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## **Using Hybridity to Create Space for Coming Out Religiously: A Case Study**

### **Abstract**

In introductory theology courses—where a plurality of religious perspectives and varying levels of religious knowledge are the norm—how do we to introduce students to the religious traditions upon which our schools are founded, while also creating space for them to "come out religiously" *and* to practice respectful engagement with others who do not share their religious identity? The notion of hybridity, particularly in relation to course approach and learning environment, is a crucial concept for forming learning communities that meet students where they are, assist them in constructing religious subjectivity, and promote appreciative, critical, and transformative dialogue across religious difference.

### **Introduction**

As philosopher Charles Taylor has argued, in our secular age people simultaneously search for meaning and assent to the premise that belief in God is just one of a myriad of possible religious or spiritual worldviews.<sup>1</sup> Even in a Catholic university, it can no longer be assumed (if it ever could) that students self-identify as Catholic, have a basic familiarity with Christianity, or even believe in God. In introductory theology courses in this setting—where a plurality of religious perspectives and varying levels of religious knowledge among students are the norm—how do we to introduce students to the religious traditions upon which our schools are founded, while also creating space for them to "come out religiously" *and* to practice respectful engagement with others who do not share their religious identity? The notion of hybridity, particularly in relation to course approach and learning environment, is a crucial concept for forming learning communities that meet students where they are, assist them in constructing religious subjectivity, and promote appreciative, critical, and transformative dialogue across religious difference.

### **Impediments to Coming Out Religiously in an Introductory Theology Course**

Methodologically, this paper is a case study Theological Questions, a required introductory theology course I teach at Saint Catherine University—a small, Catholic, women's college in the Midwest.<sup>2</sup> The students are adult undergraduates, a population courted by Saint

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Saint Catherine enrolls around 3500 undergraduate and 1500 graduate students; is located in a residential neighborhood of a major metropolitan area in the Midwest; and draws almost exclusively a regional student body, with over 90% of the students coming from in state. Over the past decade, the student body has become more religiously diversified, with a marked increase in Muslim students and Hmong students, many of whom practice Christianity alongside traditional spiritual practices like shamanism and ancestor veneration.

See [http://www.stkate.edu/pages/aboutstkates/quick\\_facts.php](http://www.stkate.edu/pages/aboutstkates/quick_facts.php) (accessed August 15, 2013).

Catherine through the Evening/Weekend/Online program (EWO).<sup>3</sup> In an effort to make coursework more flexible for this non-traditional population, in fall 2012 Saint Catherine shifted the format of EWO classes to a hybrid one in which face-to-face class sessions are combined with online learning components.<sup>4</sup> In this model, students still build relationships with faculty and each other during face-to-face sessions, but they also have more flexibility in terms of when they do their work, and less time on campus is required.<sup>5</sup>

Saint Catherine's students are required to take two theology courses for graduation, and the course I teach is the entry point into theology for a majority of EWO students.<sup>6</sup> In this context, coming out religiously, at its most basic, involves claiming a religious or a-religious identity. But based on what students write in their pre- and post-course essays,<sup>7</sup> coming out religiously is much more complex, and a number of factors undergird students' reticence to do so:

1. Cultural Taboo: Even though the United States is the most religious industrialized nation in the world, students see religion as a private matter that is taboo to discuss in public settings.<sup>8</sup> Even in a theology course, students fear speaking too personally about their religious lives, and many come without much practice talking about religion in a setting of diverse religious identities.
2. Image of Catholicism: The strong Catholic identity of the university leads many students to assume that they will learn and be asked to regurgitate only one form of theology—conservative Catholic doctrine. For example, one student writes that she was apprehensive that she would "be confronted with Catholic rhetoric and a moralistic list of should-do's and must-not's" in the course. Add to this the fact that many students do not

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<sup>3</sup> The average age of EWO students is thirty-five; many work full- or part-time jobs and are raising children while they complete a baccalaureate degree. See [http://www.stkate.edu/pages/aboutstkates/quick\\_facts.php](http://www.stkate.edu/pages/aboutstkates/quick_facts.php) (accessed August 15, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> For an excellent introduction to hybrid learning environments, see D. Randy Harrison and Norman D. Vaughn, *Blended Learning in Higher Education: Framework, Principles, and Guidelines* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> In the EWO undergraduate program at Saint Catherine, in a fifteen week semester, students attend eight, three-hour on-campus class sessions, scheduled every other week, and then complete seven online weeks of the course on the alternate weeks between the face-to-face sessions. See <https://www2.stkate.edu/ewo-admission/schedule> (accessed August 15, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> According to the description in the course catalogue, Theological Questions is "a class for first-time students, designed to familiarize them with the Christian tradition—its scriptures, history, and documents—as well as with the resources and methods of Christian theology." Please see Appendix A for a brief summary of the four units that focus my iteration of Theological Questions. Please see Appendix B for the full syllabus from the spring 2013 section of this course.

<sup>7</sup> In this course, students write a pre- and post-course essay. In the pre-essay, which they bring with them to the first face-to-face session and which is graded pass/fail, students write about what they are looking forward to in the course, anything about which they are nervous, their previous experience with religion, and their goals for the course. In the post-course essay, which is graded using traditional letter grades, students self-assess their learning in the course, focusing on readings, themes, and discussions that stand out in their minds and what has changed in their view on and practice of religion, if anything. All quotations from students in this paper come from students' pre- and post-course essays.

<sup>8</sup> For an interesting study on students' willingness to communicate about religion, see Mariam F. Alkazemi, "Students' Spiraling Silence and Willingness to Communicate about Religion in the United States: An Exploration of the Media's Role in Stigmatizing Religion," *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 2, no. 1, <http://jrmdc.com> (accessed July 30, 2013).

understand how this required theology course could be relevant to them, and many begin with a defensive and resentful mindset.

3. Lack of (Religious) Education: Many EWO students come back to college after a long absence or are beginning for the first time. Generally, they are nervous about keeping up with the course load and satisfactorily completing assignments. Additionally, few have had any formal religious education since high school, if they have ever had any. They fear that they will appear dumb in the face of "others" who know more about religion; as one student communicates, "I felt that I'd never measure up to the people who enrolled in this course that were Catholic because I was into pieces of religion and I didn't attend service every Sunday."
4. Past Religious Experience: Students' past experiences with religion are a major deterrent to coming out religiously, namely because times of hurt propagated (or at least implicitly supported) by religious communities and individuals lead the student to believe she has no place for religion in her life. For example, a number of students report have left organized religion behind when it was made clear to them that their sexual orientation left them outside the bounds of the community. These students come ready to protect themselves against more pain wrought in the name of religion.
5. Current Religious Identity: Students' current religious identification is a factor in their reserve in the theology classroom. Students covering the spectrum of religious traditions, from Pentecostal to atheist, worry that their religious viewpoints will not be respected, and this is heightened for students who belong to non-Christian traditions.
6. The Face of the Other: Finally, students articulate concern with being attentive and accountable to the variety of religious identities represented by students and conversation partners in the course, even as they claim their own religious identity. In other words, their reserve in coming out religiously is related to a desire to do so in a way that makes room for others to claim their own religious identities.

### **Understanding Hybridity**

These students' experiences of coming out religiously in relation to their own complex histories and experiences and in relation to the complex histories and experiences of their classmates indicates that hybridity is an important concept for conceptualizing religious subjectivity and shaping our pedagogical approach in introductory theology courses. In her consideration of hybridity and religious identity, Michele Saracino explains that hybridity is often invoked in relation to human identity, particularly ethnic identity.<sup>9</sup> Writes Saracino, "Hybrid identity here is largely an effect of the political, economic, and technological processes associated today with globalization, namely those systems that have led one to encounter many cultures, stories, and so on, and integrate them into oneself."<sup>10</sup> Mai-Anh Le Tran argues that in "our current postmodern, postcolonial, transnational, globalized world," religious educators must

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<sup>9</sup> Saracino is clear that hybridity is not just trendy academic jargon. Rather, it goes back to Mendelian research on genetics in the mid-1800s. As she elucidates, "From Mendel's early experiments, it became clear that in hybrid plants the genetic material of both progenitors was present, even if it was not visible to the naked eye. In other words, hybridity existed even if the organism did not have a hybrid phenotypic effect." So in its origin, hybridity emphasizes the mixture of traits within an individual organism, even when this mixture is not readily apparent to the naked eye. Michele Saracino, "Hybridity and Trespass: With Jesus at the Borders of Identity," *Horizons* 33, no. 2 (2006): 226.

<sup>10</sup> Saracino, 223.

begin from the assumption of the "hybrid subjectivities" of those we teach.<sup>11</sup> While hybridity is most often considered in relation to ethnicity,<sup>12</sup> it also makes sense to think of religious identities as hybrid in nature.<sup>13</sup> When I am asked about my religion, I find only a series of stories can begin to approximate an answer: "I was baptized Roman Catholic, attended Roman Catholic elementary and secondary schools, had a series of feminist awakenings, did all of my post-secondary education in Protestant institutions..." Religious identity involves a multitude of stories and voices that cannot be collapsed into a neat, linear narrative, let alone a pure identity. Additionally, it may just be that hybrid identity is at the heart of Christianity, that is, who Christ is and who we are called to be.<sup>14</sup>

If our students necessarily have hybrid religious identities, then our pedagogical processes need to attend to this. As HyeRan Kim-Cragg and Joanne Doi explain, "Raising awareness of these complex identities, individual and communal identities, is the role of religious educators. It is our conviction that hybrid and hyphenated multiple identities need to be affirmed in religious education discourse and pedagogy."<sup>15</sup> As I demonstrate below in returning to the case study, using a hybrid course approach and learning environment creates space for students to claim their hybrid religious identities. It fulfills the tasks Tran outlines for religious education with those of hybrid identity:

To "make accessible" the multiple and varied religious sources from which individuals may draw for the construction of their "personal myths" (life stories) in ways that offer deep psychosocial truth; and to "make accessible" the sources considered "normative" to the faith community so that the truth, goodness, and beauty found within individual personal myths could be held in dialogic imagination with communal narratives of faith.<sup>16</sup>

## Hybrid Course Approach

Hybridity shapes the construction of Theological Questions in two particular ways: course approach and learning environment. First, in terms of course approach, I explicitly

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<sup>11</sup> Mai-Anh Le Tran, "Narrating Lives, Narrating Faith: 'Organic Hybridity' for Contemporary Christian Religious Education," *Religious Education* 105, no. 2 (March-April 2010 ):188.

<sup>12</sup> Religious educators HyeRan Kim-Cragg and Joanne Doi offer personal reflections on their experiences of intercultural hybridity, explaining that hybrid identity means living "as a multiply situated person, unable to have only one identity." See HyeRan Kim-Cragg and Joanne Doi, "Intercultural Threads of Hybridity and Threshold Spaces of Learning," *Religious Education* 107, no. 3 (May-June 2012): 263. Their stories offer two important cautions in discussing hybridity. First, hybrid identities often are related to patterns of colonization, and thus any consideration of hybrid identities needs to be attentive to power dynamics and varying levels of freedom that people have in claiming their particular hybrid identities. Because hybrid identities have been forced on some groups, because they often come from situations of oppression and thus carry shame with them, we need to be vigilant not to characterize hybridity romantically, as Saracino reminds us (228). Stemming from this, secondly, hybrid identities are "mixed blessings," as Kim-Cragg names them (264). The path to embracing a hybrid identity must pass through mourning a sense of belonging in any one place and a loss of security in one unified and pure identity.

<sup>13</sup> Saracino explains how religious identities become multiple thus: "Yet, more often than not, religions overlap and converge; that is to say, there are border crossings among religions," 222.

<sup>14</sup> It is no small point that Saracino and Kim-Cragg and Doi argue that a hybrid identity is at the heart of Christianity, that is, who Christ is and who we are. This is seen in the multiplicity of the gospel accounts of Jesus' life, as well as Jesus' hybrid identity as Jesus and the Christ.

<sup>15</sup> Kim-Cragg and Doi, 273.

<sup>16</sup> Tran, 196. Tran notes that these tasks point back to the work of Mary C. Boys, *Educating in Faith: Maps and Visions*, 1st ed. (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1989).

combine a religious studies and a theological approach. This blended approach is introduced the first week of the course through an on-line lecture that makes it clear that students do not need to claim a religious identity in order to study religion. To this end, a religious studies approach is outlined in which scholars approach religion from a perspective of curiosity, wanting to know more about this important aspect of people's lives and the larger culture.<sup>17</sup> Then, following Anselm's understanding of theology as faith seeking understanding, theology is defined as a second order reflection on people's lived experiences of faith. Here it is emphasized that theology is not only an academic endeavor, but also that it arises from the realities of people's lives and can be done by anyone interested in reflecting on the theological implications of life. Two aims of theology, which shape the goals of the course, also are enumerated: transmission, that is, passing on ideas from the tradition, including biblical narratives, histories, and practices; and transformation, that is, doing critical reflection about the tradition so that it continues to speak to people's faith and experiences of the religious tradition.<sup>18</sup>

This combination of approaches, which then is carried through the course in readings, online discussions, and in-class activities, responds to some of the main stumbling blocks to students coming out religiously. The perspective of religious studies makes a way for students who consider themselves non- (or only marginally) religious to participate in the course; it deflects some of their defensiveness while gently inviting them to practice a thoughtful and respectful engagement with religion. Further, taking a ground-up approach to theology enables students to see how theology is born in "the understandings of religious practitioners, in the flow of actual religious experiences,"<sup>19</sup> and, thus, how it might be something they can do and something that might be illuminative of their own experiences. Finally, speaking of transformation of theology upfront, along with the introduction of feminist theologies, helps students understand that they will not be asked to embrace a singular theological vision through the course and that critique of religious traditions will not only be accepted but encouraged.<sup>20</sup>

Crucial to the success of this hybrid approach is that students begin the course as religious studies scholars, investigating religious traditions with which most are not familiar. Looking at Buddhism and Hinduism levels the playing field, so to speak, so that students work together through online discussion boards and in-class small group activities to develop better understanding of how suffering is explained by adherents of these traditions. After the first unit on world religions, students continue to utilize the skills they build in this religious studies work

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<sup>17</sup> In the background here is an ethnographic approach to studying religion. As theologian Christian Scharen and ethicist Aana Marie Vigen put it, "Learning deeply and authentically from the field is a central commitment of ethnographic study," and ethnographers are called to practice "humility amidst sustained, attentive, and careful observation." See Christian Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2011) 236, 17.

<sup>18</sup> Here my thought is heavily influenced by Mary Elizabeth Moore, *Education for Continuity and Change: A New Model for Christian Religious Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983).

<sup>19</sup> Jeremy Posadas, "Ethnographic Possibilities for an Introduction to Christian Theology," *Practical Matters* 6 (Spring 2013), <http://practicalmattersjournal.org/issue/6/teaching-matters/ethnographic-possibilities-for-an-introduction-to-christian-theology> (accessed May 15, 2013).

<sup>20</sup> Feminist, womanist, *mujerista*, and Asian feminist theologies are named as just a few of the forms of theology that have assisted in the transformative work of theology. Feminist theological methods allow students to develop what Serene Jones names a "double vision," so that they balance critique of the ways in which Christian traditions have harmed women with appreciation, recovering, and reconstruction of the powerful resources within Christianity to support women's flourishing. Serene Jones, "Glorious Creation, Beautiful Law," in *Feminist and Womanist Essays in Reformed Dogmatics (Columbia Series in Reformed Theology)*, eds. Amy Plantinga Pauw and Serene Jones (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 19-39.

as we move to consider major questions of Christian theology from the perspective of those who profess belief, but also considering what these questions mean for themselves, if they so desire to claim this religious identity. Further, the movement between the two approaches invites a reflexivity that advances students' own processes of naming and claiming religious identity, even if that identity is an agnostic, atheist, or undecided one.

Two other features of the course support this hybrid approach. First, online discussion boards invite students to take the perspective of religious studies scholars, biblical scholars, feminist theologians, ethicists, and in the final few weeks of the course, to speak from their own perspective about the place of (or lack thereof) religion and religious practices in their own lives (or the lives of people they know). Second pairing online quizzes, which test content knowledge, with written unit reflections, which focus on personal appropriation of course material, insures that students are assessed on both their knowledge of course content and on their critical engagement with the material. The unit reflection prompts assist students who are interested in articulating their religious subjectivity, but are also written in such a way so as to engage those who do not wish to use this course for that purpose.<sup>21</sup>

### **Hybrid Learning Environment**

A second way hybridity shapes Theological Questions is through the hybrid learning environment, and there are two features of this environment that increase students' ability to come out religiously. First, Theological Questions utilizes a combination of written, asynchronous discussion during the online course weeks and spoken, synchronous discussion during the face-to-face sessions. Part of each in-class session is devoted to small-group work, and then students participate in online discussion boards with the same small group in the following online class week.<sup>22</sup> In class, students literally see each other's faces and contend with the embodied existence and experiences of those who are different than they are. Having come face-to-face with their conversation partners and knowing they will see these people in person again, students have added incentive to take up differences of opinions in respectful ways in online discussions.

But simultaneously, because they do not literally have to face each other as they participate in online discussions, students are willing to share aspects of their religious identity and experience in discussion boards that seem too intimate for face-to-face class sessions.<sup>23</sup> Further, the act of composing written answers to discussion questions and the requirement that students respond to at least two posts from others in their discussion group leads to a particular depth of discussion, with many students continuing the conversation beyond the required number of posts (and even beyond the time period designated for the discussion on certain occasions).

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<sup>21</sup> The unit reflection paper prompts appear on pages 18-19 of this paper, in Appendix B.

<sup>22</sup> Discussion groups were shuffled three times during the course, so that students could spend long in enough in one small group to reach a deeper depth of discussion but could also get to know most of the members of the class during the course of the semester.

<sup>23</sup> To offer just one example, one student came into the class hoping to "gain avenues for understanding the unexpected and mysterious death" of her father years ago. While she never mentioned her father in our face-to-face classes, the questioning of her faith that accompanied his death came up on discussion boards, and she commented in her post-course essay that she "received this blessing [of avenues of understanding] in every online discussion." This situation demonstrates how important it is for instructors to actively monitor, if not also participate in, online discussion boards and to have at their fingertips pastoral care and counseling resources information to pass on to students who may be experiencing crisis. In this particular case, the student's discussion groups were incredibly supportive, and I was able to refer her to a spiritual director on campus.

For these reasons, hybrid learning environments improve upon the ability of solely face-to-face or online course formats to create space for coming out religiously and for respectful discussion about religion in situations of plurality. In these bounded yet open spaces, students practice constructing and disclosing religious identity, making this religious identity understandable to others, and conversing and learning from those who do not necessarily share the same religious convictions.

Second, hybrid learning environments often use an instructional strategy called castling, so that online and in-class learning activities are "arranged in a particular sequence so that the energy for learning increases and accumulates as students go through the sequence."<sup>24</sup> Ideally, online activities lead into in-class activities, which lead back into online activities and so on, so that there is integration of material throughout the course. In *Theological Questions*, students are sent forth from a face-to-face session with a reading guide, which includes pre-reading questions to stimulate their interest in the topic at hand as it related to their life experience, and the assignment to do their reading using the reading guide, view an online narrated PowerPoint lecture related to the reading material, and participate in an online discussion board. When students come to the next face-to-face class session two weeks later, I am able to address questions or holes in their understanding of course material that are apparent through the discussion boards. But then much in-class time can be devoted to students working together on activities that encourage them to put what they learn into practice, and thus to practice expressing religious viewpoints to a variety of imagined public audiences.<sup>25</sup>

### **Additional Features That Promote Responsible Religious Subjectivity**

In addition to the hybrid approach and design of the course, two additional features of *Theological Questions* are crucial for encouraging students to come out religiously and responsibly in a plural world. First is the pre-course essay, which students complete prior to the first face-to-face class session.<sup>26</sup> These pre-essays encourage students to begin narrating their religious experience, make room for the discussion of emotions in relation to religious identity, and help to build trust in the learning community, particularly when the instructor strives to respond to the essays in supportive and non-judgmental ways.

Second, student presentations carve out space in face-to-face sessions for students to teach the class about an aspect of religion that is important to them. Many students opt to learn more about aspects of their own religious upbringing, including speaking in tongues in the Pentecostal tradition, self-flagellation in Filipino Catholicism, and shamanism in the Hmong community. One student taught her class about the role of women in Laestadian Movement churches, of which the church in which she was raised is a part. Reflecting on this experience, she writes,

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<sup>24</sup> L. Dee Fink, "A Self-Directed Guide to Designing Courses for Significant Learning," [http://edinnovation.wisc.edu/content/uploads/2013/02/9\\_other\\_resources.pdf](http://edinnovation.wisc.edu/content/uploads/2013/02/9_other_resources.pdf) (accessed September 17, 2013), page 27.

<sup>25</sup> Here is one example of this type of small-group work: after we read Catholic social teaching on economics and the environment, students work in small groups to come up with a brochure, poster, presentation, skit, etc, that gets people interested in and thinking about the issue and how it relates to their lives; helps them connect the issue with Christian faith, especially biblical teaching and Catholic social tradition; details at least three specific action steps they can take in their own lives to address this issue; provides a means of community support for these action steps; and envisions one larger project the community could work on together in response to the issue at hand.

<sup>26</sup> See footnote 7 above.

One of the ways that I found my voice this semester was by sharing my religious upbringing and childhood experiences with my classmates. It was incredibly difficult. I thought about changing the topic of my presentation many times, but I knew that it was something I needed to do. It was scary and liberating at the same time, and I no longer feel like I have a shameful past that I am carrying around with me.

Not only are these presentations useful for the students who prepare them; a majority of students list the class presentations as one of their favorite aspects of the course, as it exposes them to a variety of religious viewpoints, traditions, and experiences that go well beyond what we could normally study in one course. One student puts it well:

I really enjoyed listening to my peers. Although I didn't always agree with everyone all the time, I found that I was not judgmental. I felt I was able to accept other people's views and beliefs while still keeping my belief system. I felt it was a safe environment to ask questions and explore other religious views without being discriminated against.

### **Conclusion**

For the adult undergraduate students who take Theological Questions, coming out religiously involves coming to terms with their religious upbringings and pasts and imagining futures that build on glimpses of life-giving religious practice from the course. It requires a critical construction of a religious subjectivity that makes sense of and within their current life situations. But it is not only a process isolated to the individual; it happens in relation to others who are also claiming religious identity. In this context of hybrid religious subjectivity, a hybrid course approach and learning environment seem particularly relevant to the aims of supporting students' construction of religious subjectivity and ability to engage religion intelligibly and respectfully in the public sphere.

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## Appendix A

### Summary of Course Units in Theological Questions

- Unit 1: What is religion? Exploring what religion is through the lens of encounter with mystery and looking at how the reality of suffering is addressed in Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam using John Haught's *What Is Religion?*
- Unit 2: Who is God, who are we, and does the Bible tell me so? Investigating images of God and humanity in the Hebrew Scriptures and introducing a critical hermeneutic for biblical study, focusing on reading biblical texts along with feminist commentary.
- Unit 3: Who do you say that I am? Images of Jesus. Inviting students to understand Jesus in his historical context, using Donald Senior's *Jesus: A Gospel Portrait* as an accompanying text to selections from the New Testament.
- Unit 4: What is the church, and do the church and theology matter in the world? Examining women's religious lives, both in traditional faith communities and in their personal spiritual practice, along with the Catholic church's response to social issues, such as economics and the environment, through Catholic social teaching.

## **Appendix B**

### **Theological Questions Syllabus Spring 2013**

**THEO 1000: Theological Questions**  
**Spring Semester 2013**  
**Hybrid Format | Classroom: Whitby 120B**

Instructor: Claire Bischoff, Ph.D.

Office Hours: Tuesdays 5-5:45 p.m. and by appointment. Please e-mail me to set up an in person, phone, or virtual meeting; daytime, evening, and weekend hours are available.

Office: Whitby 214

E-mail: cebischoff@stkate.edu (best way to reach me)

Phone: 612-600-8205 (cell, please use sparingly)

Skype: claire.e.bischoff (You will have to request me as a contact/friend in order for us to meet virtually on Skype.)

#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

“A class for first-time students, designed to familiarize them with the Christian tradition—its scriptures, history, and documents—as well as with the resources and methods of Christian theology. Taught every semester, it provides a foundation of readings and skills to prepare students for further study of theology.” --*Saint Catherine University Course Catalogue, 2008-2009*

By nature, human beings ask questions. It is how we learn. We ask questions in order to make sense of ourselves, our relationships with others and the world around us, and our encounters with mystery. Theology arises from these questions, as people throughout the ages have asked about who human beings are, whether there is more to life than what we can see and touch, and the purpose of it all. In this course we will consider a variety of theological questions. You will have the opportunity to ask your own theological questions, as well as to consider those questions that are central to established theological study. Everyone is welcome in this course, regardless of your religious upbringing or current religious or non-religious perspective. No prior background or previous study of theology is necessary. All that is required is that you come with an open heart and mind, ready to read, discuss, and write about the questions that arise from our being.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. You will examine definitions of religion, as it is lived through five expressions of religion, and develop your own definition of religion.
2. You will learn to use interpretive tools to read the Bible and gain a broad overview of the book and its history. Further, you will be able to recognize and discuss key figures and stories in both the Hebrew Scripture and the Christian New Testament.
3. You will become familiar with a broad overview of the origin and growth of the Christian church and articulate a modern understanding of the Christian church and its place in the world.
4. You will encounter key questions with which theology grapples, as well as name and wrestle with your own theological questions.
5. You will become familiar with the methods and results of feminist theology and examine the role of women within Christian communities, both past and present.
6. You will participate in a constructive, respectful learning community, both face-to-face and online, that contributes to your intellectual and spiritual growth.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

1. John F. Haught. *What Is Religion? An Introduction*. New York: Paulist Press, 1990.
2. Donald Senior. *Jesus: A Gospel Portrait*. New and revised edition. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992.
3. A quality study Bible. You do not need to purchase a new Bible for this course, but it is required that you have a high-quality, academic translation. Please ask if you are unsure about the translation you will be using.  
Acceptable translations include: New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), the New Jerusalem Bible, and the Common English Bible (CEB).  
Unacceptable translations include: The Message and the NLT.  
It is also possible to read the entire Bible on-line. [Bible Gateway](#) is a good site; if you choose this option, make sure you select the New Revised Standard Version when you search for a passage.
4. Additional readings to be distributed in class or posted on our D2L site.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

Attendance and Face to Face Participation	10%
Participation in Online Discussions	20%
Pre-Course and Post-Course Learning Assessment	5%
Presentation	10%
Church Visit Reflection	5%
Unit Reflections	30%
Unit Quizzes	20%

## **READING**

**Reading is harder than it seems!** Reading for good comprehension takes time and effort. For most reading selections, I will hand out a reading guide beforehand that includes questions to guide your reading of the text. In order to really comprehend what you are reading, you need to interact with the text. You can do this by asking yourself the following questions while you read:

- What is the point of this paragraph/section/chapter? (You may want to make note of this in the margins or on a separate paper.)
- Are there any words you do not know? (Consult a dictionary.)
- How does this reading fit with the topic for the week? With the course objectives?
- What names/dates/places/terms do I need to remember for quizzes?

Take notes in the margins of the text or on your reading guide.

## **CLASS ATTENDANCE AND FACE TO FACE PARTICIPATION**

A major portion of our work together will be discussion, both in person and online. For this reason, attendance in class is important, not just for your own learning but for our whole learning community. We cannot learn from you if you are absent! Please make every effort to attend our face-to-face sessions and to be actively present in our online community.

In the event that you must miss class, please notify me via e-mail in advance and arrange to get the class notes from one of your classmates. After you have done this, I will be happy to meet with you to answer any remaining questions. I know that you are all busy adults and that "life will happen" at some point during the semester. Because of this, you may miss one class for any reason (illness, family event, etc.) without negatively affecting your participation grade.

*Your Participation Grade:* Attendance and participation in face-to-face sessions counts for 10% of your grade in this course. A grade for each face-to-face session will be recorded on our D2L site, and these grades will be averaged for your overall participation grade. The following descriptions provide a rough outline of the kinds of participation which are associated with each grade:

- A: Frequent, interesting, respectful, thoughtful, contributions to class discussion. These people have done the reading, are clearly prepared for class, and arrive on time. They always speak up during class discussion, listen respectfully, and engage with other points of view. They are very helpful contributors to small group work.
- B: Respectful listening to classmates and good engagement in small group work. These people contribute regularly to class discussion (almost always), are clearly prepared for class, and arrive on time.
- C: Generally listens to others, but occasionally falls asleep, ignores the comments of others or responds inappropriately. May sometimes be tardy, responds when called on, but does not volunteer. Sometimes unprepared for class (has not done the reading).
- D: Occasional disrespectful behavior while others are speaking (tardiness, phone use, web surfing, etc.). Minimal participation in small group and large group discussion. Often unprepared for class (does not have the text, has not done the reading).

## **PARTICIPATION IN ONLINE DISCUSSIONS**

During our online weeks of the course, online discussion boards will be our primary way of interacting with each other and discussing the material for that week. Online discussions will account for 20% of your final grade. I will read and participate in every discussion forum. I will also grade each discussion board using the discussion board rubric that is attached to this syllabus. For the first few discussion boards, I will provide detailed feedback on your discussion board participation through our D2L site.

Discussion boards are a great way for members of the class to learn from each other based on the readings, different life experiences, and unique perspectives gained from studying course materials. It also assists adult learners in learning how to effectively convey ideas to a group in a professional and respectful manner.

Each online week of the course will include one discussion board, as well as some of our face-to-face weeks. You will be assigned to smaller discussion groups under the discussion tab on our D2L site. These groups will rotate throughout the course. The directions for the discussion boards will also change from week to week. Some weeks you will be asked to offer your opinion about a key point from the reading; other weeks you might be asked to find an image on-line that relates to our reading. Directions for the on-line discussions will be posted under the discussion tab on our D2L site each week.

*Initial Post:* What will stay the same for each online discussion board is that I will provide you with a specific discussion prompt. Each student is asked to answer the prompt in an answer of 150-250 words. This is not a lot of words, so you will need to be clear and concise in your writing. (An answer a little over 250 words is fine, but too much over means you may need to revise in order to make sure your answer is clear and concise. Similarly, an answer that is a few words under 150 is okay, but too much under means you have not developed your ideas sufficiently.) For A-level participation, you are required to submit your initial post early in the week to generate discussion and provide time for others to respond to you.

*Two Responses:* In addition to your initial post, you are also required to respond to two other classmates' posts with a 50-100 word response. You can use these responses to ask a classmate to clarify a point or to extend it. You may point out a connection to the reading she did not see. You may disagree with her. For A-level participation, you must go beyond this benchmark, frequently participating in the online discussion and responding to direct questions put to you by your classmates and me.

*Pre-Essay:* Prior to our first face-to-face session on February 5, please read through the entire syllabus and flip through the required reading for the course. After you have done this, consider the following questions:

1. What is your reaction to what you have read in the syllabus and glanced at in the books?
2. What are some things that interest you about this course?
3. Does anything worry you?
4. What previous experiences do you have with religion that you will bring with you to this course? This can be informal experiences (like being particularly moved by a film with religious themes) or formal experiences (like attending Confirmation class for two years). A non-religious upbringing certainly "counts" as something you will bring with you to this course, as that influences the eyes with which you engage in the course.
5. At this point, what do you hope to get out of the course?

Please type up your answers to these questions using 150-250 words (one paragraph to one-page long). Bring a printed copy of your response to class on **February 5** to hand in. This assignment will be graded on a pass/fail basis. You will earn a pass if you turn the assignment in and if your answers indicate you have read through the syllabus and glanced at the required texts.

*Post-Essay:* Use this 2-3 page essay (500-750 words) to assess your learning in the course. Here are some questions to guide your assessment, though you do not have to limit yourselves to these questions for the essay. This post-essay is due to the online drop box on our D2L site by 11:59 p.m. on May 21.

1. Which readings most appealed to you? Least appealed to you? Why?
2. Is there any one insight or new bit of knowledge that particularly stands out to you at the end of this course?
3. Was there anything said in class or written about online by a fellow student or the instructor that sticks in your mind?
4. Has your view of any of the major topics covered in this course changed as the course unfolded?
5. Is there a topic, theme or question that came up in the class that you would have liked to explore more?
6. Has this course met your expectations and goals (refer back to your pre-essay)?
7. Has your spiritual or religious life changed in any way because of this course?

## **PRESENTATION**

Each person will be responsible for one 6-8 minute presentation to be given at some point during the semester. The purpose of this assignment is not only to have you working closely with the course texts but also to get you familiar and comfortable with oral presentation. You should plan to create a discussion or activity to illuminate, enrich, and complicate our thinking about the questions raised in the readings assigned for your topic. In other words, you do not need to lecture for the entire time! Try to find a creative way to help us engage the texts in a new way. While you do not have to “cover” all the texts for the theme, you should make it clear how what you are doing in your presentation connects to the readings. You must present your ideas to me at least 48 hours in advance of your presentation day. I am also willing to talk through ideas with you, but please do not wait until the last minute to do so.

In addition to the presentation to the class, a short written reflection will be due within one week of the presentation date (please turn in to the D2L drop box labeled "Presentation Reflections"). Attached to the syllabus is the grading rubric I will be using for grading your presentations and your short written reflection.

#### *Tips for Good Presentations:*

- *Know your topic:* Are you comfortable with what you are going to talk about? Does your presentation provide others with new and useful information? Did you read your material thoroughly?
- *Use key phrases about your topic:* Good presenters use key phrases and include only the most important information. Though your topic may be vast, choose the top three or four points.
- *Be creative:* Your presentation can involve hand-outs, posters, slides, movie clips, activities, and/or any other creative medium. Please do not simply read from power points slides or index cards.
- *Theological concerns:* Does your presentation make significant connections to the theological topics at hand?
- *Appropriate length:* Do time yourself in advance, and practice in front of friends or roommates.

Here are some ideas for your presentations:

- Choose a practice, that is, something people do that is associated with the reading and introduce it to the class
- Interview someone who knows something about the topic and present results of the interview, e.g. interview someone who is an adherent to Judaism
- Research someone who is known as an exemplar in relation to a topic, e.g. MLK Jr. in relation to religious action, and describe how this person's life exemplifies the topic
- Find a piece of popular culture (movie clip, song, advertisement, etc.) or recent news that connects to the topic for the day and lead us in a discussion
- Collect images of artwork that relate to our weekly topic or question
- For weeks in which we read biblical passages, you could do a close reading of a passage, researching various interpretations of it

#### *Presentation Topics*

February 19	Judaism	_____
	Islam	_____
	Hinduism	_____
	Buddhism	_____
	Religious Mysticism	_____
	Religious Silence	_____
	Religious Action	_____
March 5	Gen 1:1-2:4 (Seven days of creation)	_____
	Hebrew Bible Book/passage	_____
	Modern Day Prophet	_____
	Modern Day Usage: Psalms	_____
	Women and in the Hebrew Bible	_____
March 19	World of Jesus	_____
	Followers of Jesus: Then and Now	_____
	Jesus' Teachings	_____
	Images of Jesus	_____
	New Testament Book	_____
April 2	Jesus and Miracles/Healing	_____
	Death and Resurrection of Jesus	_____
	Womanist Theology	_____
	<i>Mujerista</i> Theology	_____
	Asian Women's Theology	_____
April 16	Period of or Event in Church History	_____
	The Church around the World	_____
	Women and the Church	_____
	Sacraments	_____
April 30	Church and Economics	_____
	Church and the Environment	_____
	Church-related organization visit	_____
May 14	Prayer	_____
	Christian Practice	_____
	Exemplar of Living Faith	_____
	Politics and Faith	_____

**CHURCH VISIT REFLECTION**

During the course, you are asked to visit one faith community for a worship or prayer service. You may choose to visit a faith community that represents any faith tradition: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, or others. I ask that you choose a faith tradition that is different than the one you grew up in or currently participate in. (If your background or current faith is some form of Christianity, it is fine to visit a different denomination than your own.) If you want help selecting a site, please let me know.

After your visit, please write a 1-2 page reflection on your experience. Please provide both a description of the faith community (where it is, what it looks like, who is part of the community, what they do together) as well as some analysis about the community. Questions you may wish to consider include:

- How do you think that the community would talk about who they are, that is, their identity?
- How do you think that the community would talk about why they gather together? That is, what do they see as their purpose?
- What seemed appealing about this community to you? Why do you think people like this community?
- What was not appealing about this community to you? What might turn people away from this community?
- What questions were raised for you by this visit?

Your written reflection can be turned in at any time during the course to the drop box on our D2L site. The final due date for this assignment is **May 14**.

### ***UNIT REFLECTIONS***

At the end of each of the four course units, you will write a unit reflection based on the topics, readings, and discussions for that unit. These unit reflections should include references to and/or quotations from the assigned texts for that unit. They may also include your own informed opinions, as well as references to ideas presented by others in the class. Below are questions to guide your reflections for each unit. Please answer all or some of these questions. You may also include your own reflections which do not explicitly address these questions.

Each reflection should be 2-3 pages in length (typed, double-spaced, one-inch margins, and 12 point font). The grading rubric for writing assignments is attached to the end of this syllabus.

#### ***Unit 1: What is Religion?***

During the first two weeks of this course, please take some notes on *where* you hear religion talked about—in the music you listen to; in television shows or movies you watch; in newspapers, magazines, or blogs you read; in conversations you have, etc.—and *how* religion is talked about.

Then in your reflection for this unit, address the following questions:

- How is religion understood in the broader culture that you paid attention to these past two weeks? (You can focus on just one example of where religion is talked about OR look for overall themes that emerge.)
- How is this understanding of religion similar to or different from Haught's understanding of religion? How is it related to how Haught understands mystery? Do you agree with Haught's argument?
- What is your definition of religion? Does it relate to mystery, as it does for Haught?

- What theological questions have these readings raised for you?

Unit 2: Who Is God? Who Are We? Does the Bible Tell Me So?

1. Choose one biblical story or passage that we have read OR one that interests you from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and read it.
2. Find a commentary about this passage. If you are uncertain about your commentary, please e-mail me to check it out. Possible commentaries include:
  - Women's Bible Commentary
  - Interpretation Commentary series
  - WorkingPreacher.org
  - EntertheBible.org
  - ONScripture.org
3. For your reflection, please address the following questions:
  - List the passage or story that you chose and give a brief explanation of it.
  - What does your commentary say about this passage?
  - Do you agree with this interpretation of the passage? What other interpretations do you have of the passage?
  - What is it about this story/passage that interests you?
  - What aspects of the story/passage do you think would resonate most strongly with people today?
  - What does this passage reveal about who God is and/or who humanity is, from the perspective of the passage's author?

Unit 3: Who Do You Say that I Am? Images of Jesus

You have multiple options for this unit reflection. The focal question is one that Jesus puts to his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" For this reflection, I put this question to you, and you may answer it from whatever perspective you choose (as a Christian believer, as a non-Christian believer who knows something about Jesus, etc.). You can also answer the question in a medium that makes sense for you: e.g. poetry, sculpture, music, dance, painting, video, etc. If you choose to take an artistic approach to this assignment, I ask that you turn in a one-page reflection with the artistic product that explains a bit about how your piece speaks to this question. Please refer to ideas from Senior, other readings, and specific biblical passages as appropriate.

If you choose to take a more traditional, written approach to this assignment, imagine that you are writing a letter (or a blog post) to someone from a different religious tradition who wants to know more about who Jesus was in his lifetime, his relationship to Christianity, and what he means to Christian believers. In your reflection, please refer to ideas from Senior, other readings, and specific biblical passages we have read to support your points. In your reflection, you may wish to address some of these questions:

- Who was Jesus during his life on earth? What are the most important things he did or said?
- Who is Jesus for Christian believers after his death?
- What did Jesus require of those who became his disciples?
- What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus today? What do Christians do and say that demonstrate their Christian identity?
- How did Jesus relate to women in his time? How do you or other women in our time relate to Jesus? Do you think the "maleness of Jesus" is problematic for Christianity?

Unit 4: What Is the Church? Do the Church and Theology Matter in the World?

For this reflection, please write about what your ideal church/faith community would be, that is, a community that would best support your spiritual life where it is today and help you continue to grow on your spiritual journey. Questions that you may wish to consider for this reflection include:

- Who would be a part of this community?
- Where would this community meet? What would its space or spaces look like?
- What central activities would be a part of this community?
- What is the mission or purpose of this community?
- How does this community relate to the contemporary world? What contemporary issues can it help to address?
- Does this community look like other faith communities that you know of from history or the present? Does it fit with any image of church we have discussed in class?

*Unit reflections* will be graded on a regular grading scale. Please see the unit reflections grading rubrics that are attached to this syllabus. There is a specific rubric for each unit reflection.

### **UNIT QUIZZES**

The course is divided into four units. There will be one quiz administered online on our D2L site for each unit. The quizzes are designed to assess your comprehension of the reading and presentations for that unit. They are open book and notes. You have a full week to complete each quiz; this time frame is provided so that you can complete it at a time convenient for your schedule. Please allow 2-3 hours for each quiz.

*Quiz #1:* "What is religion?" Opens 6 a.m. **February 20** and closes 11:59 p.m. **February 26**

*Quiz #2:* "Who is God? Who are we? Does the Bible tell us so?" Opens 6 a.m. **March 5** and closes 11:59 p.m. **March 12**

*Quiz #3:* "Who is Jesus?" Opens 6 a.m. **April 10** and closes 11:59 p.m. **April 16**

*Quiz #4:* "What is the church?" Opens 6 a.m. **May 1** and closes 11:59 p.m. **May 7**  
(This quiz only covers readings and presentations for April 16, April 23, and April 30.)

### **LIST OF IMPORTANT DUE DATES**

February 5	Pre- Learning Assessment due in class
February 20-26	Unit 1 Quiz online
March 5	Unit 1 Reflection due online in D2L drop box by 11:59 p.m.
March 6-12	Unit 2 Quiz online
March 12	Unit 2 Reflection due online in D2L drop box by 11:59 p.m.
April 10-16	Unit 3 Quiz online
April 16	Unit 3 Reflection due online in D2L drop box by 11:59 p.m.
May 1-7	Unit 4 Quiz online
May 14	Church Visit Reflection due online in D2L drop box by 11:59 p.m.
May 21	Post- Learning Assessment due online in D2L drop box by 11:59 p.m.
May 21	Unit 4 Reflection due online in D2L drop box by 11:59 p.m.

**ACADEMIC CODE OF CONDUCT**

Plagiarism is a very serious offense. You may be guilty of plagiarism if you (accidentally or deliberately) represent someone else’s words or ideas as your own. This is both dishonest and unfair. Note that uncredited use of someone else’s work is still plagiarism even if the author has given you permission to use the work. Unless you cite your sources clearly with quotation marks, attributed paraphrases, and parenthetical citations or notes, you are still dishonestly taking credit for what someone else has done. If you have any questions about what plagiarism is or how to cite source material, don’t hesitate to ask me.

**ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS**

If you are in need of academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Resources for Disabilities at 651-690-6563. They will be able to take care of the paperwork and we will work to provide whatever accommodations you need in this class. Please do this early in the semester so that matters can be addressed in a timely fashion.

**LATE WORK POLICY**

For the purpose of fairness, 1/3 of a letter grade will be deducted for each day that any written work is handed in late. (An A paper becomes an A- paper when it is one day late, a B+ paper two days late, etc.)

**GRADING SCALE**

A+ = 97-100	B+ = 87-89	C+ = 77-79	D+ = 68-69
A = 94-96	B = 84-86	C = 74-76	D = 66-67
A- = 90-93	B- = 80-83	C- = 70-73	F = 0-65

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Please note: readings and assignments are due on the date listed below.  
(Subject to change)

### UNIT I: WHAT IS RELIGION?

WEEK 1		
<b>February 5</b> <b>Face-to-Face</b>	<b>Who are we? What are we doing here?</b>	
	Reading	1) Syllabus 2) Glance through course texts
	Writing	Learning Assessment Pre-Essay due in class today, bring hard copy to class to turn in
WEEK 2		
<b>February 12</b> <b>Online</b>	<b>How do we approach mystery? How does religion get expressed?</b>	
	Reading	John Haught, <i>What Is Religion?</i> , 1-11, 15-20, 158-170, 30-78 (please read the selections from Haught in this order)
	Discussion	Online discussion board 1.1
	Lecture	View Panopto lecture on "Studying Religion and Theology"
	Unit 1 Reflection Preparation	During the first two weeks of class, please take notes on: 1) <i>Where</i> you hear religion talked about— in the music you listen to; in television shows or movies you watch; in newspapers, magazines, or blogs you read; in conversations you have; 2) <i>How</i> religion is talked about
WEEK 3		
<b>February 19</b> <b>Face-to-face</b>	<b>How is religion lived?</b>	
	Reading	1) Haught, 81-142 2) Martin Luther King, Jr. "I Have Been to the Mountaintop," <a href="http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/documentsentry/ive_been_to_the_mountaintop/">http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/documentsentry/ive_been_to_the_mountaintop/</a>
	Writing	Unit 1 Reflection, bring rough draft to class
	Discussion	Online discussion board 1.2
	Unit 1 Reflection Preparation	During the first two weeks of class, please take notes on: 1) <i>Where</i> you hear religion talked about— in the music you listen to; in television shows or movies you watch; in newspapers, magazines, or blogs you read; in conversations you have; 2) <i>How</i> religion is talked about
<b>Quiz for Unit 1: Opens 6 am February 20, closes 11:59 p.m. February 26</b>		

**Unit 1 Reflection:** Due March 5 by 11:59 p.m. in D2L drop box

**UNIT 2: WHO IS GOD? WHO ARE WE? DOES THE BIBLE TELL US SO?**

<b>WEEK 4</b>		
<b>February 26 Online</b>	<b>What is the Bible? What story does it tell?</b>	
	Lecture	View Panopto lecture on "Introduction to the Bible"
	Reading	Catherine Cory, "Issues of Interpretation," in <i>A Voyage through the New Testament</i> , 17-26, 35-37 ( <b>optional reading</b> )
<b>February 26 Online</b>	<b>What happened in creation? How did humanity fall?</b>	
	Lecture	View Panopto lecture on "Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures"
	Reading	<p><i>*Please read in order</i></p> <p>1) Selections from the Bible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gen 1:1-2:4 (Seven days of Creation)</li> <li>• Gen 2:4-2:25 (Creation of Adam and Eve)</li> <li>• Gen 3:1-3:24 (the "Fall")</li> </ul> <p>2) Anne Clifford, "A Reconstruction of Eve's Story," in <i>Introducing Feminist Theology</i>, 66-73</p> <p>3) Chung Hyun Kyung, "Struggle To Be the Sun Again: Asian Women's Theological Reflections on Humanity," in <i>Struggle To Be the Sun Again</i>, 36-52</p>
	Discussion	Online discussion board 2.1
<b>February 26 Online</b>	<b>How does God relate to God's people?</b>	
	Reading	<p>1) Selections from the Bible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exodus 1:1-4:17 (Call of Moses)</li> <li>• Exodus 13:17-15:21 (Crossing the Red Sea)</li> <li>• Exodus 19:1-23:13 (Sinai)</li> </ul> <p>2) "An Asian Feminist Perspective: The Exodus Story (Exodus 1:8-22, 2: 1-10)," in <i>Voices from the Margin</i>, 255-266</p>
	Unit 2 Reflection Preparation	<p>1) Choose a passage or story from the Hebrew Scriptures, one we have read or one that interests you</p> <p>2) Find a biblical commentary that addresses this passage</p>
<b>WEEK 5</b>		

<b>March 5 Face-to-Face</b>		<b>How does God speak to humanity?</b>
	Reading	1) Gale A. Yee, <i>Women's Bible Commentary</i> , "Hosea," 207-215 2) Selections from the Bible: Hosea 1-1
	Discussion	Online discussion board 2.1
	Writing	Unit 2 Reflection, bring rough draft to class
<b>March 5 Face-to-face</b>		<b>How does humanity speak to and about God?</b>
	Reading	1) Selections from Psalms: Psalms 1-5, 22, 63, 137, 147 2) Anne Clifford, "Major Names for God," in <i>Introducing Feminist Theology</i> , 98-109 3) Roberta Bondi, "Wearing Away the Heart: Praying to God the Father," in <i>Memories of God</i> , 21-49
	Writing	Unit 2 Reflection, bring rough draft to class
<b>Quiz for Unit 2:</b> Opens 6 a.m. March 6, closes 11:59 p.m. March 12		
<b>Unit 2 Reflection:</b> Due March 12 by 11:59 p.m. in D2L drop box		

### UNIT 3: WHO WAS JESUS?

<b>WEEK 6</b>		
<b>March 12 Online</b>		<b>What was the world of the New Testament like?</b>
	Reading	Donald Senior, <i>Jesus: A Gospel Portrait</i> , 1-46
	Video	<i>Frontline: From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians</i>
	Discussion	1) Online discussion board 3.1
	Reading	2) Luke 4-14, 18
<b>WEEK 7</b>		
<b>March 19 Face-to-face</b>		<b>Who was with Jesus? What was Jesus about?</b>
	Reading	1) Senior, "Jesus and His Own," 47-73 2) Chung Hyun Kyung, "Who Is Mary for Today's Asian Women?" in <i>Struggle To Be the Sun Again</i> , 74-84 3) Senior, "Jesus Speaks," 74-99
	Discussion	Online discussion board 3.2

	Lecture	View Panopto lecture on "Introduction to the New Testament"
<b>WEEK 8</b>		
<b>April 2</b>	<b>Face-to-Face</b>	<b>Who do you say that I am? What do women say?</b>
	Reading	1) Teresa Okure, "Jesus and Mary Magdalene," 312-326 2) Kwok Pui-Lan, "Christology," in <i>Introducing Asian Feminist Theology</i> . 79-97 3) Anne Carr, "Feminism and Christology," in <i>Transforming Grace</i> , 158-179
<b>WEEK 9</b>		
<b>April 9</b>	<b>Online</b>	<b>How does Jesus heal? What does the death and resurrection of Jesus mean?</b>
	Reading	1) Senior, "Jesus Heals," 100-116 2) Senior, "Death and Victory," 117-142. 3) Roberta Bondi, "Out of the Green Tiled Bathroom: Crucifixion," 111-144 4) Selections from the Bible: Mark chapters 14-16
	Discussion	Discussion Board 3.3
	Lecture	View Panopto lecture on "Atonement Theology"
<b>Unit 3 Quiz:</b> opens 6 a.m. April 10 and closes 11:59 p.m. April 16		
<b>Unit 3 Reflection:</b> Due April 16 by 11:59 p.m. to D2L drop box		

#### UNIT 4: WHAT IS THE CHURCH? DO THE CHURCH AND THEOLOGY MATTER IN THE WORLD?

<b>WEEK 10</b>		
<b>April 16</b>	<b>Face-to-Face</b>	<b>What happened after Jesus?</b>
	Readings	<i>*Please read in order</i> 1) Selections from the Bible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acts 1:1-4:35 (beginning of the Church), 9:1-22 (Conversion of Saul), chapter 10 (Peter's vision)</li> </ul> 2) Senior, 143-158 3) Justo Gonzalez, <i>Church History: An Essential Guide</i> , "Overview," 11-22 4) Selections from Hildegard of Bingen, "Scivias"
	Lecture	View Panopto lecture on "A Sprint through Church History"

<b>WEEK 11</b>		
<b>April 23</b>	<b>Online</b>	<b>What is the Church?</b>
	Reading	1) Putnam and Campbell, "Vignettes: The Old and the New," from <i>American Grace: How Religion Unites and Divides Us</i> , 37-71 (handout) 2) Mary E. Hines, "Community for Liberation: Church," in <i>Freeing Theology</i> , 161-184
	Video	These are two short videos about the churches described in the "Vignettes" chapter: 1. (10 minutes) <a href="http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/multimedia?video=9tYmQwMjpTC_vhXu866rTt0AmCOHpIAF">http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/multimedia?video=9tYmQwMjpTC_vhXu866rTt0AmCOHpIAF</a> 2) This is a long video, so please just watch the first 10 minutes: <a href="http://www.saddleback.com/mc/m/3d1dd/">http://www.saddleback.com/mc/m/3d1dd/</a>
	Discussion	Discussion Board 4.1
<b>Week 12</b>		
<b>April 30</b>	<b>Face-to-face</b>	<b>What does the church say about issues that are important in society? Focus on Catholic social teaching, economics, and the environment</b>
	Reading	1) U.S. Council of Catholic Bishops, "Economic Justice for All," vi-xi, 1-15 (the handout goes through page 22, but you can stop at page 15) 2) Sharon Daloz Parks, "Household Economics," in <i>Practicing Our Faith</i> , 43-58 3) U.S. Council of Catholic Bishops, "Renewing the Earth," 223-243
<b>Quiz for Unit 4: opens 6 a.m. May 1 and closes 11:59 p.m. May 7</b>		
<b>WEEK 13</b>		
<b>May 7</b>	<b>Online</b>	<b>What does it mean to live as Christian? How do Christians pray?</b>
	Readings	1) Marjorie Suchocki, "The Question of Prayer," "Images of God," and "Conditions of Prayer," 1-41 in <i>In God's Presence: Theological Reflections on Prayer</i> 2) John Haught, "Conclusion: Prayer," 251-255 3) Stephanie Paulsell, "Honoring the Body," 13-27 in <i>Practicing Our Faith</i> , see directions below for accessing, I will also e-mail pdf
	Discussion	Online discussion board 4.2
	Lecture	View Panopto lecture on "Christian Practices"
<b>WEEK 14</b>		

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>May14</b> <b>Face-to-face</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>How do women live their faith in the world?</b></p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Reading</p>	<p>1) Kay Turner, "Preparing a Place: Defining the Personal Altar," in <i>Beautiful Necessity</i>, 27-41  2) Brennan Hill, "The God of Homelessness: Dorothy Day," 41-82 in <i>8 Spiritual Heroes: Their Search for God</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Unit 4 Reflection: Due May 21 by 11:59 p.m. to D2L drop box</b></p>		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Post-course Assessment Essay: Due May 21 by 11:59 p.m. to D2L drop box</b></p>		