THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS
THEO 100-08
MICAH HOUSE

Tuesdays & Thursday 9:30-10:45
XAVIER HALL #202

ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY
FALL, 2008
FR. DAVID VINCENT MECONI, S.J.

SLU MISSION STATEMENT: “The mission of Saint Louis University is the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God (in Latin: Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam—AMDG) and for the service of humanity. The University seeks excellence in the fulfillment of its corporate purposes of teaching, research and community service. It is dedicated to leadership in the continuing quest for understanding God’s creation, and for the discovery, dissemination and integration of the values, knowledge and skills required to transform society in the spirit of the Gospels. As a Catholic, Jesuit University, the pursuit is motivated by the inspiration of the Judaeo-Christian tradition and is guided by the spiritual and intellectual ideals of the Society of Jesus.”

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE: “In response to the mission of this Catholic, Jesuit University, the Theological Foundations course (THEO-100) seeks to educate students from all the undergraduate programs in a critical discourse with human experience, biblical origins, historical foundations, and historical developments of the Christian tradition. The course provides opportunity for human enrichment through creative questioning, awareness of Christian cultures, access to other cultural and religious contexts through comparative study, and a balanced appreciation of Christianity as a vital element in our global heritage.

Students will be introduced to the Hebrew and Christian scriptures with an emphasis on important texts and theological issues. Students will explore how historical and literary criticism help in understanding fundamental theological concepts such as God, revelation, faith, creation, covenant, and salvation history. In post-biblical developments students will study the early experience of Christians, especially as they learned to articulate their faith in Christ and thereby developed their understanding of the triune God.

The manner in which these and other theological developments are taught varies according to the method and strengths of the instructor. Students will be challenged to acquire the targeted skills of reading, writing, and speaking theologically. They will also be encouraged to consider how critical, careful and creative theological questioning can deepen their understanding of the human condition.”
COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

This course demands your attention. You are expected to be able to handle some complicated material; you are also expected to be able to read larger amounts of it! This is key. Our time together will revolve around some of the great texts of the Christian tradition: from the prophets of Israel to some who are hailed as prophets of our own day, this course is an opportunity for you to meet some of history’s great minds.

In such an introductory survey as this, you must therefore not only read the author on his or her own terms, you must also try to appreciate the historical background for each of the texts. For this I have provided some reflection questions to guide your reading. Throughout the semester, you will be asked to wrestle with both historical-theological questions as well as more “personal” questions, such as your reaction to a reading or your support or criticisms of the matter under discussion. It is my (very strong) assumption that our discussions will always be conducted with the utmost respect for one another.

Since this is a foundational course in your Micah House experience here at SLU, the special theme of theodicy has been chosen in both your introductory philosophy and theology courses. Theodicy is a compound of two Greek words, \( \theta \varepsilon \omicron \omicron \varsigma = \text{God} \) and \( \delta \iota \kappa \eta = \text{justice} \); so, theodicy usually means the “justice of God” or even “the justification or rationale of God”. As such, theodicy aims to answer the question of how evil can exist alongside a loving and omnipotent God. How can we justify both God’s providential care for the world and famine, a hurricane, or other natural disasters? Why does God allow such tragedy to devastate and continue?

CIVILITY OF THIS CLASSROOM CLAUSE

[1] In-Class Technology: the science of theology demands critical engagement with the text, and that in turn demands your undivided attention. I am of the personal opinion that this is best done without immediate access to electronic assistance (besides lighting and perhaps some heating!). If you think your laptop is an absolute necessity, please see me. Furthermore, be sure your phone is turned off when you come into class; if you are expecting an emergency call, let me know beforehand and place your phone on vibrate.

[2] Dress: A primary component of a Saint Louis University education is to form society’s future leaders. Please dress accordingly. Much of this will be left to your discretion but I simply ask that 1. no hats be worn during class and 2. you dress respectfully toward others.

[3] Food and Drink: You may bring food and drink to class as long as you consume whatever it is you bring without being a distraction to others.

[4] Respect: This should go without saying but please try to be courteous to all others in the class, especially as they are sharing their perspectives and opinions. Ideas should be able to be shared freely in a university classroom and this requires mutual reverence for the dignity of others. Punctuality is also another way of showing mutual respect to all. Thanks!
TEXTS

2. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* [any edition is fine]


WHY A LIBRARY. Yes, this is a lot of books! Reading should be an essential part of your university experience. Books are how we meet the great minds of history and how we transcend the confines and limitations of our own day. They assist us in that primal desire of the human person to know what is. I would thus encourage you to begin now to build a personal library. Unfortunately reading a text is becoming a lost art. As you grow as a student, however, test reading against other forms of learning: “Do you feel differently after 2 hours with a book than after a full-length Hollywood film?”, for example. Meeting great minds in literature is our greatest opportunity to become liberal in the classical sense of that term, to become free of prejudice and ignorance, and to learn to rule our desires with generosity. Or, as Groucho Marx once said, “Outside of a dog, a book is man’s best friend. Inside of a dog, it’s too dark to read.”

COURSE EXPECTATIONS
Class Participation (100 points)
1. Student-led introduction of class material
2. Overall participation and engagement
3. 1 or 2 Review Essays scheduled ad hoc

3 pre-assigned papers (3 x 100 points)
1. Due on 3 Oct
2. Due on 8 Nov
3. Due on 9 Dec
Final Exam (100 points) on Tuesday, December 16\textsuperscript{th} at 8:00-9:50

**CRITERIA FOR GRADING:**

A range = *Superior, exceptional, outstanding.* The assignment demonstrates critical, informed, and creative theological inquiry that reflects superior understanding of essential theological/historical concepts. This means the student demonstrates depth of insight beyond what is normally expected. Carefully nuanced reasoning and writing, free from material, structural and grammatical error are presupposed in this grade.

- A = 95-100\% [475-500 points]
- A- = 90-94\% [450-474 points]

B range = *Good.* 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.

- B+ = 87-89\% [435-449 points]
- B = 83-86\% [415-434 points]
- B- = 80-82\% [400-414 points]

C range = *Acceptable.* The assignment demonstrates satisfactory ability to describe overall picture and essential concepts. 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.

- C+ = 77-79\% [385-399 points]
- C = 73-76\% [365-384 points]
- C- = 70-72\% [350-364 points]

D range = *Below average.* The assignment demonstrates reasoning that is neither carefully nuanced 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.

- 69-60\% [349 points and below]

F = *Unsatisfactory.* 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) was involved in plagiarism or cheating.

- 59\% and below [295 points and below]
FROM THE STUDENT HANDBOOK:

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT

“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.”

ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE

“Any student who feels that he or 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.”

WRITING ASSISTANCE

“The Writing Center helps students with writing projects, multimedia projects, and oral presentations. They offer one-on-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. Take advantage of this learning opportunity. For information and making appointments call 977-2930 or visit http://www.slu.edu/departments/sesc/writing.html.”
SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

WEEK 1
26 AUG (T): WELCOME AND C.S. Lewis, MERE CHRISTIANITY: Book I.1-5 (all / 3-32)
REFLECTION QUESTIONS: How does Lewis distinguish between the Law of Human Nature and the Law of Nature? What is moral relativism and how does Lewis argue against it? What is the difference between a “material” and a “religious” mind?
Opening Comments: ______________________________

28 AUG (T)  C.S. Lewis, MERE CHRISTIANITY: Book II.1-5 (all / 35-65)
REFLECTION QUESTIONS: How does Lewis explain evil? Does evil have any real purpose? What is dualism and why is this incompatible to a Christian cosmology? What importance does free will have in the Christian story?
Opening Comments: ______________________________

WEEK 2
2 SEP (T)  Common Lecture on Theology at a Jesuit University
THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS: ch. 3 (103-31)

4 SEP (R)   THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS: ch. 6 & 7 (219-46)
REFLECTION QUESTIONS: What is meant by creed, cult, and code? Would you say any one of these is “most important” for the Christian life? What is original sin, actual sin? What are the three components to any moral action? Pay special attention to the questions regarding the nature of law (p. 235).
Opening Comments: ______________________________

WEEK 3
9 SEP (T)  C.S. Lewis, MERE CHRISTIANITY: Book IV.1-5 (153-82)
REFLECTION QUESTIONS: Why does Lewis distinguish between the two Greek words for life, bios and zoe? Can you explain an “atemporal being”? What changed in the Son of God’s Incarnation, divinity or humanity?
Opening Comments: ______________________________
11 SEP (R)  C.S. Lewis, *MERE CHRISTIANITY*: Book IV.6-11 (183-227)

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS:** Explain why doing good and avoiding evil is *not* the essence of Christianity? How and why does Lewis liken God to a dentist? Are the lives of individual Christians valid arguments for the truth or reasonableness of Christianity?

**Opening Comments:** ______________________________

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**WEEK 4**

16 SEP (T)  *Saint Augustine, CONFESSIONS*: Book 1.1.1-2.4.9 (14-38) and Book 3 (all / 43-57)

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS:** Is this an autobiography in the normal sense of the term? Why does Augustine [hereafter “Gus” or “Auggie”] entitle this his *Confessions*? What paradoxical significance does the term *infant* play here (to answer, you will have to search out the etymology of the Latin ‘in+fans’)? What does Augustine mean by an *unquiet heart* (in Latin, *cor inquietum*)? Do you agree with Auggie’s psychology of childhood? Why does Augustine spend so much time recalling his sins? Why does he steal the pears and why does this him bother so many years later? Who are Aristotle and Cicero and what impact do they have on Augustine? Who are the Manichees and what are their main tenets of belief? What role does creation play here?

**Opening Comments:** ______________________________

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18 SEP (R)  *Saint Augustine, CONFESSIONS*: Book 5.8.14-5.14.25 (84-93) and 6.1.1-6.9.14 (94-105) and 7.1.1-7.4.6 (115-19) and 7.9.13-7.21.27 (125-36) and *The Gospel of John*

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS:** Why does Augustine move to Rome? What is your impression of Monica? What attracts Augustine to Bishop Ambrose—and, what is paradoxical about this? Who is Augustine’s real “mother” throughout all of this? Who is Alypius and why is he important to Augustine’s own narrative? Can you apply Alypius’ struggle to a scene in your own life? In Book 7, what is still keeping Augustine from a true image of God? Who is the founder of Neoplatonism and what does it provide ‘Gus’? What does he mean by “spoiling the Egyptians”? What is Auggie’s final image of Jesus—why is mediation to a Christian so important?

**Bring your Bibles to class today!!**

**Opening Comments:** ______________________________

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**WEEK 5**

23 SEP(T)  *Saint Augustine, CONFESSIONS*: Books 8 and 9 (137-80)

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS:** Why is Victorinus’ conversion worth recalling here? What is most striking about Augustine’s own conversion? What happened in Ostia and how is this experience unique to the other moments of ecstasy and assent encountered earlier in the text?

**Opening Comments:** ______________________________
25 Sep (R)  Catherine Doherty, *POUSTINIA*: 189-94; 3-11; 41-72
Opening Comments: ______________________________

WEEK 6

30 Sep (T)  Catherine Doherty, *POUSTINIA*: 75-97; 111-21
Opening Comments: ______________________________

2 OCT (R)  Catherine Doherty, *POUSTINIA*: 125-48
Opening Comments: ______________________________

3 Oct  **FIRST PAPER DUE**

WEEK 7

7 OCT (T)  OLD TESTAMENT: Genesis 1-4
*THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS*: ch. 1 (33-55)

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS:** How many different creation narratives do you find and what are the distinguishing characteristics of each? How is Eden portrayed? What enticed Adam and Eve out of Eden? How do the punishments meted out to Adam and Eve differ and are they at all related to the manner of each person’s beginnings? Define: pre- and post-lapsarian, Protoevangelium, preternatural, etiology.

Opening Comments: ______________________________

9 OCT (R):  My “Theology of the Body and Purity of Heart” [to be distributed]

WEEK 8

14 OCT (T)  OLD TESTAMENT
[1] GENESIS 12-18:15, 21-22

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS:** Whom did God choose to settle in the land of the Canaanites? Recount the story of Jacob and Esau. Was Abraham’s test “fair” on God’s behalf? What main Christian event does this test foreshadow (type/antitype)? At what point in the economy would such a test have been impossible?

[2] EXODUS 1-21, 24

What does the name “Moses” mean? What significance does God’s name, “I Am Who Am” have? What is the Passover? Why are all the rituals instituted here? How does God appear throughout all of this ritualization?

Opening Comments: ______________________________
16 OCT (R)  NEW TESTAMENT ST. PAUL’S EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS:** Where was Galatia located? What sort of Christian community was found there? What is the overall purpose of Paul’s letter? Why is the Council of Jerusalem so important? How would you explain Gal 2:20 to a non-Christian? Does Gal 3:28 render all personal differences superfluous? What does Paul mean by true freedom? Explain Paul’s understanding and use of allegory (the only place in scripture where this term is found).

**THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS:** ch. 2 (65-90)
Opening Comments: ______________________________

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**WEEK 9**

**21 OCT**  FALL BREAK [NO CLASS]

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**23 OCT (R)**  NEW TESTAMENT: THE GOSPEL OF MARK 1-10
Opening Comments: ______________________________

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**WEEK 10**

**28 OCT (T)**  NEW TESTAMENT: THE GOSPEL OF MARK 11-16
Opening Comments: ______________________________

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**30 OCT (R)**  Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Credo*, 7-33
Opening Comments: ______________________________

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**WEEK 11**

**4 NOV (T)**  Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Credo*, 37-72
Opening Comments: ______________________________

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**6 NOV (R)**  Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Credo*, 75-104
Opening Comments: ______________________________

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**8 NOV**  SECOND PAPER DUE

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**WEEK 12**

**11 NOV (T)**  *NOSTRA AETATE* [to be distributed]
*THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS:* chapters 8 and 9 (299-363)
Opening Comments: ______________________________
13 NOV (R)  Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* [for both sessions]

**WEEK 13**

18 NOV (T)  Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* [for both sessions]

20 NOV (R)  Ratzinger / Benedict XVI [for both sessions]
9:30 class—“Are We Saved? Or, Job Talks with God”, *What it Means to Be a Christian*, 11-40
Opening Comments: ______________________________

11:00 class—David Bentley Hart, *The Doors of the Sea*, 1-44
Opening Comments: ______________________________

**WEEK 14**

25 NOV (T)  David Bentley Hart, *The Doors of the Sea* [for both sessions]

9:30 class, 45-70: Opening Comments: ______________________________

11:00 class, 70-104: Opening Comments: ______________________________

27 NOV (R)  THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY [NO CLASS]

**WEEK 15**

2 DEC (T)  Levi and Hillesum texts [for both sessions]

4 DEC (R)  Ratzinger / Benedict XVI [for both sessions]
9:30 class, “Faith as Service”, *What it Means to Be a Christian*, 43-62
Opening Comments: ______________________________

11:00 class, “Above All: Love”, *What it Means to Be a Christian*, 65-86
Opening Comments: ______________________________

**WEEK 16**

9 DEC (T)  G.K. Chesterton, “The God in the Cave”, an excerpt from *Everlasting Man*

9 Dec: Third Paper Due

Optional Review Session at Jesuit Hall, Dec _____ at ______

16 DEC (T)  Final Exam at 8:00-9:50 here in Xavier Hall #202