present (i.e., no switching between online and in-person attendance). For those joining online, your camera must be turned on for the entirety of the class to be counted as present. Any absences over two will reduce your participation grade. Note: part of your participation grade will include completing. You will be asked to sign a reading log at the end of the semester detailing the approximate percentage of reading done.

### Book Review: Worship, Theology, and Ethics in Cone's *Spirituals and the Blues* (15%)

Write an essay (600-800 words) first presenting the main arguments of James Cone's *Spirituals and the Blues* and then, based on previous class readings and discussion, elaborating how spirituals might influence the theology and ethics of a church who regularly sung them in worship and devotion.

### Planning and Leading Community Worship (20%) – Due: Final Bulletin—Thursday before your chapel service; Individual Reflections—one week after chapel (following Tuesday)

You will be assigned groups to lead a time of community worship. For those registered in-person, you will lead one of the regularly planned community worship services on Tuesdays at 4:30. For those online, you will lead a half-hour online service during part of our usual Tuesday class. Your group will sign up for a specific date the second week of class. This includes all aspects of the service, including picking scriptures, developing an order of worship, creating and printing the bulletin (though you won't have to pay for printing!), recruiting any necessary volunteers (musicians, readers, etc.), and leading all parts of the liturgy. The service should be based around (at least) one scripture passage to be chosen by the group and include:

- gathering ritual
- scripture reading(s)
- 2-3 songs

- prayer of intercession/pastoral prayer/prayers of the people
- proclamation of the word (sermon, readings, testimonies)
- communion or ritual response to word
- sending ritual

You will turn in the final bulletin as a group and half of your grade will be based on the order of service as well as your execution of the service. I will not be looking for perfection but preparation!

Each individual in the group will then turn in a two-page reflection (600 words maximum) due a week after the service that will include:

- your evaluation of the planning process (how you decided on scripture/ themes; how the planning process went; what was easy/difficult to decide on; etc.)
- naming two contributions you made to planning and how they fit with the scripture/theme of the service;
- strengths of the worship service
- areas of the service you would want to improve based on reflection (praxis)

## **Field Observation Report and Worship Design (55%)**

### Part 1 (15%): Field Observation Report (1500 words maximum)

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, including the areas where the congregation worships and the leaders preside. What are its strengths and weaknesses?

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 principal "non-verbal" languages (e.g., how the body is being used) you find present among the leaders and within the assembly.
6. Comment upon what you discern to be the "high" and "low" points of the congregation's participation (i.e., when is the congregation participating the most and when is the congregation participating the least in the service?)

### Part II (20%): Worship Inculturation and Adaptation

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—at least free should be from non-required readings) 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 (20%): Worship Service Design with Commentary

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 B) for one Sunday in Ordinary Time (note: you do not have to use all four of the readings!):

- a. Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Psalm 119:1-8; Hebrews 9:11-14; Mark 12:28-34
- b. 1 Kings 17:8-16; Psalm 146; Hebrews 9:24-28; Mar, 12:38-44
- c. Daniel 12:1-3; Psalm 16; Hebrews 10:11-14, 19-25; Mark 13:1-8

2. The service will include:  
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 selected
  - d. a one 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

### **Grading Scale**

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%

### **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%.

### **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.

## **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.

## **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](#).