

UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: **Fall 2009**
Instructor: L. William Oliverio, Jr.
Course #: THEO 2410
Sections: 101 and 102
Course Title: Christian Faith in Cultural Context

Description:

This course examines Christian faith in two primary contexts: Western culture at the border of modernity and postmodernity, and contemporary Christianity in the “Global South.”

Before doing so, we look at several approaches to understanding culture and its relationship to theological understanding. We especially spend time reflecting on “the linguistic turn” – the realization that our thought about God and our world occurs within the languages of the communities in which we dwell - and its implications for our understandings of God and our world. D. Stephen Long’s *Theology and Culture: A Guide to the Discussion* will be our guide here.

The first half of the course will then look at Christian faith in modernity and postmodernity in Western culture. We still will work with Long’s *Guide* in doing so, but will also read several articles from others as well as James K.A. Smith’s *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism?: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* which will examine several important postmodern thinkers and see if we can “bring them to church” or not.

In the second half of the course, we will look at the growth of Christianity in the “Global South” (Latin America, Africa, South Asia and the Pacific Rim). Philip Jenkins’ *The Next Christendom* will allow us to get caught up on many of the myriad of developments in world Christianity over the last century. And then we’ll read the West African scholar Lamin Sanneh’s reflections on these developments in *Whose Religion is Christianity?: The Gospel Beyond the West* and read some of his narration and reflections on them in *Disciples of All Nations*.

Students should be prepared to spend time reading these texts and writing analysis papers on several of them as well as writing a research paper chosen by the student and approved by the professor. Students will also take two writing exams, one on each section of the course.

Required texts:

- D. Stephen Long’s *Theology and Culture: A Guide to the Discussion* (Wipf and Stock)
- James K.A. Smith’s *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism?: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Baker Academic)
- Philip Jenkins’ *The Next Christendom* (Oxford University Press)
- Lamin Sanneh’s *Whose Religion is Christianity?: The Gospel Beyond the West* (Eerdmans)
- Lamin Sanneh’s *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity*