GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: Spring 2011
Instructor: Dr. D. Lyle Dabney
Course #: THEO 8510
Course Title: Christian Anthropology

Content:

This graduate course in systematic theology will examine the question of the human in biblical, historical, philosophical and contemporary theological discourse. In recent years much has been made of the fact that we live in a time of change, a moment in which one millennium has ended and another begun; but the real change we are experiencing in America today is much more about culture than chronology, much less about the hour we live in than the vision of human life we live out. The western tradition has defined human life in terms of what might be called two ‘final quests.’ The first was the ‘metaphysical quest’ that arose with the classical tradition and was taken up by the cultural project of Christendom, and that answered the question of the human ontologically. The fulfillment of human life according to this project was attained through the soul’s ascent to the eternal and impassible, the visio dei of the Medieval tradition. The second was the ‘historical quest’ of the Modern cultural project in which the self was defined in reference to epistemology and the fulfillment of life was said to be realized through an individual’s informed choice in time. Each of these final quests—along with their attendant definitions of the means and meaning of human being and becoming—is now in crisis. The result is that Christianity now finds itself in a social world that no longer has a common account of the human good, and is too often uncertain as to what it believes itself. In the midst of that crisis, Christian theology is turning to the human question anew, for at the center of the Gospel stands the man Jesus Christ. We have always said he was more than a man, but we have also insisted that he is nothing less than a man. It is time for Christian theology to examine anew its confession of Christ and what it means to be human in light of his life, death and resurrection. This course will investigate the biblical witness, the history of the philosophical and theological traditions, and, above all, the contemporary discussion of the self. The student will be graded according to class participation and the completion of a set of relatively short research projects that take up historical, exegetical, and contemporary aspects of this question.