TH 4405 & TH 5405 Christian Theology in Global Contexts:
Cross-Cultural Ethics Challenges

Marquette University
Spring Semester 2015

Wade Professor Marquette University Spring 2015
Boston College Professor of Moral Theology

Class: T/TH 3.30-4.45 in GM205W
Office Hours in Marquette Hall MH 008L Monday: 1:30—2:30, T/TH 1:30—3 PM OR EASILY by appointment
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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. Prereq: Jr. stdg., THEO 1001, and one second-level theology course

Detailed Course Description and Requirements

This course will consider several models and contextual issues of fundamental Christian ethics in various parts of the world in order to map how cultures and their respective ethoses intersect in the construction of ethical 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 works on cultural anthropology (Douglas), fundamental moral theology (Bretzke), a methodological reflection on the American ethical cultural tradition (Betsworth) and a work 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 Readings” (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. Unannounced short quizzes will be given on some of the assigned readings throughout the semester.

Additionally, those taking this course for Graduate Credit will be expected to read Bretzke’s A Morally Complex World: Engaging Contemporary Moral Theology (Liturgical Press, 2014) and submit a 5-10 page review that addresses the convergences, divergences and challenges raised by the intersection of traditional Catholic moral theology with contemporary multi-religious cross-cultural ethics.

Students will be asked to do weekly web-page postings or readings posted to D2L to be read by the rest of the class; a bi-weekly private Journal reflection (7 total) shared just with the instructor; a 3-4 page reflection paper on their own cultural ethos (due February 24th); 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 March 17th); a fifteen minute individual oral final exam; and a final
small group project which each student will be working on in a small group with between 1–3 other students will do a comparative analysis of either an approach to fundamental ethics or a concrete ethical 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 reflection is due May 5th.

N.B. All ordinary communication from the Professor 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 should do so via e-mail sent to james.bretzke@marquette.edu

REQUIRED BOOKS to be read by all:


Additional Required Book for Those Taking the Course for Graduate Credit:


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


Recommended Readings: Choose ONE (1)

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 4405 Christian Theology in Global Contexts Cross-Cultural Ethics
2015 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. Web-questions should be posted by the responsible group for a given week by Saturday evening before class, and Web-responses by the responsible group by Monday evening before class. All students should then read the questions and responses sometime before class on Tuesday. The web-questions, responses and readings begin with the Second Week of class. Journal entries (private to the professor only) are due by class-time, starting in the 3rd week (January 27th)

FIRST WEEK: (January 13--15) Introduction to Cross-Cultural Ethics (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
- Personal Introductions
- Gangnam video Introductory Exercise [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bZkp7q19f0]

SECOND WEEK: (January 20--22): Theological Framework of Inculturation & Ethics

- 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

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


Recommended Reading

Web-Page Question/Replies begin: Each person in Group A posts a one question to one of the assigned readings for the THIRD WEEK by Saturday evening. Each person in Group B posts a reply to one of the questions posted by Group A by Tuesday evening. Everyone should read all questions and replies by Tuesday class-time.

THIRD WEEK: (January 27-29): Cultural Anthropology & Mary Douglas I

- Introductory Power Point Presentation on Moral Methodology
- Small group preparation, followed by guided discussion.
- Cross-cultural ethical case study analysis and discussion


Web-Page Question/Replies: Each person in Group B posts a question for the FOURTH WEEK by Saturday evening. Each person in Group A posts a reply to one of the questions posted by Group B by Monday evening. Everyone should read all questions and replies by Tuesday class-time.

1st Private Journal entry due by class-time on Thursday.

FOURTH WEEK: (February 3-5): Ethics in the United States I

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


Web-Page Question/Replies: Group A posts a question for the FIFTH WEEK by Saturday evening. Each person in Group B posts a reply to one of the questions posted by Group A by Monday evening. Everyone should read all questions and replies by Tuesday class-time.

FIFTH WEEK: (February 10-12): Ethics in the United States II

Betsworth, Chapters 4-6 in Social Ethics: An Examination of American Moral Traditions, pp. 81-187.

Web-Page Question/Replies: Group B posts a question for the SIXTH WEEK by Saturday evening. Each person in Group A posts a reply to one of the questions posted by Group B by Monday evening. Everyone should read all questions and replies by Tuesday class-time.

Private Journal entry #2 due by class-time on Thursday

SIXTH WEEK: (February 17-19): Cultural Anthropology & Mary Douglas II


Douglas, Purity and Danger, Chapters 4-10 (remainder of book), pp. 72-220.

No Web-Questions nor Journal entry this week, due to preparation of the personal cultural ethos reflection paper due next week

SEVENTH WEEK: (February 24-26): 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; these will be shared in small group discussions

No Web-Questions nor Journal Entry

EIGHTH WEEK: (March 3-5) Theological Inculturation in the African Context II

Orobator, Agbonkhianmeghe E., S.J. Theology Brewed In an African Pot, Chs. 6-11 & Postscript, pp. 66-156.

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 Thursday March 14th to the professor.

Web-Page Question/Replies: Group A posts a question on either Orobator’s Theology Brewed In an African Pot, OR Achebe’s Things Fall Apart by Saturday evening; Group B posts a reply each to one of the questions posted by Group A by Monday evening. Everyone should read all questions and replies by Tuesday class-time.
Personal Journal Entry #3 due by class-time on Thursday

N.B SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS MARCH 10-12

NINTH WEEK: (March 17-19): Ethics in Africa, Missiology, Christology & Ecclesiology
Achebe, Chinua. Things Fall Apart (whole book)

LAST Web-Page Question/Replies: Group B posts a question on Endo’s Silence by Saturday evening; Group A posts a reply each to one of the questions posted by Group B by Monday evening. Everyone should read all questions and replies by Tuesday class-time.

Museum Field Visit Cross-Cultural Project due by Class-Time on March 17th

TENTH WEEK: (March 24-26): Ethics in Asia, Missiology, Christology & Ecclesiology
Endo, Shusaku. Silence (whole book, including the Appendix)

No further Web-Questions (optional if so desired). BUT Private Journal entry #4 due by class-time on March 24th.

ELEVENTH WEEK: (March 31): Missiology in Asia, Personal Sin & Moral Failure
(No class on Holy Thursday April 2)

Concluding Discussion of Endo’s Silence

TWELFTH WEEK: (April 7-9) Missiology in Latin America and Social Sin & Systemic Evil
Viewing and discussion of sections of Mission (movie)
Private Journal entry #5 due by class-time on April 7th

THIRTEENTH THROUGH SIXTEENTH WEEKS: April 14, 16, 21, 23, 28, 30
Small Group Presentations. Each group presentation will give a brief reading or similar preparatory exercise to be done in advance of the presentation by the rest of the class (so count on some extra short readings these last three weeks which are not listed in the Course Syllabus).

Private Journal entries #6 & 7 due by class-time Thursday of each week of April 21 and 28, commenting on the previous week’s Small Group presentations.

SEVENTEENTH WEEK: (Week of May 4-9) Individual Oral Exams Scheduled
The oral exam will include (but not be limited to) discussion of the “Recommended Reading” book chosen by the individual student (Kristof/Wudunn, Magesa, Moser/Leers, Press, Schreiter, or Song). Final Projects due on Tuesday May 5th