I. Course Description

Last fall, the Senior Seminar investigated the fundamental themes of Theological Anthropology (e.g., nature, grace, sin, free will, human knowledge, finitude, and embodiment) in terms of its method (Stone and Duke), biblical foundations (Paul), historical developments (Irenaeus/Gnostics, Augustine/Pelagius, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther) and contemporary issues (Rahner, Liberation Theology, Feminist Theology). This spring semester we will build on that foundation by exploring theological anthropology within the Context of 21st Century, North American Culture. To this end, students are encouraged to relate their research toward their own vocational interests, which (1) is likely framed by American culture, and (2) is informed by implicit/explicit anthropological assumptions that may or may not be theological. Thus, this course operates from a presupposition: any worthwhile theological anthropology depends upon the cultures in which it finds its forms of expression, and cultures draw their meaning from an underlying substrate of religious faith, which harbors theological anthropology claims. By such juxtaposition, we will wrestle for a “second-naiveté” (Ricoeur).

At the end of this semester, all students will present their research to a broader public in the form of a research symposium. Thus, throughout this semester, it is imperative that students hone their presentation skills. Since this semester builds on last, it behooves us to revisit the two descriptors that frame the class. On the one hand, the Senior Seminar should be:

Reading and analysis of classic works in the historical development of the theology in the church and the university, and in modern and contemporary understandings of theology in relation to both, with the aim of illuminating the communal and public dimensions of theological inquiry. Required of all majors.

Last semester we explored the historical development of theological anthropology. This semester we build on that study by exploring further contemporary applications of theological anthropology (we begun this contemporary investigation with Rahner, Liberation Theology and Feminist Theology). On the other hand, although our focus shifts, our subject remains the same:

Christian anthropology is the articulation of the Christian understanding of human existence. This understanding is grounded in Jesus Christ as the revelation of the meaning of humanity in relation to God. Thus Christian anthropology flows from christology, specifically from that part of christology wherein Christ is portrayed as the paradigm of the human as intended by the creator.

Thus, as we explore theological anthropology within the context of North American Culture, we will pay special attention to how our culture shapes theological anthropology in positive and negative ways and how theological anthropology critiques and celebrates our culture. Both the context and the content of our study make claims on the understanding of human existence. As we compare and contrast them, we will hopefully shed some light on both.
II. Course Structure: The theme of Theological Anthropology and American Pop Culture will run throughout all five subjects.

(1) Theological Anthropology and Feminism
   Hope Stephenson
   Lainey Trahan

(2) Theological Anthropology and Science
   Jennifer Hess
   Gina Meyer
   Laura Rexroat
   Lee Richardson

(3) Theological Anthropology and Spirituality/Psychology (Vocation)
   Rachell Beabout
   Danielle Diveley
   Katie Lucchesi
   Kale Uzzle

(4) Theological Anthropology and Consumer Culture
   Kevine Duniven
   Katherine Egan
   Mara Unger

(5) Theological Anthropology and Public Theology (Politics)
   Carl Hansel
   Christine Keogh
   Chris Wagner

III. Goals/Objectives of the Course (What to Learn)
By the end of this course, the student will be able to. . .

1. Identify the leading components of American pop-culture and their nascent theological dimensions.
2. Explain how theological anthropology requires a cultural context and how a cultural context always implies a theological anthropology.
3. Use a defined method to argue a thesis regarding the interplay of theological anthropology and culture.
4. Analyze five components of American pop-culture so that its organizational structure and dynamics may be better understood and facts and inferences distinguished.
5. Interpret last semester’s themes (nature, grace, sin, free will, human knowledge, finitude, and embodiment) with this semester’s subjects (feminism, science, psychology, consumerism, and politics).
6. Make informed judgments about the assumptions of theological anthropology and the values of American culture, and vice versa.
7. Conduct individual research, deliver an academic presentation in a professional manner, and write a carefully constructed research paper.

IV. Required Skill-Set Acquisition (What to Do)
1. Ability to Read Critically: individual students demonstrate the ability to comprehend the course material via (a) class discussion and (2) weekly response papers that follow the reading rubric handout, which will be graded according to qualitative peer assessment.
2. Ability to Write Clearly: individual students demonstrate the ability to scrutinize and integrate the course material via three written projects throughout the semester. Guidelines for the three Synthesis Papers are provided on WebCT.
3. Ability to Present Professionally: individual students will present their research in a public forum at the end of the semester. Guidelines for the presentations will be forthcoming.
4. Ability to Think Creatively: individual students demonstrate insightful thinking by devising a final project that relates the student’s professional and vocational goals. Creative engage Michael Lawler’s book in the synthesis papers and group presentations.
5. **Ability to Synthesize Carefully**: throughout all the assignments, individual students associate last semester’s material with the material explored semester. There is an expectation that the students will integrate what they have learned as they analyze new material.

6. **Ability to Discourse Collaboratively**:

**V. Methodology (How to Learn)**

Since the “product” of this class will be a 10-12 page research paper reworked for public presentation, this seminar will place special emphasis on student initiative, insight and independent research. While the professors will facilitate general classroom discussion, the students, on selected days, will actively lead seminar sessions through formal presentations of the readings geared toward their research. The seminar format is designed to accomplish three things. It will: (1) provide all students with a unifying theme of the interrelation of theological anthropology and pop-culture, (2) provide specific research focus in five areas, and (3) allow all students to investigate all the themes in a more general way.

Accordingly, each class will usually have three basic components: (1) analysis of Cobb, which everyone is equally responsible for, (2) analysis of a specific theme (e.g., consumerism), which specific students will primarily engage and facilitate class discussion via the reading rubric, and (2) discussion of specific themes, in which all are to participate generally, but written assignment relates to the research report not daily readings. Those student(s) who will be facilitating the discussions must meet with the teacher on Thursday of Friday prior to Monday’s class. Some reading should be completed prior to this meeting.

Each class will be roughly divided into three parts: (1) 45 minutes on Cobb, (2) 45 minutes on subject reading (two weeks per subject), and (3) 45 minutes of student research reports / presentations.

**VI. Requirements and Grading**

**A. Books:**


**B. Assignments:** for the dates they are due see the calendar.

- **5% = Presence**
- **3% = Attendance** (see attendance policy below; recorded via an in-class attendance sheet)
- **2% = Teaching Evaluation** (taken online at semester’s end; full credit for taking the evaluation)
- **10% = Final Exam:** “So What? Who Cares?” (1 page, single spaced, typed; qualitative peer grading)
- **10% = Research Reports and Reading Rubrics**
- **25% = Weekly Reading Reviews (1 page, single spaced, typed; quantitative peer grading; papers overdue past Wednesday of the week due will not be accepted.**
- **20% = Final 10-12 page Research Paper (guidelines forthcoming)**
- **30% = Final Public (guidelines forthcoming)**
C. Grade Scale and Standards:

**A range:** Superior, excellent, outstanding

A = 100-94  
A- = 93-90  

The assignment demonstrates critical, informed, and creative theological inquiry that reflects a synthetic understanding of essential theological/historical concepts. The assignment demonstrates insight *beyond what is normally expected*. This grade presupposes carefully nuanced reasoning and writing that is free from material, structural and grammatical errors. The differentiation between an A and A- largely depends on the assignment’s astute reasoning and engaging writing style in relation to peer work for the same assignment.

**B range:** Very Good, Good  

B+ = 89-87  
B = 86-84  
B- = 83-80  

The assignment demonstrates ready command of full range of concepts and shows some critical, informed, and creative inquiry that reflects *above average* understanding of essential theological/historical concepts. This means the student has produced an assignment that is free from material, structural and grammatical errors. The differentiation between a B+ and B largely depends on the assignment’s creativity in relation to peer work for the same assignment.

**C range:** Okay, Acceptable  

C+ = 79-77  
C = 76-74  
C- = 73-70  

The assignment demonstrates satisfactory ability to describe the overall picture and essential concepts in a summary manner. This means the student has completed the assignment in a manner involving no significant errors. Material may not be free from structural and grammatical errors. Nuanced reasoning is not demonstrated. The differentiation between a C+ and C largely depends on the assignment’s organization in relation to peer work for the same assignment.

**D range:** Below average  

D = 69-60  

The assignment demonstrates reasoning that is neither carefully reasoned nor coherently presented; writing is insufficient in depth of insight and/or use of texts; presentation is not free from material error in structure, spelling and grammar. This means that the student failed to respond adequately to the assignment and its intentions.

**F range:** Unsatisfactory  

F = 59-0  

In one or more of the following ways the student: 1) failed to turn in the assignment; 2) did not respond to the assignment as given; 3) submitted work so thoroughly flawed as to indicate that the student did not make a serious effort; 4) involved plagiarism or cheating.

D. Peer Grading: I have a *general* expectation for the quality of work expected in this class as represented by the contents of the exams or written assignments. However, I determine *specific* grades by comparing the contents of each exam and paper to the work of your peers, which means the bar for the class is set by the class. Thus, the best tests/papers earn an A and set the grade scale for that assignment.

E. Attendance: This class has the following attendance policy. *Excused absences are not penalized.*  
0 absences earn all 3 attendance points  
1 absence earns 2 points
2 absences earn 1 point
3 absences earn no points (1 week of class missed)

After this, the penalty is substantial. Each additional unexcused absence after the third lowers your overall grade –2 percentage points. Twelve unexcused absences earn a failing grade (AF). I keep record of your attendance via an attendance sheet you sign at the beginning of class. It is your responsibility to sign the sheet. Do not come late to class. If missing a class is inevitable, it is your responsibility to bring it to my attention on the missed day of class, if possible. Again, excused absences are not penalized.

F. Academic Assistance: Any student who feels that he/she may need academic accommodations in order to meet the requirements of this course, as outlined in the syllabus, due to presence of a disability, should contact the Office of Disabilities Services. Please telephone the office at 314-977-2930, or visit Room 131 in the Academic Resources Center, 3840 Lindell Blvd. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

G. Writing Center: I encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Center’s services; getting feedback benefits all writers. The Center helps with writing projects, multimedia projects, and oral presentations. They offer one-on-one consultations that address everything from generating and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documentation. Call 977-2930 to schedule an appointment. They also accept drop-ins when consultants are available. For locations and hours, visit http://www.slu.edu/departments/sesc/acadresources/writing/index.html.

H. Academic Integrity and Honesty: Students are expected to be honest in their academic work. The University reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic conduct is, in its judgment, detrimental to the University. Such conduct shall include cases of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or receiving or offering or soliciting information on examinations, or the use of previously prepared material in examinations or quizzes. Violations should be reported to your course instructor, who will investigate and adjudicate them according to the Policy on Academic Honesty of the College of Arts and Sciences. If the charges are found to be true, the student may be liable for academic or disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion from the University.

VII. Course Calendar
A. Due Dates of the Semester Assignments
   Due almost every class: one page, single-spaced and typed Reading Review or Research Report; nevertheless, everyone should come to class prepared to discuss the readings.

   Monday, February 18: Thesis and initial Bibliography
   Monday, February 25: Revised Thesis, Defined Methodology and Some Annotated Bibliography
   Monday, March 3: More Annotated Bibliography
   Monday March 10: Programmatic Essay
   TBA: Rehearsal Presentations (we only have two classes available).
   Monday, April 28: Public Presentations I: Egan, Hess, Keogh, Lucchesi, Meyer, Stephenson, Unger, Uzzle
   Monday, May 5: Public Presentations II: Beabout, Diveley, Duniven, Hansel, Rexroat, Richardsn, Trahan, Wagner

   Friday, May 9 by 4:00: Final Exam
   Friday, May 9 by 4:00: Final Paper

B. Weekly Calendar
   Cobb = The Blackwell Guide to Theology and Popular Culture
   Collins = The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief
   Hilkert 1 = “Experience and Tradition: Can the Center Hold – Revelation?”
   Hilkert 2 = “Imago Dei: Does the Symbol Have a Future?”
   Himes = Fullness of Faith: The Public Significance of Theology
Kavanaugh = Following Christ in a Consumer Society: The Spirituality of Cultural Resistance
Neafsey = A Sacred Voice is Calling: Personal Vocation and Social Conscience

The readings and discussion questions are due on the day listed.

January
First Week:
M 21: Martin Luther King Day: No Class

Second Week:
M 28: Introduction to Senior Seminar II; complete the syllabus structure, assignments and calendar.

February
Third Week: Theological Anthropology and Feminism
DeLubac Lecture by Dr. Mary Catherine Hilkert of Notre Dame
M 4: READ Cobb, Introduction AND Hilkert 1, “Imago Dei: Does the Symbol Have a Future” AND Hilkert 2, Experience
WRITE researchers write a one-page single-spaced reading response to each Hilkert reading; others write a one-page single-spaced reading response to COBB.
DUE above

R 7: DeLubac Lecture: Creation in the Image of God: Does Gender Matter?
7:00pm, BSC St. Louis Room.
xs
F 8: Senior Seminar meets with Dr. Catherine Hilkert, seminar room 3:45-5:30.

Fourth Week: Theological Anthropology and Science
M 11: READ Cobb, Chapters 1-2, Collins, Chapters 1-5
WRITE researchers write a one-page single-spaced reading response to Collins others write a one-page single-spaced research report, incorporate COBB if possible
DUE above assignments

Fifth Week: Theological Anthropology and Science
M 18: READ Cobb, Chapters 3-4 AND Collins Chapters 6-11 plus Appendix
WRITE researchers write a one-page single-spaced reading response to Collins others write a one-page single-spaced research report, incorporate COBB if possible
DUE above assignments AND thesis and initial bibliography

Sixth Week: Theological Anthropology and Spirituality/Psychology (Vocation)
M 25: READ Cobb, Chapter 5 AND Neafsey, Chapters 1-5
WRITE researchers write a one-page single-spaced reading response to Neafsey others write a one-page single-spaced research report, incorporate COBB if possible
DUE above assignments AND revised thesis, defined methodology, some annotated bibliography

March
Seventh Week: Theological Anthropology and Spirituality/Psychology (Vocation)
M 3: READ Cobb, Chapter 6 AND Neafsey, Chapters 6-10
WRITE researchers write a one-page single-spaced reading response to Neafsey others write a one-page single-spaced research report, incorporate COBB if possible
DUE above assignments AND more annotated bibliography
Eighth Week: Theological Anthropology and Consumer Culture (Mid-Term Week)
M 10: READ Cobb, Chapter 7 AND Kavanaugh, Chapters 1-8
WRITE researchers write a one-page single-spaced reading response to Kavanaugh
others write a one-page single-spaced research report, incorporate COBB if possible
DUE above assignments AND programmatic essay

Ninth Week:
M 17: Spring Break: No Class

Tenth Week: Healing
M 24: Easter Monday: No Class

Eleventh Week: Theological Anthropology and ½ Consumer Culture, ½ Public Theology (Politics)
M 7: READ Cobb, Chapter 8 AND Kavanaugh, Chapters 9-Conclusion AND Himes, Chapters 1-3
WRITE researchers write a one-page single-spaced reading response to Kavanaugh/Himes
others write a one-page single-spaced research report, incorporate COBB if possible
DUE above assignments

April
Twelfth Week: Theological Anthropology and Public Theology (Politics)
M 14: READ Cobb, Chapters 9-Conclusion AND Himes, Chapters 4-Epilogue
WRITE researchers write a one-page single-spaced reading response to Himes
others write a one-page single-spaced research report, incorporate COBB if possible
DUE above assignments

Thirteenth Week: Public Presentations I
M 28: Katie Egan Consumerism
    Jen Hess Science
    Christine Keogh Politics
    Katie Lucchesi Vocation
    Gina Meyer Science
    Hope Stephenson Feminism
    Mara Unger Consumerism/Science
    Kale Uzzle Vocation

May
Fourteenth Week: Public Presentations II
M 5: Rachell Beabout Vocation
    Danielle Diveley Vocation
    Kevin Duniven Consumerism
    Carl Hansel Science/Politics
    Laura Rexroat Science
    Lee Richardsn Science
    Lainey Trahan Feminism
    Chris Wagner Politics

Fifteenth Week: Final Paper and Exam
M 12: Final Paper and Exam due by Friday May 9 by 4:00