TH 2410-101 (2448) Christian Faith in Cultural Contexts: 
Topic: Cross-Cultural Theology

Marquette University 
Fall Semester 2018 

NB: Last update: September 2, 2018 (added a Recommended Reading to the Racism unit)

Fr. Bretzke’s Moral Theology Resource Web-page: https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/default.htm
Twitter: @jimbretzke

Class: T/TH 9:30—10:45 AM in Olin Engineering 170
Office Hours in Marquette Hall MH Lower Level 008AE T/TH 11:00 AM—12 PM; W 11:00—11:30 AM OR EASILY by appointment
Rev. Bretzke’s e-mail: james.bretzke@marquette.edu (best method for communication)
Jesuit Residence Room phone: 414-288-5067 (to leave voice mail)

N.B. Paper copies of this Syllabus will NOT be handed out in class, so if you wish to have a hard copy please print it out yourself. The electronic version will remain available on D2L.

Catalogue Description:

The reception of the Christian gospel in diverse cultures throughout the world. The challenge of inculturation and the requirements of the unity of Christian faith. The meaning of mission and evangelization outside the West. The encounter with indigenous religions.

Detailed Course Description and Requirements

This course will consider several models and contextual issues of Christian faith in various parts of the world in order to map how cultures and their respective ethoses intersect in the construction of theological paradigms which in turn can both foster and hinder cross-cultural respect and collaboration. Two historical novels set respectively in Africa (Achebe) and Asia (Endo) will be read, along with short articles on cultural anthropology, fundamental moral theology (Bretzke), a book on methodological reflection on the American ethical cultural tradition (Betsworth) and a short book on theological inculturation in the African context (Orobator). The 1986 movie Mission will be viewed and discussed in the context of Latin America liberation theology. Additionally each student will be asked to read one (1) of the “Recommended Book Readings” (Hogan, Kristof & WuDunn, Magesa, Moser & Leers, Press, Schreiter, or Song) to discuss with other students who have chosen the same book, and to bring this discussion into the final oral exam. A few unannounced short quizzes will be given on some of the assigned readings throughout the semester.

Students will be asked to do a few “ice-breaker” exercises finding examples from their own culture of symbols for “cultural artifact,” “love,” “proverbs,” and “taboo” (examples will be given in class for this very short and easy assignment). Also they will do 4 short one-two page Reflection/Response papers on key themes that unfold during the course. Also a 3-4 page Exposition paper on their own cultural theological ethos (due October 11th); an in-class written Mid-Term Exam on October 16th (identification terms and short essay based on course
readings and lectures); a field visit to an art museum to be used in a report and cross-cultural reflection on cultural values are represented in art (due October 25th); a fifteen minute individual oral final exam (scheduled during finals week); and a final small group project which each student with between 1-3 other students will do a comparative analysis of either an approach to Christian theology or a concrete ethical or theological issue from her or his native region with an approach from a different cultural model used by other author(s) or co-presenter students. These final projects will either be presented in the last weeks of the course OR posted in an online dossier onto D2L. Examples of each of these assignments will be presented in the first three weeks of the semester. Final project with accompanying 5-page reflection is due December 6th (for those who presented in November); OR due December 12th (for those who presented in December).

N.B. All ordinary communication to the class from the Professor normally will be handled via D2L so students must check the course web-site each week and have their D2L e-mail accounts active. All assignments will be submitted electronically via D2L as well. Students wishing to contact the Professor directly should do so via e-mail sent to james.bretzke@marquette.edu

Learning Outcomes

THEOLOGY Knowledge Area (supplied by the Department of Theology): By the end of the Course the Student will be BETTER able to

1. Describe theologically the basic content of the Catholic faith in relation to other Christian and religious traditions as well as other world views.

2. Interpret theological texts and frameworks in their historical contexts.

3. Articulate implications of Christian faith for growth in holiness and promotion of justice in the contemporary world.

Course-Specific Learning Outcomes for Cross-Cultural Christian Ethics: By the end of the Course the Student will be able to

1. Describe Catholic fundamental moral theology and articulate a general methodology and specific approaches to address particular core concepts such as The Moral Person and Moral Community; Conscience, Moral Norms and the Natural Law, Grace, Moral Failure, Sin and Reconciliation.

2. Define, describe and/or apply in a theological context of Christian ethics the basic concepts of cultural anthropology such as culture, acculturation, enculturation, ethos, ethnocentrism, socialization, purity, taboo, globalization, and related concepts.

3. Articulate these core concepts in terms of models and paradigms in order to construct a model of a theological framework of inculturation & ethics that is adaptable to differing cultural contexts.
4. Articulate different ethical models and approaches found geographical cultural contexts such as Asia, the Americas, and Africa in which Christian ethics engages in the processes of inculturation.

5. Describe ways in which culture and cultural contexts intersect with core theological concepts such as Christology, Evangelization, Missiology and Ecclesiology.

6. Successfully work with a small group of diverse students in outlining, constructing, and presenting a project that is centered on a particular ethical theme or issue of contemporary relevance in the area of cross-cultural ethics.

**REQUIRED BOOKS to be read by all: All on 2-hour Library Reserve**


**REQUIRED ARTICLES to be read by all (and available electronically):**


Brooks is a Republican political columnist for the New York Times and a regular guest on the PBS News Hour.


Gerson is a Republican political analyst and speech-writer who has worked for the George W. Bush Administration.


Briefly considers income inequality in terms of its cultural roots and negative psychological impact.


Massingale is a diocesan priest of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and now teaches at Fordham University. At the time he authored this book he was professor of theology at Marquette University.


Short news article on an incident at a Utah prom that sparked debate over what constitutes acceptable or inacceptable cultural appropriation.

**Recommended Articles:** As the course progresses additional, topical short readings will be suggested that complement or augment the course themes. **Students are very much encouraged to suggest such articles by sending them to the Professor!** One such example, on the topics of Racism and White Privilege is the following:


**Final Exam BOOK Readings: Choose ONE (1) All on 2-hour Library Reserve**

Each student must choose ONE [1] of these books to read and do an oral report on at the time of the oral final exam). The book chosen may also be done in connection with the small group project and will be discussed with other students who choose the same book.


**NB:** Additional Regional Bibliography available from the Professor. Additional reading of an article or chapter will be expected of each student during the last part of the course as preparation for each week's student small group presentation(s).

**Grading Policy**

**A** Work is exceptional in every respect. There is an active and sophisticated engagement with all aspect of the course, demonstrated through careful analysis or creative treatment of the ideas covered. Both class participation and written work indicate outstanding mastery of content, originality of thought clearly expressed, and clarity in connecting course concepts with ministerial and theological interests.

**A-** Work is superior and above the average graduate level expectations. This involves mastery of the course content, recognition of the “big picture” within which course material is situated, and capacity to make cogent links with one’s ministerial and theological position. This level is reflected in the ability to express one’s thoughts effectively in writing and to contribute significantly to class conversation.

**B+** Work is more than satisfactory at the graduate level. This involves mastery of the course content and the ability to draw connections across course topics and with appropriate theological and ministerial topics. Contribution to class conversation gives evidence of both active listening and thoughtful participation. Written work is clear, focused and well organized.

**B** Work is clearly satisfactory at the graduate level. There is consistent engagement with, and a basic mastery of, the course material with a good command of the various topics.
B- Work is barely acceptable at the graduate level. This reflects a basic command of the course material, an adequate articulation of the connections across content areas, and a basic recognition of the implications for pastoral work.

C Work is marginally acceptable at the graduate level. This is a basic mastery of most of the course materials but not all. It represents that you have slipped below an acceptable level of work in one or two areas.

F Work is unsatisfactory and fails to meet the requirements of the course.

Class Attendance is expected at all class sessions. If an absence is foreseen in advance of a particular class please alert the Professor of this and follow up with an e-mail reminder the day of the planned absence. If an unforeseen absence occurs (e.g., medical issue, family emergency, etc.) please send an e-mail as soon as possible to the Professor explaining the reason for the absence. The Marquette University policy on absences will be followed, such that the equivalent of missing two weeks of class (i.e., 4 total absences) will result in the generation of the formal warning of impending withdrawal from the course due to absences, and a succeeding 5th absence will ipso facto result in administrative withdrawal from the course.

Th 2410 Course Readings Schedule

Refer to the Course Readings for complete page numbers and bibliographical information on these assigned readings. Readings listed for each week should be completed by class-time of each week. 1-2 page Reflection/Response papers (private to the professor only) are due by Thursday class-time, starting in the 3rd week (September 13th)

FIRST WEEK: (August 28, 30) Introduction to Cross-Cultural Theology (no required reading before the first class, but please do the “Gangnam Style Exercise” e-mailed to you)

- Overview of Course Syllabus, Readings, and Learning Outcomes
- Gangnam video Introductory Exercise [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bZkp7q19f0] (first watch the PSY video at least twice, and then watch once or twice the MIT parody video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lJtHNEDnrnY&start_radio=1&list=RDJtHNEDnrnY ) N.B. This is not meant to be a “research” exercise, so please do not try to do any further investigation into either clip until after the in-class exercise. The directions for the entire exercise are also posted online at https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/GangnamStyleCrossCulturalExercise.pdf AFTER we discuss these clips in class additional materials on the video, including a translation of the Korean, will be made available to you.

- Personal Introductions (done on August 30) in conjunction with “Cultural Artifact” Ice-Breaker Decoding Exercise (will be briefly explained August 28, and then done in small groups August 30)

SECOND WEEK: (September 4, 6): Theological Framework of Inculturation
• Terminology Overview from Cultural Anthropology & Theology of Inculturation
• Introductory Multi-Media Power Point Presentation Cross-Cultural Perspectives
• Setting up small groups for reading/discussion for the following class
• Ice-breaker exercise sharing “Love” symbols from different cultures

_Students will be divided into small groups responsible for leading the class discussion of these 4 readings, though everyone should read all readings_


Short news article on an incident at a Utah prom that sparked debate over what constitutes acceptable or inacceptable cultural appropriation.

**Recommended Reading**


**THIRD WEEK:** (September 11,13): **Cultural Anthropology**

• Introductory Power Point Presentation on Moral Methodology
• Ice-breaker exercises sharing ”proverbs” (due 9/11) and “taboos” (due 9/13)
• Cross-cultural ethical case study analysis and discussion


Brooks is a Republican political columnist for the *New York Times* and a regular guest on the PBS News Hour.

Gerson is a Republican political analyst and speech-writer who has worked for the George W. Bush Administration.


Massingale is a diocesan priest of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and now teaches at Fordham University. At the time he authored this book he was professor of theology at Marquette University.

1st Reflection/Response 1-2 page paper on your personal understanding of the term “White Privilege” (you may also include media links, images, clips, etc., but these are not required due by class-time on Thursday).

Recommended Reading


FOURTH WEEK: (September 18, 20): Cultural Anthropology II Field Visits Exemplars

September 18th we will meet for class in the Heggarty Museum, so please go directly there and check in with Fr. Bretzke

September 20th we will meet in the Upper Church of the Gesu, so please go directly there and check in with Fr. Bretzke

These field visits are geared to help conceptualize the Museum OR Churches Field Visit Cross-Cultural Project due on October 25th

N.B., the professor is out of town, and unable to meet, exchange e-mails, etc. September 21-4

FIFTH WEEK: (September 25,27): Christian Cultural Tradition in the United States I

Betsworth, Chapters 1-3 in Social Ethics: An Examination of American Moral Traditions, pp. 11-80.

(Commemoration of Korean Chuseok Fall Harvest Festival)

SIXTH WEEK: (October 2,4): Christian Cultural Tradition in the United States II
Betsworth, Chapters 4-6 in Social Ethics: An Examination of American Moral Traditions, pp. 81-187.


Gerson is a Republican political analyst and speechwriter who has worked for the George W. Bush Administration.


Briefly considers income inequality in terms of its cultural roots and negative psychological impact.

2nd Reflection/Response due by class-time on Thursday 1-2 page paper on your personal understanding of the term Ethnocentrism (you may also include media links, images, clips, etc., but these are not required due by class-time on Thursday).

SEVENTH WEEK: (October 9, 11): Theological Inculturation in the African Context I


N.B. Much of Orobator’s book gives a theological reflection on Achebe’s Things Fall Apart novel which we are reading for Week 9. If you wish you might read the novel first, but it is not necessary to do so, and the Orobator book can serve as a good introduction to Achebe.

**3-4 page paper due on personal cultural ethos reflection sources due by class-time on Thursday October 11th; these will be shared in small group discussions**

No Reflection/Response Papers

EIGHTH WEEK: (October 16) Mid-Term Exam (Mid-term break October 18)

Finalization of small groups for the purposes of the project presentation and initial précis of the group’s proposed presentation is to be submitted by Tuesday October 16th to the professor.

NINTH WEEK: (October 23, 25): Ethics in Africa, Missiology, Christology & Ecclesiology

Achebe, Chinua. Things Fall Apart (whole book)
Museum Field Visit Cross-Cultural Project due by Class-Time on October 25th

TENTH WEEK: (October 30, November 1): Missiology, Christology & Ecclesiology in Asia
Endo, Shusaku. Silence (whole book, including the Appendix)

3rd Reflection/Response due by class-time on Thursday 1-2 page paper on your personal understanding of the terms “Mission and Evangelization” (you may also include media links, images, clips, etc., but these are not required due by class-time on Thursday).

ELEVENTH WEEK: (November 6, 8): Missiology in Asia, Personal Sin & Moral Failure

Concluding Discussion of Endo’s Silence in light of Scorsese’s movie depiction

TWELFTH WEEK: (November 13, 15) Missiology in Latin America and Social Sin & Systemic Evil

Viewing and discussion of sections of Mission (movie)

4th Reflection/Response due by class-time on Thursday 1-2 page paper on your personal understanding of the terms “Social Sin and Systemic Evil”

THIRTEENTH WEEK (November 20) Small Group Presentation Work Session (outside of class, as the Professor will be at a convention in Denver) (Thanksgiving Break November 22)

FOURTEENTH & FIFTEENTH WEEKS: Small Group Summary Presentations (November 27, 29; December 4, 6)

Final Group Project Individual Reflection Essay (c. 5 pages): due December 6th for those who presented in November; and due December 12th for those who presented in December

SIXTEENTH WEEK: (December 7-15) Individual Oral Exams Scheduled
In O’BRIEN Jesuit Residence (1345 W. Wells): come to the receptionist area; the exams will be in a first floor parlor. You can enter either on Wells St. or through the North Commons.
The oral exam will include (but not be limited to) discussion of the “Recommended Reading” book chosen by the individual student (Hogan, Kristof/Wudunn, Magesa, Moser/Leers, Press, Schreiter, or Song).

N.B. Incompletes must be completed by February 15, 2019 (MU Policy)