

GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: **Spring 2009**
Instructor: Robert Masson
Course #: 384
Section: 1002
Course Title: Spec. Questions in Systematic Theology
Course Subtitle: Analogy and Metaphor In Religious Discourse

Content:

The course will explore the hypothesis of my research the last few years that a better understanding of the metaphorical character of thought and language can clarify contemporary theological controversies.

The first part of the course will investigate the theological appropriations of various theories of metaphor, analogy, symbol, and religious language with special attention to specific approaches advanced by the following figures: Mary Gerhart and Allan Russell; George Lakoff and his various collaborators; Janet Soskice ; Eberhard Jüngel; readings of Aquinas proposed by Herwi Rikhof, David Burrell, Gregory Rocca, and Henri Bouillard; Paul Tillich; Roger Haight; Sallie McFague; Karl Rahner and Charles Taylor.

The second part will focus on the application of these theories to particular theological issues including Thomas Sheehan's advocacy of an "atheological" reading of Christianity in his controversial life of Jesus and in his interpretation of Rahner; the controversy over Roger Haight's Christology and related issues in Sallie McFague's; the possibility for ecumenical dialogue on the issues of natural theology and the analogy of being; issues raised by contemporary critiques of atheists Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Samuel Harris; foundationalism vs. non-foundationalism; pluralism and interreligious dialogue; and finally issues related to several central affirmations in Feminist, Black and Womanist theologies.

Format:

Students will be invited to develop research projects related to their own academic interests that dovetail with the seminar's topic. Class time will be given more or less equally to lectures that provide an overview of my ongoing research on these topics, seminar discussion and presentations by each student on a research project related to seminar's topic.

Assignments and/or Examinations:

- Several abstracts (one single spaced page); one critical book review (600-700 words); a class presentation and research paper related to the seminar's topic.

Required Texts:

- Gerhart, Mary, and Allan Melvin Russell. 2001. *New Maps for Old: Explorations in Science and Religion*. New York: Continuum.

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- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Jüngel, Eberhard. 1989. *Metaphorical Truth. Reflection on Theological Metaphor as a Contribution to a Hermeneutics of Narrative Theology*. In *Theological Essays*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.
- Soskice, Janet. 1985. *Metaphor and Religious Language*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Optional texts:

- Bouillard, Henri. 1968. *The Knowledge of God*. New York: Herder and Herder.
- Burrell, David B. 1979. *Aquinas: God and Action*. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press.
- Haight, Roger, S.J. 1999. *Jesus Symbol of God*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
- Rikhof, Herwi. 1981. *The Concept of Church: A Methodological Inquiry into the Use of Metaphors in Ecclesiology*. Shepherdstown, W.Va.: Patmos Press.
- Rocca, Gregory P. 2004. *Speaking the Incomprehensible God: Thomas Aquinas on the Interplay of Positive and Negative Theology*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press.
- Sheehan, Thomas. 2000. "From Divinity to Infinity." In *The Once and Future Jesus*, edited by R. Funk. Santa Rosa, California: The Westar Institute.