THEO 5110-01: CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY
North Park Theological Seminary
2027 Spring, Tuesday 7:30 pm–9:00 pm
3 Credit Hours
(Course Syllabus Draft)

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

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Location: Nyvall Hall 311
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Office Hours: By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introduction to the doctrines, methods, and tasks of Christian theology, seeking active appropriation of Christian faith in the context of the church and in engagement with the world (from Catalog).

Additional Description: (added by Lama)
This course introduces the discipline of Christian *theology* (meaning "reflection of Christian faith"), specifically attending to social justice and "planetary" liberation. This approach asks: what is *theological* about social issues such as racism, sexism, economic and ecological exploitations? In other words, what does *theology* have to do with social justice and liberation? Guided by these questions, we will explore the methods, sources, and major doctrines of Christian theology by carefully reading diverse theological texts from the early Church to contemporary theologians. It also focuses on cultivating and nurturing the skill of embodied, creative, and faithful storytelling to generate critical, constructive and contextual thinking that can enrich students' intercultural understanding and awareness.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Identify and describe basic Christian doctrines, and significant theologians, in terms of their historical contexts and/or their contributions to the Christian theological tradition (KNOWLEDGE).
- Explain important theological themes, concepts and vocabulary, based on lectures and reading materials (COMPREHENSION).
- Connect the personal and pastoral relevance of Christian doctrine to contemporary life in various social contexts (ANALYSIS)
- In light of the significance of civil and collegial discourse, employ charity in dialogue with those who hold differing theological views from your own (APPLICATION)
- Develop the skill of academic writing theology by engaging, evaluating, and integrating various theological texts on a theme (SYNTHESIS, EVALUATION).

This course contributes toward the following MACS, MACM, M.Div., & MATS learning outcomes:

- Interpret the Christian historical and theological tradition for appropriation in the life and mission of the Church.
- Demonstrate a theologically grounded ministerial identity and growing capacity to integrate it with the ministry of Christian formation
- Engage diversity and exhibit growth towards inter-cultural competence for ministry reflective of God's global redemptive work.

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Serene Jones and Paul Lakeland. *Constructive Theology: A Contemporary Approach to Classical Themes* (Fortress Press, 2005) [hereafter ***CT***: Available online at NPU Brandel Library]
2. William C. Placher, *Essentials of Christian Theology* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2003) (an anthology written by theologians from diverse denominations with both ecumenical and evangelical approaches) [hereafter ***ECT***]
3. Kwok Pui-Lan, ed., *Hope Abundant: Third World and Indigenous Women's Theology* (Orbis Books, 2010)
4. Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Beacon Press, 1996)
5. Weekly readings from a diversity of viewpoints provided on Canvas

Recommended Texts

- William Placher and Derek R. Nelson, *Readings in the History of Christian Theology,* revised edition, Vols. I and II (Westminster John Knox Press, 2015)
- Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction,* 6th edition (Wiley Blackwell, 2017) [available online NPU Brandel Library]
- John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, & Iain Torrance, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (Oxford University Press, 2007)
- Beth Felker Jones, *Practicing Christian Doctrine: An Introduction to Thinking and Living Theologically* (Baker Academic: 2023)

COURSE ASSESSMENTS AND GRADING SCALE

1. **Class Attendance & Participation (20%)**

This is a synchronic online class. All students should come to the synchronic Teams session prepared for active, and informed participation. Participation includes the completion of required readings of the week and weekly assignment prior to the class meeting. Each student will lead the opening for one class session through an activity called "Thinking Theologically Through Visual Arts." Detailed instructions will be available on Canvas.

Attendance: Only two class sessions can be missed without penalty to your final grade; five absences will result in failure. Three or more late arrivals or early departures will be counted as an absence.

Students joining by Teams: Think of your physical space as an extension of the classroom. Ensure that you are in a **private, stable location that is free of visual and audio distractions**. It's important that we all respect the integrity of classroom discussion. (For this same reason, please do not record class sessions.) **Please keep your camera and microphone on through the class session**. Consider purchasing a microphone/headset to improve the quality of your sound. (Attendance in class assumes that you are present in this way.)

2. **Weekly Reflection & Response (500 words Maximum) (20 %)**

Each student submits/posts a critical reflection essay on the readings assigned twenty-four hours in advance of the meeting time on the course website. In addition to your reading reflection essay, you will respond to two of your classmates' posts. You must post at least **SEVEN TIMES** over the course of the semester. Your reading reflection essay (no more than one-page single spaced) will be formatted accordingly:

- State the major argument(s) or thesis/purpose of the readings.
- Three Insights or new learnings from the readings that inform your understanding of Christian theology.
- Two Questions: your questions should be fully developed, indicating how they have emerged from the text.
- One Awareness that informs your practice of ministry.

3. **Theological Position Paper I & II (40%--20% each)**

You will write two position papers. Each paper (1,200-1,500 words in length) will engage with a theme based on your interests. For each paper, you will select **two theologians'** positions on your selected theme. You will write a synthetic, integrative, and carefully argumentative essay to illustrate your theological position. Your position papers are not sermons or confessional statements but rather demonstrate your articulation and reflection of the texts by treating each theologian's position critically and compassionately. The aim of the assignment is to foster dialogical, critical and constructive engagement with respect and integrity.

4. **Collaborative Group Project & Presentation (20 %)**

You will be assigned to a small of group of four students. Each group will select **ONE theme** from the course topics and prepare for a group presentation to be presented at the end of the semester. The purpose of the assignment is to engage the theme (selected as a group) in depth by cultivating the practice of **reading closely and reading together**, and to demonstrate how your group would translate/apply your new theological knowledge into your ministry context and beyond. Consider this assignment as a creative project.

Your group project will be evaluated by taking account of your self-evaluation and evaluation of other members in the group. In other words, you will allocate points to yourself and others in your group based on the levels of effort. You will receive a grade that represents the average of the

instructor's grade for the group's project (10 out of 20 points), your grade of your own effort (- out of 5), and the grades you received from other group members (- out of 5).
Your group tasks are as follows:

1. Set up a schedule for weekly meeting for 45 minutes
2. Select **One Theme** from the Course Materials
3. Engage the Course Materials for the selected theme, including suggested readings (develop your research, reflexive, analytical and integrative skills)
4. Decide a deliverable project (podcast, video presentation, Bible Study Guide, Retreat Guide)
5. Prepare for your project
6. Group Presentation (15-20 Minutes)

GRADING

Assignment	**Weight**
Class Attandence & Participation	20%
Weekly Reflection & Response	20%
Theology Position Paper I &II	40%
Collaborative Group Project & Presentation	20%

*Grade percentages operate as follows: A 100-93% A- 92.9-90% B+ 89.9-87 B 86.9-83 B- 82.9-80% C+ 79.9-77% C 76.9-73% C- 72.9-70% D+ 69.9-67% D 66.9-63% D- 62.9-60%

INCOMPLETE GRADES

If, due to extenuating circumstances (specifically, pregnancy, illness, personal and family issues, military assignment, etc.), a student anticipates they will be unable to complete course work within the allotted time, that student may request a grade of incomplete from the course instructor before the last week of class clearly stating the reason(s) for this request. Overscheduling and/or lack of self-discipline are not considered extenuating circumstances. If the request is timely and meets the criteria, student and instructor will submit the incomplete grade form and the grade for that class will be listed as "I" until the last day of the following semester. If coursework is not submitted by the last day of the following semester the listing of "I" will automatically be changed to "F." For the full policy, see page 15 of the Seminary Academic Catalog.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park University is committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating will receive a failing grade on the assignment and are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion. Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Plagiarism – the use of another's work as one's own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the internet.
2. Use of ChatGPT or other AI composition software to impersonate individual assignments.
3. Copying another's answers on a quiz or exam.
4. Deliberately allowing another to copy one's answers or work.
5. Signing an attendance roster for another who is not present.

For additional information, see the Seminary Academic Catalog, p. 25–26.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Your experience in this class is important to me. North Park is committed to creating inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have already established your accommodations, please share your accommodation letter with me so we can discuss how your accommodations will be implemented in this course. If you have not yet established services and have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations, please email the Disability Access Specialist or contact by phone (773-244-5737). Student Engagement facilitates the interactive process that establishes reasonable accommodations.

TITLE IX

Students who believe they may have experienced sexual misconduct, sexual harassment,domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking should contact the Title IX Coordinator (773) 244-5664 or TitleIX@northpark.edu to learn more about reporting options, resources, and support services. As members of the North Park faculty, we are concerned about the well-being and development of our students and are available to discuss any concerns. Faculty members are private resources meaning we are legally obligated to share information about the behavior reported above with the University's Title IX coordinator. If you are unsure whether you want your concerns disclosed to the Title IX Coordinator, we encourage you to contact Counseling Support Services at (773) 244-4897 or counseling@northpark.edu. Please refer to North Park's Safe Community site for reporting, contact information, and further details.

COURSE THEMES

Theme 1: **Revelation**
Scripture, Tradition, Reason, & Experience
Theme 2: **God**
What Do We Mean by God? Does God exist? Can God suffer?
Theme 3: **Human Beings**
What are human beings? What's wrong with us?
Theme 4: **Jesus Christ**
Who Do You Say that I AM?
Theme 5: **Spirit**
Discerning the Spirit
Theme 6: **Eschatology & Ethics**

Politics of Hope

Theme 7: **Church**
Missio Dei "God's Mission" in An Age of Global Migration

COURSE SCHEDULE