

Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary
GLOBAL CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIES

IM-664/TS-664 (3 Units)
Fall 2009
Thursday 1:00-4:00 PM

Professor: Mark D. Baker, Ph. D.
452-1768 (office); 255-5236 (home)
e-mail: mbaker@mbseminary.edu
Office Hours: Weds. 1:30-4:30 &
Thurs. 9:00-11:00

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The emphasis in the course is on the dynamic relationship between the Gospel and its cultural context. Students will reflect on both the content and method of contextual theologies primarily through the writings of African, Asian, and Latin American theologians as well as through the work of some North American and European theologians who are intentionally contextualizing their theology. The course will include an exercise in doing contextual theology.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Through this course students will be able to:

- learn key socio-cultural traits of different regions and observe their impact, both positive and negative, on theological thinking in those regions
- develop the ability to critically compare and evaluate the writings of a number of theologians in different contexts explaining the same doctrine
- identify key themes in one theologian=s work and observe the dynamic relationship between the Gospel and his or her context.
- articulate, in relation to at least three doctrines, how the student=s theology has been enriched through seeing those doctrines through the lens of a different culture
- explain, through using examples, the missional importance of developing contextual theologies.
- reflect contextually on a theological theme.

LEARNING OUTCOMES ADDRESSED IN THIS COURSE

Within the larger curriculum goals of the Seminary, this course will facilitate growth in ability to:

- 3.2 Utilize theological and social scientific tools and practices to understand and interpret the culture of a ministry and the cultural context of the ministry
- 3.3 Assess the significance of cultural context for interpreting Scripture within and across cultures
- 4.2 Demonstrate strong research and writing skills
 - 4.3.3.2 Develop skills in evaluating theological methodology
 - 4.3.3.9 Discuss contemporary and global theologies
 - 4.3.3.10 Reflect on theological themes in a contextually sensitive manner

COURSE TEXT Course Pack (CP) - a collection of photocopied articles and chapters will be distributed the first class session. You will be billed for the cost of copies and copyright fees.

COURSE OUTLINE

- 1- Aug. 27 - **Introduction to the Course and Theological Approaches**
Before class read: Justo González (CP), *Mañana*, 48-53

- 2- Sept. 3 – **Models of Contextual Theology**
 Preparation: Read the following and answer reflection questions (see appendix):
 William Dyrness (CP), 20-34.
 Dieumeme Noëlliste, (CP), 105-108
- 3- Sept. 10 - **Christology**
 Preparation: Read the following and answer reflection questions (see appendix):
 William Dyrness (CP), *Learning About Theology from the Third World*, 163-184
 C. René Padilla (CP), *A Christology and Mission in the Two Thirds World*, @ 12-
 32
 Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (CP), *A Doing Christ=s Mission in the Pluralistic Context
 of Asia: A Critical Dialogue with Some Asian Christologies*, @ 109-126.
- 4- Sept. 17 - **Christology, cont.**
 Preparation: Read the following and answer reflection questions (see appendix):
 Justo González (CP), *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective*,
 139-155
 Kosuke Koyama (CP), *A Theology of the Cross*, @ 240-261
- 5- Sept. 24 - **Christology, cont.**
 Preparation: Read the following and answer reflection questions (see appendix):
 Aloysius Pieris (CP), *A Speaking of the Son of God in Non-Christian Cultures:
 The Two Christological Perspectives in Asia Today*, @ 59-65.
 William Dyrness (CP), *Learning About Theology from the Third World* 156-159.
 E. Stanley Jones (CP), *A The Indian Interpretation of Jesus*, @ 189-200.
 Wayan Mastra (CP), *A Christology in the Context of the Life and Religion of the
 Balinese*, @ 157-174.
 Kwame Bediako (CP), *A Jesus in African Culture*, @ 93-121.
- 6- Oct. 1 – **Latin American Liberation Theology**
 Preparation: Read the following and report in class that you have done so (see
 appendix):
 Gustavo Gutiérrez (CP), *A Liberation Theologies: Latin America*, @ 131-133
 João B. Libânio (CP), *A Praxis/Orthopraxis*, @ 172
 Leonardo Boff (CP), “Methodology of the Theology of Liberation,” 1-21
 Orlando Costas (CP), *A Prophetic Significance of Liberation Theologies*, @ 126-
 132
 C. René Padilla (CP), *A The New Ecclesiology in Latin America*, @ 336-354.
 Nancy Bedford, “Whatever Happened to Liberation Theology” at
<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=820>
- 7- Oct. 8 - **Doctrine of God**

Preparation: Read the following and answer reflection questions (see appendix):
 Aída B. Spencer (CP), *A God the Stranger: An Intercultural Hispanic American Perspective*, @ 89-103
 Dieumeme Noëlliste (CP), *A Transcendent but Not Remote: The Caribbean*, @ 104-126
 Vincent Donovan (CP), *Christianity Rediscovered*, 41-53 & 61-64
 Solomon Avotri (CP), *A Genesis 11:1-9: An African Perspective*, @ 17-25.
Bibliography for Contextual theologian paper due

Module Week, No Class Oct. 15

8- Oct. 22 - **Doctrine of God, cont., Reconciliation, and Resurrection**

Preparation: Read the following and answer reflection questions (see appendix):
 Grace Y. May (CP), *A Viewing God Through the Twin Lenses of Holiness and Mercy: A Chinese American Perspective*,” 166-188
 Miroslav Volf (CP), *A The Social Meaning of Reconciliation*, @ 158-172
 I Cor. 15:1-58 and reflections by Elsa Tamez, François Kabasele Lumbala, and Daniel C. Arichea (CP), in *Return to Babel*, 185-198
Response letter/essay due

9 - Oct. 29 - **Atonement**

Preparation: Read the following and answer reflection questions (see appendix):
 Timothy Tennent (CP), “Human Identity in Shame-Based Cultures of the Far East,” 77-104
 Mako Nagasawa, “Why Penal Substitution Doesn’t Work with Asian Americans”
<http://nagasawafamily.org/article%20penal%20substitution%20&%20asian%20americans.pdf>
 Mark D. Baker (CP), “The Saving Significance of the Cross in a Honduran Barrio” @ 1-17

10- Nov. 5 - **Atonement, cont.**

Preparation: Read the following and answer reflection questions (see appendix):
 David Shenk (CP), selections from *Justice, Reconciliation & Peace in Africa*, 19-21, 39-41, 44-54, 64-74, 87-90, 90-93, 99-104
 Z. M. Kisare (CP), *Kizare: A Mennonite of Kiseru*, 76-83
 Curtis Chang (CP), *A He Shared Our Aches*, @ 172-183
 JoAnne M. Terrell (CP), “What Manner of Love?” 51-76

11- Nov. 12 - **Doing Contextual Theology**

Preparation: Reflect on method and a topic for contextual theology project (see appendix).
 Read: Brian McLaren (CP), *Generous Orthodoxy*, 79-89
Contextual Theologian Paper due.

12- Nov. 19 - **Sin and Salvation**

Preparation: Read the following and answer reflection questions (see appendix):

Orlando Costas (CP), *Christ Outside the Gate*, 21-39

Carol Lakey Hess (CP), *Caretakers of Our Common House*, 31-54

Justo González (CP), *Mañana*, 134-138

Loida Martell-Otero (CP), AOf Satos and Saints: Salvation from the Periphery, @
7-37.

Mark Baker & Clint LeBruyns (CP), “Salvation”

Thanksgiving break, no class Nov. 26

13- Individual meetings with professor

ABest draft of Contextual theology project due Monday Nov. 30.

14- Dec. 10 - **Conclusion: Student Presentations**

Preparation: prepare presentation (see assignments).

Final draft of Contextual theology project due

ASSIGNMENTS

Reading: Unless otherwise noted it is expected that the reading for this course will be done thoroughly and in careful and reflective way. This course requires about 570 pages in weekly reading assignments. It is expected, however, that you will spend as much time reading and reflecting on these pages as you would reading the 1500 to 2000 generally required in a three unit course. Discussion of the reading will be a major part of each class session.

Reading reflections: The appendix lists questions to reflect on as you read the material for the next class. Before class write responses to the questions (about to two pages single-spaced for each session.) These reflections will help students interact with the readings in a way that will lay the foundation for class discussion, other assignments and learning activities. (Grading standards: B for satisfactorily completing the assignment; B- or lower for not doing all the reading or not adequately answering a question; B+ for answers that reflect careful reading and thoughtful interaction with the questions; A- or A for outstanding depth of insight or analysis. Note, while longer answers, unless they are simply summary, increase the probability of getting a B+ rather than a B, length alone will not produce an A since more words written does not necessarily mean more insight.) *Because of the importance of these assignments to the class discussion, and because the answers will be discussed in class, any assignments handed in late (after the class session) will be reduced two full grade points.* (Written responses to the reading are not required for classes 1, 2, 6, 11, 13 and 14.)

Response letter/essay: At the mid-point of the course students will write a two page single space reflection on material from class sessions and readings. You will write this letter/essay to a friend (partner in ministry, family member, church member, etc.); give one copy to your friend and give a copy to the professor at the next class session. This is not meant to be a summary of all we have done. You are to write about three or four things you found most engaging and important;

describe the concept or ideas, and explain their importance to your friend. (This may include questions you haveBissues that remain unresolved.) You are especially encouraged to reflect on methodological issues, and upon the missional importance of developing contextual theologies. These essays will help students sort through content and identify and reflect upon that which is of central importance to them. You will be graded on clarity of thought and communication, and level of personal engagement. **Due 10/22.**

Contextual Theologian Paper: While the course as a whole attempts to capture the breadth and diversity of global Christian theologies this assignment will allow students to get to know the work of one theologian in a more in-depth way, and thus observe in a more sustained way how one person develops his or her theology in a specific context. You will select one theologian and read at least 350 pages of his or her work. The appendix contains a list of possibilities. You may choose a theologian not on the list, but should check with the professor. (By no later than **10/8** you will need to report which theologian you have chosen and supply a bibliographic list from which you will read. The bibliography should include, if available, books and articles by the person, and articles about the person's work.) Students will each write a ten to twelve page paper (double-spaced) which will describe central themes of the theologian's work and critically reflect upon it. Description of the central themes should be no more than 30% of your paper. You may use the general reflection questions for evaluating individual writings (in the appendix) as the basis of your analysis and critical reflection. **The paper is due 11/12.**

Contextual Theology Assignment: Having observed how others have done contextual theology you will have a chance to do the same by writing about a particular theological theme from and for a particular context you know well. The first part of the paper should identify the context, describe an aspect of this particular theological theme that people from your context easily understand and connect with and also describe a way, in relation to this theological theme, people in your context need to be challenged or corrected. (Theme and context must be approved by the professor.) The second part of the paper will be in the form you would actually present it to this context. This may be written in the form of an article, presentation, or sermon; or you may use other media. Students' work will be evaluated according to the same guidelines we use to evaluate the theologians we read in the course. You are encouraged, but not required, to interact with others about this assignment, and even if in just a small way, put into practice what Dyrness points to in his chart on page 30. (Or if you prefer another methodology--seek to start put into practice that methodology.) The length of paper may vary depend on the form of the presentation. The first part of the paper should be at least two pages (double-spaced). The second part should be at least four pages (double spaced). All students must complete a **best draft by 11/30, 8:30 AM.** The professor will grade it and then discuss it with the student. A revised and final draft is **due by 12/10.** . (The best draft's grade will 1/3 and the final draft's grade will be 2/3 of the grade for this project.)

Presentation: As a way of facilitating learning from other students and as a way of helping students identify aspects of the course that have been of central importance each student will give an 8 minute presentation in the last class session. They should tell, in relation to three doctrines, how their theology has been enriched through seeing those doctrines through the lens of a

different culture, and use examples to demonstrate the missional importance of developing contextual theologies. They may also reflect on methodological issues.

Attendance and Class Participation - To get an “A” in this category you must have perfect attendance and make significant contributions to class discussion. An “A-“ will be given to those with perfect attendance or with one absence and significant participation. Two absences will place a student in the “B” range; participation will determine whether it is a high or low “B.” Three absences could move the student in to the “C” range. Four or more absences place the student at risk of receiving an “F” in class participation, but also at risk of having their course grade lowered a full letter grade or of automatically failing the class. Students may talk to the professor about ways to partially make up for absences. Note that “significant participation” refers to quality of participation not just quantity.

Academic Policies:

MBBS academic policies are described at www.mbseminary.edu/fresno/policies . These policies provide guidance on academic integrity and plagiarism, incomplete course work, extensions, dates for changing registration, non-discriminatory and inclusive language, appeals, etc. Students are expected to be familiar with these policies and will be held responsible for adhering to them. If you have questions about how these policies relate to you or o a situation that you face in your studies, please speak to the professor or consult the Registrar or Academic Dean.

Assignment policies for this course:

1. Students are expected to submit assignments on time; if they are late they will be graded down one grade level (a B+ becomes a B).
2. All written work should have one inch margins and Times Roman 12pt font.
3. All assignments may be printed on scrap paper.

Grading Scheme

Attendance and class participation 10%; Reading reflections 40%; Response letter/essay 5%; Presentation 5%; Contextual theologian paper 25%; Contextual theology project 15%.

As stated in the *Academic Handbook* a “B” is the baseline grade. A “B” means the student is doing satisfactory work. The “B+” or higher grade indicates that the student has exceeded the baseline performance standard. The “C” grade indicates that the student has not achieved the baseline level. I will write a letter grade on your assignments. In my grade book each letter grade will be given a numerical equivalent (B+ = 3.33; A- = 3.67). At the end of the semester your numerical average will determine your final letter grade based on the following scale:

- 4.00 to 3.83 = A
- 3.82 to 3.5 = A-
- 3.49 to 3.17 = B+
- 3.16 to 2.83 = B etc.

Students taking the course credit/no credit (pass/fail) must complete all assignments in order to receive credit for the course.

APPENDIX

Reflection Questions for Class Three

- 1.) State briefly the main characteristics of the African, Asian, and Latin American Christologies described in these readings.
- 2.) State which category (suitcase, translation, anthropological, praxis, interaction) best describes each of the following theologians: Nyamiti, Bediako, Sobrino, Samartha, Song, Nolan, Dyrness, Padilla, and Kärkkäinen. Include a sentence or two explaining why, and be ready to share, in class, quotes from the reading to back up your choice.
- 3.) Observe how Dyrness, Padilla and Kärkkäinen evaluate various thinkers. What can we learn from them that will help us in the rest of the course as we read individual theologians? What are important evaluative questions to ask as we read theologians the rest of the semester?

General Reflection Questions for Evaluating Individual Writings (Classes 4-12)

We will use the following questions to guide our reading and discussion of individuals for the rest of the course. There is great flexibility in how you do this assignment. For instance, in a given week you may choose to write on three questions and within your answer to each question discuss all of the writings of that week. Or you may write in response to three questions about one author, two questions about another, and respond to one question that compares three different readings of that week. You should, however, in some way include at least one response to each reading. Clearly label what question you are responding to. In addition to these general questions, some weeks there are specific reflection questions that follow in the appendix, and that you are required to write answers to.

Contextual Character

1. How does the theology reflect its contextuality? How is it different from theologies written in other settings?
2. Are there ways you think the theology is not contextual enough?
3. How is it similar to and different from theology done by others in the same setting?

Gospel and Culture

4. In his or her work is the gospel simply rephrased in a culturally sensitive way, or does the gospel and culture interact to produce new theological insights? Give examples.
5. Which has the privileged role gospel or culture? (Other ways of asking this question are: Is the the gospel assimilated to, brought in conformity with, the culture, or is the culture assimilated to, brought in conformity with, the gospel? [Dyrness, 168B from wk. 3]. Is it Christianization of culture or desecralization of culture through dynamic interaction of the gospel and culture? [Dyrness, 169]).

Other Questions

6. How does the writer deal with the AScandal of Particularity@? (The incarnation of God in JesusBa particular man in a particular time and place, and the claim that Jesus is the way of salvation.) Does he or she appear more minimalist or maximalist [Dyrness, 178-79]?

7. Does his or her work show evidence of dialogue with other contextual theologies? How could it profit from other theologies?
8. Does the author interact with Christian tradition? Does she or he utilize it, or only critique it?
9. Does the theologian use tools of social analysis? If so how?
10. What pre-commitments are evident?
11. Does he or she place more emphasis on God=s transcendence or God=s immanence?
12. What are the missional implications of this work?
13. How does Jesus= suffering/God=s suffering play a role in his or her theology?

Contributions to Global Theology

14. How has reading this theologian enriched your theological understanding?
15. What can we learn from the methodology of this theologian that will help us in our own contextual theological reflection?

Additional Reflection Questions for Class Four

In Relation to **González** (The AConstinization@ of God. refers to making the emperor God-like and God emperor like, discussed on page 108 of González=s book.)

1.) González is a historian, and therefore it should not surprise us that there is such a strong emphasis on history in his book. On one hand so much attention to theological debates that happened centuries ago make this feel like a very un-contextual piece of writing, but in another way it is very contextual. In what ways is his discussion of the Councils and creeds an example of contextual theology?

In relation to **Koyama**: 2.) Choose one of the following themes and trace how he uses it throughout the essay. What can we learn from this? (circular/linear, brokenness/glory, periphery/center, confront/embrace)

Additional Reflection Questions for Class Five

In relation to **Pieris** 1.) Note how Pieris=s is a maximalist (See earlier Dyrness reading, 178-179) and reflect on whether, in his case, that is the same thing as saying Aall paths lead to God? Do you agree with Dyrness=s description/critique of Pieris? Why or why not? (Dyrness, 156-159.)

In relation to **Mastra** 2.) Is this more an example of an interaction model or a translation model (see earlier Dyrness reading, 27-31)? Explain your answer.

Class six: A note on the Padilla reading

I have included the Padilla reading for a number of reasons. First, although in North American liberation theology is primarily identified as texts written by certain theologians, in Latin America it is identified as much or more with base communities. Second, base communities, as described in this article, are a good example of the method of liberation theology—this ecclesiology comes not from a book, but from the “road.” Third, once again Padilla offers us a great model of interacting with others’ theology. Note how he both critiques and offers words of appreciation, seeks to learn from them.

Additional Reflection Questions for Class Seven

1. Donovan, unlike others we have read, is working in a context that is not his own. What can we learn from him about contextualizing in a foreign culture?
2. What approach do you think Avotri is using (anthropological, praxis, translation or interactional)? Explain your answer. (If you are unclear on the categories please review Dyrness, pages 25-30).

Additional Reflection Questions for Class Eight

In relation to **Volf**, 1.) Even though he does not highlight it, how do you see evidence of his Croatian, former Yugoslavian, context of ethnic conflict and violence? And, how does that help explain the difference between his essay liberation theologians we have read?

In relation to the **essays on I. Cor 15**, take special note of each author=s approach to scripture and interpretation of scripture. These readings especially lends itself to comparison because we have three authors reflecting on the same text. 2.) What are differences and similarities you observe? What do you attribute to context and what do you attribute to method [praxis, interactional, etc.] and approach to scripture?

Additional Reflection Questions for Class Ten

You may read the first pages of **Shenk**, quickly. They provide the contextual background for the later theological reflection. Start reading slowly on page 71.

Curtis Chang is not writing to a Ageneric@ North American context, yet it is a context more similar to Ahome@ for most of us than Shenk and Kisare. In part we are doing this reading to help prepare for the next classBto help you imagine doing contextual theology in a context you are familiar with. Also, however, we are reading it to note differences and similarities with this week=s African writings.

1. What are ways that Chang=s presentation is theologically similar to Shenk and Kisare even though he does not use the metaphor of sacrifice?
2. What are ways Chang=s work differs? How do the contexts change or modify the content of what is communicated?

Reflection Questions for Class Eleven

(Come to class prepared to share your reflections. You do not, however, have to hand them in.)

1.) What are various contextualizing moves that McLaren makes in this chapter?
- 2.) Based on your reflections on the methodology used by the various contextual theologians we have read, what are guidelines, directions or insights on how to do contextual theological reflection that will aid you in your contextual theology project?
- 3.) What is the doctrinal issue you will write on? How does your context illuminate this doctrine? What are pressing contextual questions that relate to this doctrine? How might God=s Spirit challenge your context through this doctrine?

Additional Reflection Questions for Class Twelve

In relation to **Costas** 1.) How can you see his contextuality even in the first part of this chapter (pp.21-33) before he explicitly discusses Latin America?

Please pay special attention this week to how the various writings relate. 2.) What are similarities and differences and how is that due to their contexts?

I co-authored the article on salvation for the *Global Dictionary of Theology* (IVP). I was directed to draft the article and then send it to African theologian Clint LeBruyns for his input, and for him to add to the article. I am giving you an early draft of the article, rather than the final version, so that you can see what Clint added. 3.) What stands out to you about what he added and how does that relate to our differing contexts?

Contextual Theologian Paper

Additional Reflection Questions for the Contextual Theologian Paper

1. What other influences are evident (peers, educational, social)? How are they seen?
2. Is his or her work so focused on one contextual issue that it fails to deal with other issues that have importance, not just in a general theological sense, but even in his or her context?
3. Does he or she have a Acanon within the canon of scripture@ that leads to a distorted theology?

The following is a list of some of the possible theologians for this project. If you pursue another option check with the professor *before* the bibliography is due.

Africa:

Bediako, Kwame
 Bujo, Benezet
 Dickson, Kwesi A.
 Kapolyo, Joe
 Mbiti, John
 Oduyoye, Mercy Amba
 Parratt, John
 Shenk, David W.

Escobar, Samuel
 Padilla, C. Rene
 Schipani, Daniel (in area of Christian education)

Roman Catholic Liberation Theologians

Boff, Leonardo
 Gutierrez, Gustavo
 Sobrino, Jon
 Segundo, Juan Luis

Protestant Liberation Theologians

Miguez Bonino, Jose
 Tamez, Elsa

Asia:

Beltran, Benigno
 Endo, Shusaku (novelist)
 Kitamori, Kazoh
 Koyama, Kosuke
 Mangalwadi, Vishal
 Park, Andrew Sung
 Phan, Peter C.
 Pieris, Aloysius
 Prabhakar, Joseph (with other Dalit theologians)
 Samartha, S. J.
 Joh, Wonhee Anne
 Yung, Hwa

Hispanics:

Gonzalez, Justo
 Isasi-Diaz, Ada Maria
 Machado, Daisy
 Pedraja, Luis
 Villafane, Eldin
 Reid, Barbara

Native American

Tinker, George

Latin America:

Evangelicals doing contextual theology:
 Costas, Orlando

African American

Cone, James
 Hopkins, Dwight

Jennings, Willie
Panell, William
Riggs, Marcia
Terrell, JoAnne M.
Williams, Delores

Eastern European
Miroslav Volf