

# THEO/ETHI 710: Theology and Emotions

Spring 2015

Andover Newton Theological School

**BE SURE TO READ THROUGH THIS ENTIRE SYLLABUS, INCLUDING ALL ASSIGNMENTS. THERE IS AN ASSIGNMENT DUE FOR THE FIRST CLASS SESSION WHICH, IF NOT COMPLETED, WILL RESULT IN THE STUDENT BEING DROPPED FROM THE CLASS.**

Instructor: Thandeka

Office: Worcester 209

Tel.:

e-mail: thandeka@ants.edu

Course Meeting Time: Thursday, 2:00 – 4:50 p.m.

## Course Description

This seminar uses movies, music, theatre, liturgical theory, affective neuroscientific research and affective theological studies to retrieve the lost emotional foundation of liberal faith. Students will use insights gained from this multidisciplinary work to create an in-class presentation of a new liturgical strategy that can uplift the heart of liberal faith in Christian and/or Unitarian Universalist Sunday services.

**\*\*ALL TEXTS (including Schoology Readings) MUST BE BROUGHT TO CLASS ON THE ASSIGNED DATE OF THE TEXT READING.\*\*** Students with laptops may bring them to class and read online if that is their preference.

## Required Texts

### I. Books:

Thomas Merton. *The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation*. New York: HarperOne, 2003 [ISBN 978—0-06-059362-9 paperback]

Aidan Kavanagh. *On Liturgical Theology*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992 [0-8146-6067-3]

Jerzy Grotowski. *Towards a Poor Theatre*. New York: Routledge, 2002  
[0-87830-155-0]

Friedrich Schleiermacher. *The Christian Faith*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999  
[0-567-08709-3]

Sarah B. Drummond. *Holy Clarity: The Practice of Planning and Evaluation*. Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 2009 [ISBN 978-1-56699-387-6]

Jaak Panksepp and Lucy Biven. *The Archaeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotions*, pp. 1 – 46; 389-500. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012 [ISBN 978-0-393-70531-7]

## **II. Schoology Readings:**

Paul Vitello. "Bad Times Draw Bigger Crowds to Churches," December 14, 2008, *The New York Times*

Michael S. Piazza and Cameron B. Trimble. "Expectant with Possibilities," *Liberating Hope: Daring to Renew the Mainline Church*, pp. 14-15. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2011 [ISBN 978-0-8298-1886-4 alk. paper]

Heather Hahn. "More Vital Congregations," *Interpreter: The People of the United Methodist Church*, p. 13. March/April 2011

"11 Facts about Congregational Vitality in UCC Congregations."

[<http://www.ucc.org/evangelism/fact/>]

Summary of "Introduction" to *American Congregations at the Beginning of the 21st Century: A Report from the National Congregations Study*  
[[http://www.soc.duke.edu/natcong/Docs/NCSII\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.soc.duke.edu/natcong/Docs/NCSII_report_final.pdf)]

Jaak Panksepp. "The emotional antecedents to the evolution of music and language," *Musicae Scientiae* [full text, not just abstract]

D. W. Winnicott. "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena." *Playing and Reality*, pp. 1 -14. London and New York: Tavistock/Routledge, 1971

D. W. Winnicott. "Fear of Breakdown." *Psycho-Analytic Explorations*, pp. 87-95. Eds. by Clare Winnicott, Ray Shepherd, Madeleine Davis. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989

Thandeka. "Future Designs for American Liberal Theology." *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 30:1, January 2009

## **III. Celluloid and Video Texts:**

*Lars and the Real Girl*. Starring Ryan Gosling, Emily Mortimer, Paul Schneider and R.D. Reid (2008)

Alive Inside. YouTube.

Henry: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FWn4JB2YLU>

## **Course Requirements & Grading**

To pass this course, students must participate in class discussions, read all written assigned texts, view the assigned movie and YouTube Video, and complete all written assignments on time and in a satisfactory manner. **Students with disabilities who wish reasonable accommodations must first meet with the Director of Student Life.**

### 40% of Grade:

Students must write nine discussion notes, due, respectively, at the beginning of each class session. Bring 20 copies for distribution.

At the end of the term, students must write a Grade Evaluation Essay (500-word maximum), which must be turned in at the final class session on April 30, 2015. This essay consists of an assessment and evaluation by students of their own work (excluding the term paper) for the course. This assessment process includes a critical review of their (1) discussion notes and (2) contributions to class discussions throughout the course. Students must evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their own work and determine which areas need improvement and which areas demonstrate strong development. Based on this assessment and evaluative process, the student then determines the appropriate grade for all of the reviewed course work (excluding the term paper) done for the course. The grades that the students give themselves will constitute 40% of their total grade for the course. As preparation for this grading process, students must write down a few notes to themselves evaluating their work for and in each class session. Time will be provided at the end of each class session for this purpose. These notes should be used at the end of the term to help students reflect upon, evaluate, and finally grade their work throughout the course. This aspect of the grading system for the course is designed to encourage students to engage in a disciplined, self-reflective process, one that can strengthen their ability to critique and effectuate positive change in their own vocational development.

**As part of this grading process, students must meet with the instructor for a mid-term review.**

### Instructions for this mid-term review:

Divide your mid-term evaluation essay (350-word maximum length) into three sections.

Section One: Evaluate your class work based on the criteria you established to assess your progress in this course.

Section Two: Select and evaluate an outstanding discussion note written by one of your classmates. Compare and contrast it with the strengths and weaknesses of your own strongest discussion note. Identify insights gained by means of this process and indicate ways in which you can improve your future discussion notes.

Section Three: Evaluate your participation in class discussions. Are you fully satisfied with your participation or are there areas you would like to improve?

The mid-term meeting with the professor will begin with a review of your essay. Bring two copies of your essay with you to this meeting.

60% of Grade:

The remaining 60% of the grade for this course is based on the student's term paper (maximum length 5000 words) and will be evaluated by the professor. The term paper is due on Monday, April 13, 2015.

## TERM PAPER INSTRUCTIONS

Building upon texts and workshop experiences from this course, construct your own theology of inner experience and show how inner experience is achieved as a spiritual or religious liturgical practice. Your theology should include answers to the following questions: How do human beings gain access to inner experience as a spiritual or religious practice? How do human beings retrieve the inner experiences they have lost?

To determine the adequacy of your theology of inner experience, you must use a case study of an experience taken from your own life or from your vocational work as leader of a Sunday service or as a chaplain or spiritual director. Describe the experience, program or strategy and its major results. Use your theology of inner experience and Sarah Drummond's book *Holy Clarity* to (1) evaluate the successes and failures of your case study, and (2) assess the adequacy of your theology when used to explain the results of your case study

Texts from this course (including neuroscientific texts) must be used to help you develop and explain your theology of inner experience. You must refute or qualify some of the major claims or assumptions made by Merton, Schleiermacher, Kavanagh, Grotowski, Panksepp, and/or Thandeka about what it means to have inner religious experiences that exceed one's own conceptual reach. You can also draw on texts not used in this course.

### Term Paper Structure:

Maximum word limit: 5000 words.

Your paper must have five sections. (1) Introduction; (2) your case study; (3) your theology of inner experience; (4) the analysis of your case study using your theology of inner experience as well as insights from *Holy Clarity*; (5) conclusions.

1. Introduction: A brief paragraph describing insights you have gained from work on this term paper project. How is your theology of inner experience applicable to your vocational calling?
2. Case study: A detailed description of an important inner experience (1) in your own life or (2) in a church program or liturgical strategy you created or (2) as a result of your work with someone in a pastoral care or spiritual counseling setting.
3. Delineate your theology of inner experience. Demonstrate how various writers have helped you develop and articulate your theology of inner experience. You must use texts from this course to explain your theology. You can also use texts not discussed or assigned in this course to help you develop your theology of inner experience. When citing texts, paraphrase the authors' words, using direct quotations only when absolutely necessary (and if you use direct quotations, you must restate the authors' arguments using your own words). All citations must be documented using footnotes or endnotes according to the Chicago Manual of Style format.

In this section, define key terms. These definitions must include a delineation of your core assumptions about the general nature and structure of human experience (i.e., your doctrine of human nature). What are your basic presuppositions about religious, spiritual, and/or mystical experiences? How do these assumptions and basic premises frame and inform your assessment of human thoughts, sentiments, and actions that enable persons to have ennobling inner experiences? Do not assume that your reader shares your religious presuppositions. Identify all major presuppositions, state them clearly, and explain them.

4. The application of your theology of inner experience to your case study. Use your theology to think through the problems posed in your case study. Does your theology help you think through your original experience or your vocational project in new ways? **Use Sarah Drummond's four evaluation strategies in *Holy Clarity* (summarized on pages 69-71) to help you evaluate your case study.** Use your case study to evaluate and improve the adequacy of your theology of inner experience. Explain how you will use your theology of inner experience as a minister, chaplain, spiritual director and/or religious scholar, when helping persons who have turned to you for spiritual insight and guidance.
5. Conclusions and further personal reflections: Briefly, offer reflections on ways this project can advance your vocational calling.

## Term Paper Evaluation:

Your paper will be assessed for internal coherence and integrity.

- How precisely are your primary terms defined and your basic presuppositions stated?
- Are there internal contradictions in your theology that you have not addressed?
- How well do you support your theology of inner experience by using and/or refuting theories and theologies that differ from your own standpoint?
- How carefully do you pinpoint aspects of theories/theologies developed in texts read for this course that complement or challenge your own standpoint?

The 5000-word limit is absolute. Penalty is one letter grade for exceeding the limit. For each 250 words exceeding the limit, the grade will be lowered another full letter grade.

**Documentation:** Failure to document written work properly (omission of page numbers from full bibliographical citations; failure to use quotation marks for direct quotes; direct paraphrase of sources or splicing together several sources; etc.) will be considered plagiarism and is a very serious matter. Egregious cases will be referred to the Academic Dean for disciplinary action.

Students may not submit the same paper, even in-part, for two different assignments without explicit permission from both instructors. Cases where students fail to honor this expectation may be subject to disciplinary action; reusing one's own work without acknowledgement is a form of plagiarism.

## DISCUSSION NOTE INSTRUCTIONS

Each discussion note must contain two parts. **Part One** (250-word maximum) always entails an analysis of an assigned text and must include parenthetical citations identifying the page number for each major claim. In sum, document your claims about the text by using citations from the text itself as evidence to support your summary of the claim. Citations should include the author's last name, page number, and when appropriate the title of the work (if more than one work by the author is used). Example: (Winnicott, "Fear of Breakdown," 88). Words in the reference citations do not count toward the word-count limit. **Part Two** (100-word maximum) gives you the opportunity to express your own personal concerns, insights, opinions and perspectives on the text. **Papers that exceed the maximum word limit cannot be read in class and will be given the grade of F.**

## Course Outline

Session I: Thursday, January 29, 2015

Topic: Affect Theology and Inner Experience

**Required Texts: (Read the following texts, watch the movie and write the discussion note BEFORE this first class session. FAILURE TO DO SO WILL RESULT IN THE STUDENT BEING DROPPED FROM THE CLASS.)**

Written Texts:

- Thandeka, "Future Designs for American Liberal Theology"
- Thomas Merton. *The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation* (Introduction, Chapters One through Three, pp. vii – 34)
- Paul Vitello. "Bad Times Draw Bigger Crowds to Churches," December 14, 2008, The New York Times
- Michael S. Piazza and Cameron B. Trimble. "Expectant with Possibilities,"
- *Liberating Hope: Daring to Renew the Mainline Church*, pp. 14-15. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2011 [ISBN 978-0-8298-1886-4 alk. paper]
- Heather Hahn. "More Vital Congregations," *Interpreter: The People of the United Methodist Church*, p. 13. March/April 2011
- "11 Facts about Congregational Vitality in UCC Congregations." [<http://www.ucc.org/evangelism/fact/>]
- Summary of "Introduction" to *American Congregations at the Beginning of the 21st Century: A Report from the National Congregations Study* [[http://www.soc.duke.edu/natcong/Docs/NCSII\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.soc.duke.edu/natcong/Docs/NCSII_report_final.pdf)]

Discussion Note Assignment:

Write a Discussion Note\* for class distribution (**bring 20 copies of your paper to class**) that answers the following question in **Part One** of this two-part assignment: **What, according to Merton, is the inner self? Part Two: Personal commentary**

\* Each discussion note must contain two parts. **Part One (250-word maximum)** always entails an analysis of an assigned text and must include parenthetical citations identifying the page number for each major claim. In sum, document your claims about the text by using citations from the text itself as evidence to support your summary of the claim. **Part Two (100-words maximum length)** expresses your personal comments,

insights, and queries related to your work in Part One. Each subsequent discussion note, as explained above, must contain two parts.

### **Session II: Thursday, February 5, 2015**

Topic: Mysticism and inner experience

Required Text:

Written:

- Thomas Merton. *The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation* (Chapters Four through Thirteen, pp. 35 – 122)

Discussion Note Topic:

Part One (250-word maximum): According to Merton, what is the difference between lower and higher mystical experiences?

Part Two (100-word maximum): Personal comments and thoughts.

### **Session III: Thursday, February 12, 2015**

Topic: Inner Experience reconsidered neuroscientifically

Required Texts:

- D. W. Winnicott. "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena" (pp. 1 - 14). *Playing and Reality*.
- D. W. Winnicott. "Fear of Breakdown" (pp. 87-95). *Psycho-Analytic Explorations*.
- Jaak Panksepp and Lucy Biven. *The Archaeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotions* (Chapter 1, pp. 1-46; Chapters 11-13, pp. 389 – 500).

Discussion Note:

Part One: Delineate Panksepp's neurobiology of the soul

Part Two: Personal commentary.

### **Session IV: Thursday, February 19, 2015**

Topic: The mysticism of inner experience reconsidered neuroscientifically

Written Text:

- Jaak Panksepp, "The emotional antecedents to the evolution of music and language"



YouTube:

- Alive Inside. YouTube.  
Henry: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FWn4JB2YLU>

Discussion Note Topic:

Part One: Why does Jaak Panksepp believe that music is the language of emotions?

Part Two: Personal comments and thoughts.

**Session V: Thursday, February 26, 2015**

Topic: Liturgical theology and inner experience

Required Text:

- Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (Chapter One: "Introduction," pp. 3 – 22); Chapter Five "Liturgical Theology," pp. 73-95); Chapter 6 "Liturgy of God or About God," pp. 96 - 121

Discussion Note:

Part One: According to Kavanagh, what is the difference between primary and secondary theology?

Part Two: Personal commentary

**Session VI: Thursday, March 5, 2015**

Topic: "Poor theatre" and inner experience

Written Text:

- Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, pp. 9-59, 117-125

Discussion Note:

Part One: According to Grotowski, how do holy, chaotic outbursts enable others to reach self-knowledge?

Part Two: Personal Commentary

**Sessions VII - IX Thursday, March 12, 19, 26 2015**

Topic: How Schleiermacher found and lost inner experience

**Written Texts:**

- Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (pp. v. – 31)

Three Discussion Notes.

**NO CLASS SESSIONS THURSDAY APRIL 2 AND APRIL 9, 2015**

**Sessions X - XII: April 16, 23, 30 – Final Papers/Projects Analyzed and Critiqued by Student Respondents**