

*Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but the one who is herself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. The students become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow.*  
(Paulo Freire)<sup>1</sup>

## **I. Course Description**

*This course focuses on the development of theological thinking and imagination for today's world. It facilitates the integration of theology and the commitment to sustainable justice via exploring fundamental concepts of theology, e.g., God, Creation, Sin and Evil, Jesus Christ, and the Kingdom of God through engagement with science and social sciences, such as evolutionary anthropology. Learners will deliberate on questions such as, 'what does theology gain by entering in dialog with scientific advances in evolutionary anthropology?' 'What are the theological sources, criteria, and tasks?' Students are encouraged to engage in creative and critical theological reflections to cultivate and refine their own values and commitments as theologians. This course is organized according to the principles guiding inquiry-based methods of learning combined with engaged pedagogy and constructive theology. Class activities, assignments and group dynamics will require from each participant to be opened to learn and practice compassionate communication in order to generate theological insight. May compassionate communication and action be a basis for emerging theologies, practices and teachings that promote a life-giving human-Earth-divine relationship.*

*Please note that this course is an introduction to the study of theology. It cannot cover all the main doctrines within Christian systematic theology. Therefore, students who are in the ordination track are strongly advised to take other theological courses pertaining to their own faith traditions in their 2nd and 3rd semester to better prepare for their ordination interviews.*

## **II. Course Objectives**

*At the end of this course, learners should be able, on a beginning level, to:*

- 1. Discuss the interplay of academic theology, sustainable justice and practice.*
- 2. Demonstrate openness to engage in critical, interreligious and creative theological reflections.*
- 3. Demonstrate theological insight into the relationship between theology and ecology via critical engagement with historical and contemporary sources of the Christian tradition.*
- 4. Demonstrate the ability to place in dialogue theological reflections and science, raising creative and life-giving theological questions.*
- 5. Develop appreciation for the study of theology (Theology is Cool!).*

## **IV. Textbooks**

### **Required Texts**

- 1. Jones, Serene, and Paul Lakeland, editors. *Constructive Theology: A Contemporary Approach to Classic Themes*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005.*
- 2. Dickinson, T. Wilson. *The Green Good News: Christ's Path to Sustainable and Joyful Life*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019.*

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<sup>1</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 1981, 67.

### **Other Required Readings**

See all PDFs uploaded at Populi under “Syllabus” tab.

### **Optional Texts**

1. Sölle, Dorothee. *Thinking About God: An Introduction to Theology*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2016.
2. Kennedy, Philip. *A Modern Introduction to Theology: New Questions for Old Beliefs (Introductions to Religion)*. New York, NY: I. B. Tauris, 2006.
3. Valentín, Benjamín, editor. *In Our Own Voices: Latino/a Renditions of Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010.

### **V. Course Requirements and Assessment of Student Learning**

Each student will be required to do the following:

- a. Student Self-Assessment: 10%
- b. Participation Grade: 30%
- c. Mid-Term Evaluation 30% (Quiz and Critical Reflection Paper)
  1. Knowledge Test 10% due on March 14th at 11:59pm.
  2. Critical Reflection Paper (1500-word)
- d. Final Project 30%: “Theological and Moral Foundations for Sustainability Initiatives”

This article with accessible link below provides several links on how to approach any kind of written assignment and summaries on how to develop a research question, argument and thesis. Students are strongly encouraged to check it out.

“How to Approach Any Assignment”

<https://www.trentu.ca/academicskills/how-guides/how-write-university/how-approach-any-assignment>

### **Hybrid Course**

CT549 Introduction to Theology is a hybrid course.

### **VI. Course Schedule and Format**

This schedule provides the general timing of topics, readings and assignment due dates.

### **The Theological Tasks**

#### **Week 1 (Feb 1<sup>st</sup>): What is Theology and the Theological Tasks?**

#### ***Preparatory work for class discussion***

#### **Required Readings:**

1. Plantinga, Richard J. et al. “What is Theology?” In *An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 3-26. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010. [PDF]
2. Victor Anderson et al., “Introduction,” in *Constructive Theology*, eds. Serene Jones, and Paul Lakeland (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 1-18.

**Pre-Discussion (Populi) Assignment:**

1. Introduce yourself
2. Brave spaces

**Class Discussion:**

1. What is theology and the theological task?
2. Are you a theologian?
3. Reflect if theology should be informed by scientific advances.

**Week 2 (August 31<sup>st</sup>)**

**Lesson 2: The Doctrine of God.**

*Preparatory work for class discussion*

**Required Readings:**

1. Ellen T. Armour et al., "God," in *Constructive Theology*, eds. Serene Jones, and Paul Lakeland (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 19-76.

**Optional Reading:**

1. Kennedy, *A Modern Introduction to Theology*, 3-19. [PDF]

**Due:** Reading Comments to be uploaded at Populi every Sunday at the latest by 11:59pm. Peer-Feedback to be offered at the latest by Mondays at 11:59pm, under the Discussion tab linked to weekly "Lessons." See instructions and assessment rubric for weekly preparatory work (both) in the file titled "CT549-Participation Grade [2]," in the folder "Course Work Assignments Guidelines and Assessment Rubrics."

**Question:**

1. Based in your own experience before coming to seminary, what would you say are the core beliefs of the Christian Tradition?
2. Based on what you read this week, should Christianity modify its doctrines and practices in light of daily experiences and scientific knowledge generated in modern times?
3. Based on Dorothee Sölle's chapters what would you say your theological framework is?
4. How does your theological framework influence on the responses that you gave to the two previous questions?

**Week 3 (September 7<sup>th</sup>)**

**Lesson 3: The Doctrine of God.**

*Preparatory work for class discussion*

**Required Readings:**

1. Deane-Drummond, Celia. "God as Wisdom." In *Wonder and Wisdom: Conversations in Science, Spirituality and Religion*, 95-112. Philadelphia, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2006. [PDF]
2. Haught, John F. "God and Evolution." In *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, edited by Philip Clayton and Zachary Simpson, 697-711. New York, NY: Oxford Press, 2006. [PDF]

3. Brierley, Michael W. "The Potential for Panentheism for Dialogue Between Science and Religion." In *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, edited by Philip Clayton and Zachary Simpson, 632-651. New York, NY: Oxford Press, 2006. [PDF]

**Optional Reading:**

1. Sölle, *Thinking About God*, 171-195.

**Week 4 (September 14<sup>th</sup>)**

**Lesson 4: Theological Anthropology.**

*Preparatory work for class discussion*

**Required Readings:**

1. M. Shawn Copeland et al., "Human Being," in *Constructive Theology*, eds. Serene Jones, and Paul Lakeland (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 77-116.

**Optional Reading:**

Gozález, Michelle A. "Who We Are: A Latino/a Constructive Anthropology." In *In Our Own Voices: Latino/a Renditions of Theology*, edited by Benjamín Valentín, 64-84. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010. [PDF]

**Week 5 (September 21<sup>st</sup>)**

**Lesson 5: Theological Anthropology.**

*Preparatory work for class discussion*

**Required Readings:**

1. Deane-Drummond, Celia, and Agustín Fuentes. "Introduction: Dialogues in Theology and Evolutionary Anthropology." In *Theology and Evolutionary Anthropology: Dialogues in Wisdom, Humility, and Grace*, edited by Celia Deane-Drummond and Agustín Fuentes, 1-10. Forthcoming: Routledge, 2021.

2. Cunningham, David S. "The Way of All Flesh: Rethinking the *Imago Dei*." In *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans, and Other Animals*, edited by Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough, 100-117. Longdon: SCM Press, 2009.

3. Deane-Drummond, Celia. "A New Anthropology for the Earth." In *A Primer in Ecotheology: Theology for a Fragile Earth*, 89-103. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017.

4. Fernandez, Eleazar S. "A Theological Reading of the Interlocking Forms of Oppression." In *Reimagining the Human: Theological Anthropology in Response to Systemic Evil*, 53-73. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press.

**Optional Readings:**

Deane-Drummond, Celia. "Are Animals Moral? Taking Soundings Through Vice, Virtue, Conscience, and *Imago Dei*." In *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans, and Other Animals*, edited by Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough, 100-117. London: SCM Press, 2009.

**Preparatory work due: Go to Lesson 5**

**The Context and Sources of Theology Today**

**Week 6 (September 28<sup>th</sup>)**

**Lesson 6: Constructive Theology and “Sin and Evil.”**

*Preparatory work for class discussion*

**Required Readings:**

1. Margaret D. Kamitsuka et al, “Sin and Evil,” in *Constructive Theology*, eds. Serene Jones, and Paul Lakeland (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 117-160.
2. Sölle, *Thinking About God*, 54-67.

**Optional Reading:**

1. Jones, Serene. “Sin: Grace Denied.” In *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace*, 94-125. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000. [PDF]
2. Sölle, *Thinking About God*, 68-94.

**Week 7 (October 5<sup>th</sup>)**

**Lesson 7: Constructive Theology and “Sin and Evil”**

*Preparatory work for class discussion*

**Required Readings:**

1. Moe-Lobeda, Cynthia. “Moral Crisis, Context, and Call.” In *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological Economic Vocation*, 23-47. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013. [PDF]
2. Moe-Lobeda, Cynthia. “Structural Violence as Structural Evil.” In *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological Economic Vocation*, 49-80. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013. [PDF]
3. Rasmussen, Larry L. “The Ethic We Need.” In *Earth-Honoring Faith: Religious Ethics in a New Key*, 127-159. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013. [PDF]

**Optional Reading:**

1. Kennedy, *A Modern Introduction to Theology*, 252-260. [PDF]

**Further Learning (Optional):**

1. Tucker, Mary Evelyn. “Religious Ecology and Cosmology: Responses to Environmental Challenges.” Audio lecture. “Religion & Ecology Summit.” California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, CA. March 11, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdpvNEtNI2c>.
2. Grim, John, and Mary Evelyn Tucker. “Religion and a New Environmental Ethic.” Yale University. January 13, 2009. Video, 12:50, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BG0bQ3SwDI8>.

Fall Break: October 11<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>

**The Audiences and Criteria of Systematic Theology**

**Theologian-in-Residence**

**Week 8 (October 19<sup>th</sup>)**

**Lesson 8: Constructive Theology and Jesus Christ**

*Preparatory work for class discussion*

**Required Readings:**

1. Karen Baker-Fletcher et al., "Jesus Christ," in *Constructive Theology*, eds. Serene Jones, and Paul Lakeland (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 161-200.

**Optional Reading:**

1. Hendricks, Obery M. Jr. "My Personal Journey: How I Came to Know Jesus the Political Revolutionary." In *The Politics of Jesus*, 1-10. New York, NY: Doubleday, 2006. [PDF]

2. Hendricks, Obery M. Jr. "Birth of a Revolutionary: The Shaping of Jesus' Politics." In *The Politics of Jesus*, 50-73. New York, NY: Doubleday, 2006. [PDF]

**Week 9 (October 26<sup>th</sup>)**

**Lesson 9: Constructive Theology and Jesus Christ**

*Preparatory work for class discussion*

**Required Readings:**

1. Dickinson, *The Green Good News*, 3-86.

2. Pedersen, Kusumita. "Inclusion and Exclusion: Reflections on Moral Community and Salvation." In *Earth Habitat: Eco-Justice and the Church's Response*, edited by Dieter Hessel, and Larry Rasmussen, 33-52. Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 2001. [PDF]

**Optional Readings:**

Sölle, *Thinking About God*, 95-135.

**Week 10 (November 2<sup>nd</sup>)**

**Lesson 10: Constructive Theology and Church**

*Preparatory work for class discussion*

**Required Readings:**

1. James H. Evans et al., "Church," in *Constructive Theology*, eds. Serene Jones, and Paul Lakeland (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 201-238.

2. Isasi-Diaz, Ada Maria. "Kin-dom of God: A Mujerista Proposal." In *In Our Own Voices: Latino/a Renditions of Theology*, edited by Benjamín Valentín, 171-189. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010. [PDF]

**Optional Reading:**

1. Goizueta, Rovertto S. "The Church: A Latino Catholic Perspective." In *In Our Own Voices: Latino/a Renditions of Theology*, edited by Benjamín Valentín, 133-154. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010. [PDF]

2. Sölle, *Thinking About God*, 136-153.

**Week 11 (November 9<sup>th</sup>)**

**Lesson 11: The Kingdom of God and Sustainable Justice.**

*Preparatory work for class discussion*

**Required Readings:**

1. Dickinson, T. Wilson. *The Green Good News*, 87-182.

**Optional Reading:**

1. Yordy, Laura Ruth. "Ethics and Eschatology." In *Green Witness: Ecology, Ethics, and the Kingdom of God*, 85-130. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008. [PDF]
2. Baker, Christopher, and Elaine Graham. "Ecology and Faith Communities." In *A Companion to Public Theology*, edited by Sebastian Kim, and Katie Day, 390-417. Boston, MA: Brill, 2017. [PDF]

**Week 12 (November 16<sup>th</sup>)**

**Lesson 12: The Kingdom, Spirituality and Society: Engaging in Transformative Practices**

*Preparatory work for class discussion*

**Required Readings:**

Oscar Romero, *The Scandal of Redemption: When God Liberates the Poor, Saves Sinners, and Heals Nations*. Walden, NY: Plough Publishing Houses, 2018.

**Optional Reading:**

1. *Laudato Si*

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_encyclica-laudato-si.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_encyclica-laudato-si.html)

November 22<sup>nd</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> --Thanksgiving Break

**Week 13 (November 30<sup>th</sup>)**

**Lesson 13: Constructive Theology and Spirit**

*Preparatory work for class discussion*

**Required Readings:**

1. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz et. al., "Spirit," in *Constructive Theology*, eds. Serene Jones, and Paul Lakeland (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 239-278.

**Optional Reading:**

1. Moore, Mary Elizabeth. "Sacred Vocation: Ministering with the Earth." In *Ministering with the Earth*, 143-170. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1998. [PDF]

**Due:** Final Project

**Week 14 (December 7<sup>th</sup>): An Alternative Criteria for Theological Reflection**

*Preparatory work for class discussion*

**Required Readings:**

1. Gebara, Ivone. "Daily Life Challenges as the Criterion for Biblical and Feminist Theological Hermeneutics." In *Faith and Feminism, Ecumenical Essays*, edited by B. Diane Lipsett, and Phyllis Trible, 203-216. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014. [PDF]

2. Rasmussen, Larry L. "Returning to Our Senses: The Theology of the Cross as a Theology for Eco-Justice." In *After Nature's Revolt: Eco-Justice and Theology*, edited by Dieter T. Hessel, 40-56. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992. [PDF]