THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS
THEO-100
BONNE TERRE PRISON
SPRING 2008

Professor: Kenneth L. Parker

Statement of Purpose

As we begin the twenty-first century, critical issues confront humanity. The post-Enlightenment faith in material progress has not transformed the world. Indeed, many would argue that much of the misery and destruction of the last century stem from attempts to "save" the world through material progress. Our global culture is caught in the crosscurrents of three competing world views: pre-modern, modern, and post-modern. In the twenty-first century our welfare as individuals and communities depends on how well we understand these conflicting ways of viewing human experience. This course is designed to assist you in your examination of religious questions in this context. During the semester we will consider the problem of belief in our times, examine the religious experience of various faith traditions, explore the Christian sources for religious knowledge, and discuss the Roman Catholic understanding of the foundations of religious truth. The goal of this course is for students to develop their own theology for Christian action in the world for the twenty-first century.

Structure of the Course

Sessions will be a mixture of interaction between students and the professor, group presentations, small group discussions, and brief lectures. Reading and written assignments form the foundation for each session, and student involvement is an essential part of classroom experience.

Evaluation

Your grade will be determined by the following:

Grade scale:  A = 100-94
             B = 93-88
             C = 87-80
             D = 79-70
             F = 69-0
The course grade will be based on:

- Class attendance and participation 10%
- Essays and Questions 50%
- One Group Presentation 10%
- Exam I 10%
- Exam II 20%

Textbooks

Required:

Jean Guitton, *A Student’s Guide to Intellectual Work*

*Bible: New Revised Standard Version With the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*

Malcolm X, *Autobiography*

Viktor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*

Jaroslav Pelikan, *The World Treasury of Modern Religious Thought*

Requirements

**Attendance and Participation:**

Attendance at all sessions is required. Absences without explanation will affect your final grade. Each unexcused absence will result in 10 points off your total attendance/participation grade.

Participation is defined as the formulation and use of quality questions/comments in *classroom discussions*. A quality question/comment is defined as: 1.) A question/comment that is based on issues raised by the readings and the topic for that session; 2.) which aids the flow of the discussion, and does not sidetrack into peripheral or unrelated subjects; 3.) and builds on the subjects and ideas explored in previous sessions.
Students earn their participation grade. Students must record five of their questions/comments, and explain how they fit the criteria stated above. Credit for questions/comments will be recorded by the professor. Questions and comments meeting the criteria of quality will receive 20 points (with a maximum of 100 points applied to your grade). These submissions must be given to the professor by last class of the semester. Each student must also submit four assessments of group presentations made to the class (forms will be provided). Each submission will be worth five points. Students may earn a total of 120 points toward their participation grade.

Readings:

Students are expected to study all readings assigned for discussions in class.

Written Assignments (Essays and “Formal” Questions):

Essays and “formal” questions on the readings are an essential part of your work in this course. These assignments are an opportunity for you to react/respond to the readings. They are also an opportunity for you to control the outcome of half your course grade.

If these assignments are submitted in the format mandated, follow the basic structure you will be taught, are clearly your work, and address the topic assigned, you will receive a “√” (worth 5 points).

Penalties are the following: late submission (minus 1 points); bears the signs of plagiarism (minus 5 points); does not address the topic assigned (minus 5 points); does not follow the format taught (minus 2 points).

Five spelling mistakes and/or glaring grammatical faults will result in assignment being returned and 2 points off the grade.

Essay format:

Upper left hand corner - Title of Essay
Upper right hand corner - Student name, Date submitted.
[The structure and composition of the essay will be discussed in the first week.]

Format for formally submitted Questions:

When assigned, three written questions must be submitted on the reading studied. These questions will be submitted in the following format:

Upper left hand corner - Title of Course
Upper right hand corner - Student name, Date submitted.
List reading studied.
List questions prepared (complete with quotes and/or page citations).
Questions must address specific issues found in the text assigned (it is important to either quote passages and/or cite pages as appropriate). Questions will be graded on the basis of serious reflection and critical reaction to the texts that were read and studied.

**ALL ESSAYS AND “FORMAL” QUESTIONS SHOULD BE TYPED.**

Marking system for essays and questions: $\sqrt{5} = 5$ $\sqrt{3} = 3$ $\varnothing = 0$ (These will be totaled at the end of the semester).

**Group Presentation:**

Each student will take part in a group that will plan a presentation on a major world religion. Active participation in preparations is required. Failure to attend group meetings or to complete tasks undertaken for the group will result in the loss of a letter grade.

**Each member of the group** must submit a summary of their activities for the group and record their attendance at group meetings or reasons for absences. **The chair of the group** must also submit a summary of the meetings for planning the presentation, who was present, the nature of each member's contribution to the work, and a bibliography of the works consulted (encyclopedias may be consulted. Failure to submit a report of personal or group activities results in the loss of a letter grade. **All reports must be submitted the day of the presentation.**

A fact sheet (no more than two pages) will be prepared for each presentation, and the quality and presentation of the material will be a factor in the grade received.

Group presentations will be evaluated on content and delivery. The professor does not expect each member to take an active role in the actual classroom presentation; but it is required that every member make a positive contribution to the preparation of the project.

**Presentation Format:**

Must be framed around the following four questions:

1. How do they define the Divine?

2. Is there purpose to human existence? Explain.

3. How should human society be organized (social structures, moral, and ethical imperatives)?

4. How does humanity encounter the Divine (worship, organized religious life, mysticism)?

MUST BE NO MORE THAN 15 MINUTES LONG!
### Evaluation Forms:

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<thead>
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<th>Criteria for Group Presentation Evaluations:</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
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<tr>
<td>General Qualities:</td>
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<td><strong>Word choice and sentence structure</strong></td>
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<td>appropriate for an oral presentation.</td>
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<td><strong>Audience (your peers) and purpose (to inform) clear.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Content:</strong></td>
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<td>Thesis is clearly stated, carefully limited in scope and plausible.</td>
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<td>Demonstrated knowledge of subject.</td>
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<td>Ability to competently answer questions.</td>
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<td>Quality of Fact Sheet.</td>
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**Essay Examinations:**

The Examinations will be a one essay exam. The topics can be found in your course calendar.

How to measure your success on a Parker exam essay:

"A" level work:

1. Clear thesis statement provided. Presents outline of issues, stating in the first paragraph basic points to be discussed.

20 points maximum: Incorporates as fully as appropriate in the body of the essay the terms, sources, and content which are relevant to the stand taken in the first paragraph.

50 points maximum: Analyzes in final paragraph how all the issues examined relate.

20 points maximum: Creation of a synthetic presentation of the issues examined and an analysis of their importance.

"B" level work:

1. Clear thesis statement provided. Able to present basic outline of issues, stating in the first paragraph basic points to be discussed.

2. In body of essay, does not incorporate as fully as appropriate the terms, sources, and content which are relevant to the subject.

3. Analyzes in final paragraph how all the issues examined relate.

4. Synthesis of issues examined and the analysis of their importance not adequately developed.

"C" level work:

1. Able to present basic outline of issues, stating in the first paragraph basic points to be discussed.

2. No clearly presented thesis statement.

3. In body of essay, does not flesh out the account and argument with terms and sources which are relevant to the subject.

4. Does not analyze in final paragraph how all the issues examined relate.

Professor's evaluation and judgment, based on the criteria established for essay writing at the beginning of the course, is the final determining factor.
Ground Rules for Interaction with the Professor:

- Conversations beyond to scope of the course are not possible (this includes private interactions about a student’s case, or internal affairs of the institution).

- Written communication between class meetings must be via the Education Office and limited to questions about assignments. Professor must (by regulation) turn over all correspondence via postal service to IAC and must refuse all telephone contacts.

- As a volunteer, the professor can never be on a student’s visiting list.

- Communication of any kind with student's friends, relatives, and significant others is prohibited by the rules of the Missouri correctional system.

- Only course assignments may be given to the professor. All other materials, of any kind, will be refused.

- All course related assignments are graded on site and not taken off the premises.

- There can be no monetary exchanges of any kind. The professor only brings on site what is necessary for teaching.

- Professor must (required by regulations) report any matter that is a violation of the institution’s rules and regulations.

- Professor cannot do for one student what is not done for all.

- As a mark of respect, professor will address everyone as “sir” or Mr. [Name]. The appropriate title for the professor is “Professor” or “Dr.”

- Regulations strictly limit handshakes and prohibit “pats on the back” and hugs. Thanks for understanding.
THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

CALENDAR: SPRING 2008

25 January - Introduction.

Session One: General orientation to class. Reading of syllabus, explanation of requirements, organization into groups, and discussion of the theme of this course.

Session Two: Semester Planning: This session will introduce students to basic skills that they must develop during the semester: formulating quality questions and guidelines for essay writing.

Assignment (due 1 February): Prepare a one page single-spaced essay entitled, "My Understanding of Religious Faith". The essay will be framed around the following questions: 1.) How do I define the Divine (God)? 2.) How do I encounter the Divine (God)? 3.) What implications does/should my understanding of religious faith have on me and the society in which I live?

Read and study Jean Guitton, A Student’s Guide to Intellectual Work. Come prepared to discuss Guitton’s views on how intellectual work changes people.

1 February – Sorting through the Questions

Session One: What is Religious Faith?

Session Two: What is Intellectual Work?

Assignment (due 8 February): 1.) Read and study Friedrich von Hügel, "The Three Elements of Religion", Treasury, 498-511. 2.) Write a one page single-spaced typed essay in which you discuss the following: Briefly summarize the elements of religious development described by Friedrich von Hügel. Reflecting on your essay, "My Understanding of Religious Faith", decide which element describes your present situation, and explain why that element dominates in your life.

Read and study Malcolm X, Autobiography. Come ready to analyze how the Three Elements of Religion functioned in the life of Malcolm X.
8 February – Analyzing the Formation of a Religious Imagination

In this session, we will explore the ways human beings develop their religious imagination.

Session One: Friedrich von Hügel’s “Three Elements of Religion”

Session Two: Analysis of Malcolm X’s Religious Imagination

Assignment (due 15 February): Read and study F.M. Dostoyevsky’s “Grand Inquisitor,” Treasury, 13-25, and the Bible, Matthew 4:1-11. Prepare three questions (in the format mandated) that came out of these readings. [NOTE: When reading a Bible reference, look for the name of the book (for example, "Matthew"); then look for a chapter number that is followed by a colon (for example, "4:"); then look for the verse numbers that follow the colon (for example, "1-11"). The complete reference looks like this, "Matthew 4:1-11"). In an encyclopedia, read an article about Dostoyevsky’s life and Russia during the 19th century and think about why he wrote this story.

Note: The ambitious are encouraged to read The Brothers Karamazov as a long term project. This story is taken from that book.

15 February - Faith and Freedom.

This session will explore the challenges to religious belief, focusing on the issue of human freedom.

Session One: Analysis of “Grand Inquisitor.”

Session Two: Why is Freedom a Problem for Humans?

Assignment (due 22 February): Read and study the following texts in the Treasury: Karl Marx, "Religion, the Opium of the People", 79-91; Friedrich Nietzsche, "Beyond Good and Evil", 64-71; Sigmund Freud, "The Future of an Illusion", 72-78; William Ernest Henley, "Invictus", 92. In an encyclopedia, read articles about the lives of these men. Prepare a one page single-spaced essay. Reflecting on your essay entitled "My Understanding of Religious Belief", explain how the writers you read challenged or supported your understanding of religious belief.

22 February - Unbelief in the Modern Era.

This session will explore the ways 19th and 20th century thinkers have challenged Religious Belief.

Session One: Analysis of the readings by Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, and Henley

Session Two: Discussion of your reflections on Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, and Henley and how their ideas challenge/confirm your assumptions about religious belief
Assignment (due 29 February): Read and study Albert Camus, "The Unbeliever", 29-33. Prepare three questions (in the format mandated) that came out of this reading.

Read and study Viktor Frankl’s *Man’s Search for Meaning*. Come prepared to do a comparative analysis of Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, Henley and Frankl's observations about religion.

In an encyclopedia, read articles about the lives of these men.

29 February – Is There Common Ground between Believers and Unbelievers?

Session One: What do Believers and Unbelievers Share? Analysis of Camus’ reflections on the common ground between believers and unbelievers

Session Two: A discussion of Frankl’s *Man’s Search for Meaning*

Assignment (due 7 March): Read and study "The Will to Believe" 95-114, by William James. Prepare a detailed outline of this essay that summarizes the major points of his argument. Students are encouraged to work in collaboration with other members of the class in preparing the outline (all participants must be named).

7 March - The Will to Believe.

Session One: This session examines the issue of religious belief in the modern era

Session Two: Planning and preparation for the presentations on world religions

14 March – World Religions

Assignment (due 14 March): Finish work on group projects. Come prepared for the presentations. Also read *Nostra Aetate*, and be prepared to discuss it in the second session.

Session One: Presentations on Judaism (Group 1), Islam (Group 2), Hinduism (Group 3)

Session Two: Presentations on Confucianism (Group 4) and Buddhism (Group 5). Analysis of the common ground between the World Religious Traditions

Assignment (due 21 March): Read Albert Schweitzer, "Reverence for Life", 237-243, and write a one page single-spaced typed essay. In your essay, focus on the relevance of Albert Schweitzer’s reflections to our study of the world's religious traditions.
21 March - Reverence for Life.

Session One: This session deals with the challenges to reverence for life and the religious response

Session Two: Concluding discussion of first half of course and prep for take-home exam

27 March – Exam I (submitted to Education Office)

Read Martin Luther King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail", 606-621. Using the reading from King, explore the implications of Faith on Human Action. Be sure that your essay incorporates the insights of the authors studied thus far. The essay will be graded on organization, analysis, and comprehensive use of the sources studied (see scale provided on page 6 of syllabus). Your typed single spaced essay may be no more than three pages in length.

Assignment (due 28 March): Read and study Dei Verbum (The Word of God), a document of Vatican II. Prepare three questions (typed and in the format mandated).


Session One: Discussion of the Mid-term Exam

Session Two: Revelation - This session concerns the Christian sources for religious knowledge, and how they are used

4 April – Professor in York, England to deliver a paper at the Reformation History Colloquium

Assignment (due 11 April): Read the Bible, Genesis 1:1-2:25. Prepare a one page single-spaced essay. In the essay, respond to the following question: Is Genesis 1-2 a history of the origins of the world, or an ancient Hebrew explanation (theology) of what creation was intended to be?

Assignment (due 11 April): Read the Bible, Genesis 3:1-24, Genesis 2-3. Prepare a one page single-spaced typed essay. In the essay, compare Genesis 1-2 and Genesis 3, analyzing the deeper (theological) significance of the accounts. Can they be described as an explanation of why things are the way they are? Defend your position.
11 April – Creation … What Went Wrong?

Session One: This session concerns the Biblical account of Creation and the nature of humanity.

Session Two: This session will explore the Biblical account of what went wrong with Creation.

Assignment (due 18 April): Read and study Psalms 104 and 105. Prepare notes on the theological questions being addressed and identify the answers the psalmist gives to these questions. As background, also read the Books of Exodus, Deuteronomy 31:1-34:12, and Joshua.

Read and study the Book of Amos. Prepare a single spaced typed essay that addresses the following issues: Who does God care about? Why is God angry? Are the maledictions punishments imposed by God or consequences that result from human choices? According to Amos, does God abandon those with whom he is angry?

18 April – Who is the God of Israel?

Session One: The Exodus Experience and Our Spiritual Journey

Session Two: Human Action and God’s Justice

Assignment (due 25 April): Read the Gospel of Matthew 1:1-17. Using Bible dictionaries and other reference works, identify all of the ancestors of Jesus that can be found, and prepare a brief summary of the significance of each person. Summaries should be typed. Students are encouraged to work cooperatively in completing this project. Participants must be listed on each student’s submission.

Assignment (due 25 April): Study the Gospel of John 1:1-18. Prepare notes listing the attributes of Jesus. Make notes on how this description of Jesus differs from Matthew’s geneology and be prepared to discuss these differences in class.

Read the entire Gospel of Mark as background for our study of Jesus.

25 April - Who is Jesus?

Session One: This session will focus on the genealogy found in the Gospel of Matthew, and consider its implications.

Session Two: This session explores the attributes of Jesus in John’s Prologue.

Assignment (due 2 May): Read Matthew 5:1 to 7:28. Prepare notes listing the five most essential theological questions Jesus addresses in the Sermon on the Mount. Summarize in one sentence Jesus’s answer to each of these questions.

Assignment (due 2 May): Read Matthew 20:17-27:66; Mark 14:1-15:47; Luke 22:1-23:56. Prepare a one page single-spaced typed essay that addresses the question: “Who killed Jesus?” [Take a stand and argue your position based on the texts, not what you have been taught in the past]
2 May – Jesus: His Message and His Death

Session One: Jesus and his Message

Session Two: Jesus and His Crucifixion

Assignment (due 9 May): Read and study Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20-21. Create a chart that identifies common elements in the accounts of the resurrection of Jesus; and note the elements of the accounts that differ from the others. Come prepared to discuss these, the significance of the common elements and your questions about the differences in the accounts.

Assignment (due 9 May): Read and study Acts of the Apostles. In a one page single spaced essay, respond to the question “What is the Church?” The response should be based on what is found in the text of Acts, not what you have been taught in the past.

9 May – Jesus’s Resurrection and the Mystical Body of Christ

Session One: This session explores the Christian significance of the resurrection of Jesus

Session Two: This session examines the nature of the Church in Christian teaching

15 May – Exam II (Submitted to the Education Office)

Take-home Exam Question: Read and study the Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians. Incorporating all that you have studied this semester, and framing your essay around Friedrich von Hügel's, "The Three Elements of Religion," write an essay that presents your “Theology for Christian Action in the World.” The essay may be no longer than three single-spaced typed pages.

Assignment (due 16 May): Read and study the First Letter of John 1:1-5:21. Prepare notes and come ready to discuss the central message of the First Letter of John. Determine which element of Friedrich von Hügel's, "The Three Elements of Religion" (498-511) is being described here and be prepared to defend your conclusion with illustrations from First John.

16 May – God and Humanity

First Session: This session concerns the relationship between God and humanity

Second Session: This session will be a time to assess the course and reflect on what has been accomplished
Theological Foundations
Professor Kenneth L. Parker

Name _________________________________

RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND (optional): ________________________________

What is the one question about religion or religious experience that you would like answered in the course of the semester?

___________________________________________________

___________________________________________________

___________________________________________________

___________________________________________________

I wish to be a member of the following group (indicate in order of preference):

_____ Judaism (Group 1)

_____ Islam (Group 2)

_____ Hinduism (Group 3)

_____ Confucianism (Group 4)

_____ Buddhism (Group 5)

Please state any concerns that you have about the course, or matters about which the professor should be aware:

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________