UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: Spring 2010
Instructor: Dr. John Zemler
Course #: THEO 1001
Section: 111
Course Title: Introduction to Theology

Description:

This is a demanding introductory Theology course. We will explore the basis and content of the Christian tradition with some attention paid to Judaism and Islam. Students will learn the basic content of what makes up Christian Theology: The Revelation Mediated through Scripture and Tradition combined with Experience. They will also learn how theology informs our understanding of God and our journey to God. In this vein we will examine, prayer, discipleship, as well as war and peace. To this end, the course has two broad parts.

Part 1: Scripture and Tradition:
We will study what forms scripture. How were the biblical books composed and how were they chosen to form the canon? We will examine the history of the tradition and how, why, and when, certain doctrines developed. We will enjoy a trip learning how the liturgy came about and why we have offices such as priest, bishop, and pope. Which experiences formed part of the valid tradition and which were determined to be inauthentic and not universally applicable?

Part II: Living a Life that Matters:
Our class will also spend time evaluating and understanding how our own experience informs our theology. How does our experience inform our theology when it comes to subjects such as war, torture, poverty, medical care, and suffering? We will also engage the topics of prayer, mysticism, and discipleship. We will also ask the question of how political is the subject of theology? In this context we will start to become familiar with two modern masters of the Christian experience and how they incorporated non-Christian experience into their knowledge and worship of God and the service of all people: The Roman Catholic Trappist Monk Thomas Merton and the United Church of Christ Missionary Scholar Kosuke Koyama.

Students who successfully complete the course will be prepared for further theological endeavors in the areas of scripture, historical theology, liturgical and doctrinal studies, world religions, and ethics.

The course is demanding. Expect to work. Attendance and attention is mandatory. Expect writing assignments. Exams typically include multiple choice, short answer, listing, and small essays. The instructor enjoys teaching theology and demonstrating how it is relevant to our modern world. He also enjoys interacting with students who are dedicated to all facets of their education.

Students are not required to have any prerequisites. Everything necessary to succeed in this course is presented within the course content. Personal faith commitments are not required to
succeed in this course. It is an academic theology class where everything that is required to succeed is presented in the course itself.

**Required texts:**

- Access to a modern (post-1940) translation of the Bible.
- No Man is an Island, Thomas Merton, ISBN-10: 1590302532
- Introduction to Theology, ed., John D. Laurance, (Correct edition is available at BookMarq)
- Other readings may be made available