



SCHOOL FOR MINISTRY
The Episcopal Diocese of San Diego

CHURCH & WITNESS IV

Contemporary Theology

SYLLABUS
Spring Semester 2022

INSTRUCTOR

Orlando Espin

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Zoom Info:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88175383090?pwd=S1YwRktzbjdUN080K3lyalhLdHk4QT09>

Meeting ID: 881 7538 3090

Passcode: 721267

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will cover mainstream Christian theology from 1945 (the end of World War II) through today. It will discuss several developments and streams in contemporary theology, by placing them in their respective cultural, societal and historical birthing contexts. Contemporary theology is no longer coextensive with the so-called "First World." We will underline that theology is never "finished;" rather, it is an ongoing search for understanding, arising from its many diverse (and diversifying) cultural, societal and historical contexts, and from the many and varied social issues and crises that each Christian generation must confront in order to make sense of their faith, their world(s) and their mission to transform the latter.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Summaries of these books are to be completed and handed in writing, on the dates indicated in the curriculum. Also note that there are two times when students may choose one or another book to summarize. Summaries are exactly that: summaries, and not reviews or evaluations. At least three pages, double spaced. Include your name! Send via email.

Althaus-Reid, M. *Indecent Theology* (Routledge, 2001).
Clifford, A. *Introducing Feminist Theology* (Orbis Books, 2013).
Cone, J. *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Orbis Books, 2013).
Espín, O. *Idol and Grace* (Orbis Books, 2014).
Gutiérrez, G. *A Theology of Liberation* (Orbis Books, 1988).
Moltmann, J. *A Theology of Hope* (Fortress Press, 1993).
Orobator, A.E. *Theology Brewed in an African Pot* (Orbis Books, 2008).
Phan P. *Asian Christianities* (Orbis Books, 2018).

Final assignment consists of a paper wherein students present and summarize their views/learnings from the course. Between five and ten pages, double spaced. Pages numbered. Include your name! Send via email.

SYLLABUS

WEEK I - January 22. (In person)

1. Introduction.
2. Overview of course. Expectations. Assignments.
3. "Theology":
 - a. Anselm of Canterbury's definition: "Faith in search of understanding."
 - b. A more accurate definition, and why it is more accurate:

"Faith of the People (i.e., the 'Church') in search of understanding for the transformation of the world."
 - c. Theology is (and can only be) a human endeavor. Hence, it is:
 - i. limited, time-bound, created, fallible.
 - ii. inescapably contextual.
 - iii. reflective of the theologians' contexts, limitations, etc.

- iv. Humans (and theologians are only human) search, understand, believe, transform as humans who only exist contextualized in the power asymmetries of cultures, societies, genders and sexual orientations, races, classes, ethnicities, and in time.
- v. On all of the above depend our understandings of the "Faith of the People (i.e., the 'Church') in search of understanding for the transformation of the world:"
 - whose faith,
 - whose Tradition, and who traditions,
 - who is the Church,
 - whose search,
 - whose understanding,
 - for whose transformation,
 - of whose world.

WEEK II - January 29.

1. World War II ends:

- a. destruction followed by resurgence.
- b. the resurgence divides the world, again:

- i. Communist vs. Capitalist.
- ii. "First," "Second" and "Third" Worlds:

- "Developed"
- "Communist"
- "Underdeveloped"

c. But the **labels often hide** more than they convey:

i. injustices, inequalities, power asymmetries:

- based on race, gender and sexual orientations, possessions, etc.:
- in the powerful nations, who can take others' resources.

- ii. "development" made equal to "having more power."
- iii. "development" made equal to having access to resources of others.

2. Old colonialism begins to die with increasing independence of old and new nations.
 3. But a "new colonialism" (neo-colonialism) arises:
 - a. Who has access to the world's resources and why.
 - b. Who/What is presented as "normative." Who has access to such "presentation."
 4. "The Church" keeps functioning as an institution led by the clergy (even when doctrinally it claims otherwise):
 - a. Neo-colonialism embraces missionary expansion.
 - b. Eurocentrism becomes an ecclesiastical norm and assumption.
 5. Increasing impact on theology of historical, biblical and patristic studies.
- = **Moltmann review due.**

WEEK III - February 5.

1. The 1960s-1990s:
 - a. The rise of the "minoritized" ("minorities" are very often "majorities"):
 - i. The rise of women and feminism. The challenge to patriarchy.
 - ii. The rise of LGBTQ people. The challenge to heteronormativity.
 - iii. The rise of non-white communities. The challenge to white privilege.
 - b. The rise of challenges to the Eurocentric assumptions regarding...
 - i. democracy and participation,
 - ii. normativity and diversity,
 - iii. development and poverty,
 - iv. justice and injustice,
 - v. identity and power symmetries.
2. The 2000s:
 - a. Has the institutional assumptions of "Church" really declined and, in its place, has the doctrinal reality of "Church" actually increased as the operational assumption and thrust?

- b. How have society's power asymmetries (based on race, class, ethnicity, gender, etc.) demonstrably favored or demonstrably prevented (or made difficult) our being one People (vs. being a collection of asymmetrically "ranked" groups within the diocesan Church)?

WEEK IV - February 12.

+ Latin American theologies.

- a. Theologies of liberation.
- b. Theology in dialogue with Marxism (especially Gramsci's).
- c. Theology and "basic communities."
- d. The "founding" roles of G. Gutiérrez, L. Boff, J. Sobrino, and J.L. Segundo.

= **Gutiérrez review due.**

WEEK V - February 19.

1. African theologies.

- a. Crucial role of culture. Inculturation. Critique of Eurocentrism.
- b. Theologies of culture and self-affirmation.
- c. Legacies of white, European colonial Christianity.

2. Asian theologies.

- a. Crucial role of culture and of cultural diversity.
- b. Inculturation and critique of Eurocentrism.

3. Aboriginal/First Peoples theologies.

- a. Forgotten presence, contributions, victimizations endured.
- b. Inculturation and critique of Eurocentrism.

= **Phan OR Orobator review due.**

WEEK VI - March 5.

1. Feminist theologies.
 - a. Gender equality, full participation and justice.
 - b. Challenge to patriarchal socio-cultural power asymmetries and assumptions.
 - c. Yet... still often blind to race and ethnicity.
 - d. No critique of Eurocentrism.

2. LGBTQ theologies.
 - a. Challenge to heteronormative assumptions and consequent power asymmetries.
 - b. Affirmation of LGBTQ as "graced" and not "intrinsically evil."
 - c. Affirmation of marriage equality.
 - d. Yet... still often blind to race and ethnicity.
 - e. No critique of Eurocentrism.

= Clifford OR Althaus-Reid review due.

WEEK VII - March 12.

1. Black theologies.
 - a. Black theologies.
 - b. Womanist theologies.
 - c. Slavery's lasting impact. White culture's ("convenient") forgetfulness.
 - d. Race as (historical, human) lens to understand the configuration, dynamics, marginalization, and power asymmetries of/in U.S. society.
 - e. Roles of family and older women.

2. Asian American theologies.
 - a. Diversity of cultural and historical origins.
 - b. Culture as historical lens to understand power asymmetries & marginalization.
 - c. Roles of extended family.

= Cone review due.

WEEK VIII - March 19.

1. Native American theologies.
 - a. Forgotten presence, contributions, victimizations endured.
 - b. Inculturation and critique of Eurocentrism.
 - c. Roles of family.

2. Latinoax theologies.
 - a. Latinoax theologies.
 - b. The "founding" roles of V. Elizondo, J. González, A. M. Isasi-Díaz.
 - c. Mujerista theology, LGBTQ theology, Black Latinoax theology.
 - d. Diversity of cultural and historical origins.
 - e. Immigration and marginalization.
 - f. Defining roles of cultures vis-à-vis society.
 - g. Roles of the extended family and of older women.

= Espín review due.

WEEK IX - March 26.

1. "The faith of the people in search of understanding for the transformation of the world."

2. Exercise:
 - a. Which are the elements/components/processes for a theology truly born in and for the transformation of San Diego, Imperial, Riverside and Yuma counties?
 - b. Why these elements/components/processes?

WEEK X - April 2.

1. Exercise:
 - a. Were we to create a theology that reflected the lived reality of the **peoples** of San Diego, Imperial, Riverside and Yuma counties:
 - i. What would that theology look like?
 - ii. What topics would it underline and develop?
 - iii. And why, on both of the above?

2. What pastoral impact would this theology have?

- a. In counseling,
- b. In preaching,
- c. In religious education (Sunday school, adult formation, etc.),
- d. In organizing and promoting pastoral programs,
- e. Which specific pastoral programs, to transform our local world.

WEEK XI - April 9.

1. Continue discussing last week's question 2.
2. Questions/discussions on the entire course or any part thereof.

WEEK XII - April 23. (In person.)

1. Conclusion.
2. **Final assignment due.**