



Introduction to Christian Theology

Course Syllabus Draft

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Course Instructor

Lama Htoi San Lu, Ph.D.

Visiting Assistant Professor of Theology & Louisville Institute Postdoctoral Fellow

North Park Theological Seminary

hslu@northpark.edu

Course Description

An introduction to the doctrines, methods, and tasks of Christian theology, seeking active appropriation of Christian faith in the context of the church and in engagement with the world (from Catalog).

Additional Description: (added by Lama)

This course introduces the discipline of Christian *theology* (meaning “reflection of Christian faith”), specifically attending to social justice and “planetary” liberation. This approach asks: what is theological about social issues such as racism, sexism, economic and ecological exploitations? In other words, what does *theology* have to do with social justice and liberation? Guided by these questions, we will explore the methods, sources, and major doctrines of Christian theology by carefully reading diverse theological texts from the early Church to contemporary theologians. It also focuses on cultivating and nurturing the skill of embodied, creative, and faithful storytelling to generate constructive and contextual thinking that can enrich students’ intercultural understanding and awareness.

Course Objectives

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

- Identify and describe basic Christian doctrines, and significant theologians, in terms of their historical contexts and/or their contributions to the Christian theological tradition (KNOWLEDGE).
- Explain important theological themes, concepts and vocabulary, based on lectures and reading materials (COMPREHENSION).
- Connect the personal and pastoral relevance of Christian doctrine to contemporary life in various social contexts (ANALYSIS)



- In light of the significance of civil and collegial discourse, employ charity in dialogue with those who hold differing theological views from your own (APPLICATION)
- Develop the skill of academic writing theology by engaging, evaluating, and integrating various theological texts on a theme (SYNTHESIS, EVALUATION).

This course contributes toward the following MACS, MACM, M.Div., & MATS learning outcomes:

- Interpret the Christian historical and theological tradition for appropriation in the life and mission of the Church.
- Demonstrate a theologically grounded ministerial identity and growing capacity to integrate it with the ministry of Christian formation.
- Articulate a theology of ministry that informs and finds expression in one's vocation, whether lay or ordained.
- Demonstrate vision and growing capacity to excel in leadership for God's mission.
- Engage diversity and exhibit growth towards inter-cultural competence for ministry reflective of God's global redemptive work.
- Communicate effectively through spoken and written media, engaging in critical, respectful dialogue with others.

Required Texts

- Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 6th edition (Wiley Blackwell, 2017)
- Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Beacon Press, 1996)
- William C. Placher, *Essentials of Christian Theology* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2003) (an anthology written by theologians from diverse denominations with both ecumenical and evangelical approaches)
- Weekly readings from a diversity of viewpoints provided on Canvas

Recommended Texts

- Kwok Pui-Lan, ed., *Hope Abundant: Third World and Indigenous Women's Theology* (Orbis Books, 2010)
- Serene Jones and Paul Lakeland. *Constructive Theology: A Contemporary Approach to Classical Themes* (Fortress Press, 2005)



Course Requirements and Assignments

1. Class attendance & Active participation (10%)

2. Weekly Reading Reflection Essay (no more than 500 words) (20 %)

Each student submits/posts a critical reflection essay on the readings assigned twenty-four hours in advance of the meeting time on the course website. In addition to your reading reflection essay, you will respond to two of your classmates' posts. Your reading reflection essay (no more than one-page single spaced) will be formatted accordingly:

- State the major argument(s) or thesis/purpose of the readings.
- Three Insights or new learnings from the readings that inform your understanding of Christian theology.
- Two Questions: your questions should be fully developed, indicating how they have emerged from the text.
- One Awareness that informs your practice of ministry.

3. A Short Autobiography (10%)

In this short essay (2-4 pages/500-1000 words in length), you will critically reflect on the ways your body is shaped by race, ethnicity, gender, class, nationality, and Christian faith (religious belief) and practices, and other aspects of identity. You may also include how race, ethnicity, gender, class, etc. influences your Christian faith. The aim of the assignment is to highlight the importance of self-reflexivity and one's social location and storytelling as a method of theology.

4. Theological Position Paper I & II (40%--20% each)

You will write two position papers. Each paper (1,200-1,500 words in length) will engage with a theme based on your interests. For each paper, you will select two theologians' positions on your selected theme. You will write a synthetic, integrative, and carefully argumentative essay to illustrate your theological position. Your position papers are not sermons or confessional statements but rather demonstrate your articulation and reflection of the texts by treating each



theologian's position critically and compassionately. The aim of the assignment is to foster dialogical, critical and constructive engagement with respect and integrity.

5. Final Integrative Project & Presentation (20 %)

In this assignment, you will do a creative piece integrating all the course materials including your weekly reflection essays and theological position papers. Your projects could be a sermon, poem, song, art form, short story, podcast, video presentation, a case study, a glossary (in your own words). Along with your creative piece, you will provide a well written interpretation of your work. The purpose of the assignment is to show how you would translate your theological understanding into your own pastoral/ministerial context and beyond.

Course Themes

Theme 1: Revelation

Scripture, Tradition, Reason, & Experience

Theme 2: God

*Does God exist? Can God suffer? What Do We Mean by **God**?*

Theme 3: Human Beings

What are human beings? What's wrong with us?

Theme 4: Jesus Christ

Who Do You Say that I AM?

Theme 5: Spirit

Discerning the Spirit

Theme 6: Eschatology & Ethics

Politics of Hope

Theme 7: Church

Missio Dei "God's Mission" and the Mission of the Church