

## Liberating God: Liberation & Postcolonial Theologies

Religion

Room TBH

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Monday/Wednesday/Friday 11-11:50am

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### **Description:**

In the past four decades, liberation and postcolonial theologies have emerged to challenge traditional Western understandings of God. These theologies take into consideration the social and historical context of particular communities, so they are not based on a “universal” perspective. Among these theologies, we can find Latin American Liberation Theology, Black Theology, Hispanic/Latina/o Theology, Indigenous Theologies, Asian American Theology, Feminist Theologies, and Gay & Lesbian Theologies. While mostly identified within the Christian context, various religious traditions are represented within these theologies. In this sense, it is important to look beyond the misconceptions regarding these theologies and analyze their histories and their purposes. In this course we will study some of the most recognized liberation and postcolonial theologies within the American contexts and analyze and locate their historical and political foundations. We will look at particular issues such as poverty, gender, sexual preference and race/ethnicity to see how these theologies have addressed them and re-conceptualized them in light of particular historical and social perspectives.

### **Outcomes:**

- Students will have a general comprehension of the multiplicity of liberation theologies and their foundations.
- Students will have an understanding of the role of liberation theologies within their particular contexts and the challenges they provide to traditional theologies.
- Students will be able to do critical, analytical and creative reflection on the different issues and topics brought forward by liberation theologies and how they affect social reality.
- Students will engage the topics and themes developed by these theologies in order to develop a personal reflection and build a particular point of view.

### **Text and readings:**

Every week readings will be assigned from different texts. Readings will come from the following two required texts or will be posted in Doc Sharing on e-College.

Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed. *Feminist Theologies: Legacy And Prospect* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).

Elizabeth Stuart. *Gay & Lesbian Theologies: Repetitions With Critical Difference* (Ashgate Publishing, 2003).

**Visions and Expectations:**

This course will be run in a seminar style. This means you and I will be working together in order to reach the objectives of the course. I make the commitment of being here in class **on time** unless I tell you otherwise ahead of time, so I expect everyone to make the same commitment. Since it is a discussion course, I will come to class ready to critically engage the material, and I will expect you to do the same. In order to come ready for discussion and the construction of your papers, you will have to spend at least 6 hours a week in preparation for this class. The discussion format requires that everyone participate and build an argument based on her/his point of view, even when it is different from the one in the literature or from mine.

**Statement on Disability Services at TCU:**

Texas Christian University complies with the American with Disabilities Act and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities. If you require accommodations for a disability, please contact the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities in the Center for Academic Services, located in Sadler Hall 11. Adequate time must be allowed to arrange accommodations and accommodations are not retroactive: therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the academic term for which they are seeking accommodations. Students with emergency medical information or needing special arrangements in case a building must be evacuated should discuss this information with their instructor/professor as soon as possible. Further information can be obtained from the Center for Academic Services, TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129, or at 817-257-7486. Guidelines for documentation may be found at <http://www.acs.tcu.edu/DISABILITY.HTM>.

**Requirements:**

- Critical Reflection Paper I — **10%**
- Critical Reflection Paper II — **10%**
- Semester Project — **20%**
- Class Participation — **20%**
- Reflective Journal — **20%**
- Final Evaluation — **20%**

**\*The percentages indicate the weight of each requirement towards the final grade.**

**Critical Reflection Paper (40 POINTS)**

This assignment is a short paper (2-3 pages) in which the student will engage a weekly reading. The student has to develop a personal and analytical argument on a topic taken from the reading. It is not a summary of the text or a “book report” type of paper or a commentary on the text.

While students have the choice of selecting the readings for their Critical Reflection Papers, **the first one must be turned in by Week 6**. This is an individual task, not group work, so each student should write this paper individually. Without exception papers are due at the beginning of the class in which the selected reading will be discussed. No papers will be accepted after the selected reading was discussed. Students can bring a draft of their papers to me before turning in the final draft, and I will read them and provide feedback. After the first paper, every student should plan to visit my office in order to discuss the evaluation of that paper.

Although this type of paper doesn't require citations or bibliographical resources, since it is a reflection paper, students in this course should be aware of the strong sanctions against plagiarism, cheating and collusion set forth in the university's Academic Misconduct Policy (**Sec. 3.4 from the Student Handbook**). Plagiarism may result in an automatic "F" in the course. If you have any questions or doubts about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge course materials and the works of others, be sure to consult me. Proper citation procedures are provided in all writing manuals (for example MLA, APA, and Chicago Manual Style among others).

**Guidelines for Paper – Papers will be evaluated based upon four categories:**

- 1. Grammar (10 points)**
- 2. Coherence (10 points) – Students should have an organized paper, in which paragraphs relate to one another, as well as the general argument.**
- 3. Argument (10 points) – The student must build an argument, not an opinion. Students should develop an independent argument from the one in the reading that is sustainable by examples. In this sense, students will select a topic from the reading and discuss it by creating an argument. The argument of the paper will be based on students' perspectives, experiences and personal reflection, not merely on opinions. That is, students should do more than simply express an opinion. While an opinion conveys how you feel about something (e.g., "I enjoyed this reading;" "I like/dislike this reading"), an argument is a reflection on the material based on deep-level insights and previous class discussions.**
- 4. Reflective Voice (10 points) – Students will include a reflection on the argument as part of the paper. The use of "I" is accepted and encouraged.**

**\* Each student should keep to the number of pages assigned for the paper (12 point-Times New Roman, 1 inch margins, double space, and should include page numbers). Failure to comply with any of these will result in the loss of 3 points/each. No title or presentation page, please.**

Semester Project (100 POINTS)

Students will be divided in pairs and together will select their project topic in conversation with the professor. On Week 5 each group will introduce the selected topic to the rest of the class. This is an informal presentation in which the students will present the approach and the basic study questions to be dealt with in the paper. This is a chance for the class to help each other with constructive comments. The professor will guide the groups to different resources and bibliography about the particular topic. The groups will review the material about the issue together, and will come with their own point(s) of view (key positions and arguments, agreement or disagreement with the major arguments, and suggestions for future explorations). So, in this sense it is **one** paper per group.

This longer paper (15 pages) is intended to provide the students with the space to examine a particular topic from the course. This paper will follow the same guidelines as the critical reflection paper, mentioned above and the criteria of evaluation will be the same as well. The issue about academic misconduct applies for this assignment as well. A bibliography should be included. Groups are encouraged to select a different structure in the writing of this paper (e.g.,

story, newspaper article, interview, drama, etc.). Once the group decides on the type of written paper it will do, I will decide if it is possible for the subject matter and will specify the guidelines for the new structure. This paper is due the Monday after the Thanksgiving Break at the beginning of class. No papers will be received after this date. If you fail to turn in the paper on this date, the group will fail this assignment. Students will also have to give an oral presentation to the rest of the class in order to inform them about their findings.

This project will be done in phases:

- Presentation of topic – Week 5 (10 points)
  1. General topic
  2. Specific topic
  3. Important questions to ask the literature
  4. Type of literature (Bibliography)
  5. Type of paper (Format)
- Annotated bibliography – Week 8 (10 points)
- Outline of the project – Week 10 (10 points)
- Final Project – November 26 (60 points)
  1. Grammar (15)
  2. Coherence (15)
  3. Argument (15)
  4. Reflective Voice (15)
- Oral presentation – Week 15 (10 points)
  1. Creativity (5)
  2. Clarity (5)

Class Participation - including Attendance (100 POINTS)

It is a requirement to be in class and show evidence of careful preparation for a thoughtful participation in class discussions. In case of an absence, the student should contact other members of the class in order to get an up-to-date progress report on the material covered. After the fourth absence the grade for class participation will be reduced by 10 points each absence (e.g., 4 absences/loss of 10 points, 5 absences/loss of 20 points, and so forth). Two late arrivals or early departures will be counted as one absence. Every student is responsible to sign the attendance list every class. Only official University absences, and absences due to severe illness, family emergency or a catastrophic accident will be excused.

The student should show evidence of an ability to read and discuss the material critically and historically, understanding her/his context, social location and point of view. **Every student should read the assigned material and bring notes on it in order to be engaged in the discussion.** Every human being has prejudices; so, in order for the class discussion to flow, each student should be aware of those prejudices and be open to having them challenged. Ideally, class is not a competition for a grade but a setting where an exchange of ideas takes place. If a student is not ready to participate seriously and respectfully, or if s/he has not done the reading, s/he will be counted as absent for that day. I reserve the right to give “pop-quizzes” in order to test your readiness and preparation for class. This will be part of the class participation grade. Class participation is the most important aspect of the course, so in this case students who usually do not participate in class should make an effort to make their voices heard. Class

participation is evaluated by the capacity of the students to make constructive contributions to the topics discussed during class, not by the capacity to talk.

As part of class participation, each student is expected to prepare and lead class during one week of the semester. On the Monday and Wednesday of the week he or she is to lead class, the student will arrive with a review of the readings for the day (important aspects of the reading) and questions to lead discussion on those particular days.

#### Reflective Journal (100 POINTS)

Each student is required to submit weekly journal entries through e-college. This assignment provides a space in which the student (through writing) can make sense of her/his experiences in the course. It is a way of developing reflection beyond the classroom and the assignments. The student will reflect on the issues presented in class week-by-week focusing on the challenges, problems and learning aspects of the class discussions. This diary promotes the articulation of ideas about the material and the learning process in order for the student to do introspection.

#### Guidelines for Reflective Journal:

- **One reflective journal per week (10 points/each) due by 5pm on the Sunday after the week.**
- **You have to submit 10 throughout the semester out of the possible 12.**
- **Students should provide an analytical engagement of the material and the discussions for that week, not solely on the readings.**
- **Students should include personal reflection on the arguments and topics discussed in the class.**
- **Grading: 9-10 points for a critical reflection, 7-8 points for a non-engaged discussion (e.g., summaries and opinions), and 0-6 points for just summaries.**

#### Final Evaluation (20 POINTS)

Following the University policy, there will be a final evaluation. Here, I will be evaluating your general knowledge on the issues discussed in class and your ability to put ideas and key terms together. Throughout the course, terms and topics will be highlighted and discussed, and they will be part of the evaluation.

#### Grading System:

The grading scale for this class is:

A= 90-100

B= 80-89

C= 70-79

D= 58-69

F= 0-57

Each student is responsible to fulfill the requirements of the course. So in this sense to do what is required in the class generates a “C,” to engage the material critically generates a “B,” and to produce a significant contribution beyond the requirements generates an “A.”

#### Course Schedule:

The course is divided in weeks. Each week we will be discussing a different topic, and readings about that topic will be assigned. Students are responsible to follow the calendar and come

prepared for discussion. All readings will be on e-College in the Document Sharing section, except for the readings from these required texts.

#### Week 1: Class Overview and Introduction

- Monday – Review of Syllabus and Orientation
- Wednesday – Historical Perspectives of Liberation Theologies
- Friday – Mini-Workshop: How to write from one’s own place?

#### Week 2: Latin American Liberation Theology

- Monday – Franz J. Hinkelammert, “Liberation Theology in the Economic and Social Context of Latin America: Economy and Theology, or the Irrationality of the Rationalized,” David Batstone, Eduardo Mendieta, Lois Ann Lorentzen, and Dwight N. Hopkins, eds. *Liberation Theologies, Postmodernity, and the Americas* (London: Routledge, 1997), 25-52.
- Wednesday –
- Friday – Discussion

#### Week 3: Latin America Liberation Theology vs. Popular Theology

- Monday – **Labor Day (No Class)**
- Wednesday – Marcella Althaus-Reid, “Gustavo Gutiérrez Goes to Disneyland: Theme Park Theologies and the Diaspora of the Discourse of the Popular Theologian in Liberation Theology,” Marcella Althaus-Reid, *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology: Readings on Poverty, Sexual Identity and God* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 124-142.
- Friday – Discussion

#### Week 4: U.S Hispanic/Latina/o Theology

- Monday – Orlando O. Espín, “The State of U.S. Latina/o Theology: An Understanding,” Alvin Padilla, Roberto Goizueta, and Eldin Villafañe, eds. *Hispanic Christian Thought at the Dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Apuntes in Honor of Justo L. González* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 98-116.
- Wednesday – Nancy Pineda-Madrid, “Latinas Writing Theology at the Threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed. *Feminist Theologies: Legacy And Prospect* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).
- Friday – Discussion

#### Week 5: Black Theologies

- Monday – James Cone, “Black Theology and Black Liberation,” James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, eds. *Black Theology: A Documentary History, Volume I 1966-1979* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 106-113.
- Wednesday – Stephanie Y. Mitchem, “Womanist Theology and Ethics,” Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed. *Feminist Theologies: Legacy And Prospect* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).
- Friday – Discussion

Week 7: Re-Thinking Liberation (Mid-Term Review)

- Monday – Discussion
- Wednesday – Discussion
- Friday – **Fall Break (No Class)**

Week 8: Christian Feminist Theologies

- Monday – Rosemary Radford Ruether, Peggy H. Cleveland, Pamela Cooper-White, and Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, “At the Center,” Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed. *Feminist Theologies: Legacy And Prospect* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).
- Wednesday – Mary E. Hunt, “The Flowering of Feminist-Womanist Theologies,” Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed. *Feminist Theologies: Legacy And Prospect* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).
- Friday – Discussion

Week 9: Non-Christian Feminist Theologies

- Monday – Nayereh Tohidi, “Muslim Feminism and Islamic Reformation,” Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed. *Feminist Theologies: Legacy And Prospect* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).
- Wednesday – Sandy Boucher, “Buddhist Feminist Scholarship,” Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed. *Feminist Theologies: Legacy And Prospect* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).
- Friday – Discussion

Week 6: Postcolonial Theologies

- Monday – Musa W. Dube, “Postcolonialism and Liberation,” Miguel A. De la Torre, ed. *Handbook on U.S. Theologies of Liberation* (Saint Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 288-294.
- Wednesday – Mark Lewis Taylor, “Spirit and Liberation: Achieving Postcolonial Theology in the United States,” Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, Mayra Rivera, eds. *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 39-55.
- Friday – Discussion

Week 10: Indigenous Theologies

- Monday – Stephen P. Judd, “The Indigenous Theology Movement in Latin America: Encounters of Memory, Resistance, and Hope at the Crossroads,” Edward L. Cleary and Timothy J. Steigenga, ed. *Resurgent Voices in Latin America: Indigenous peoples, Political Mobilization, and Religious Change* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 210-230.
- Wednesday – Tink Tinker, “American Indian Traditions,” Miguel A. De la Torre, ed. *Handbook on U.S. Theologies of Liberation* (Saint Louis: Chalice Press, 2004).
- Friday – Discussion

Week 11: Theologies for the Environment

- Monday – Steven Bouma-Prediger, “Environmental Racism,” Miguel A. De la Torre, ed. *Handbook on U.S. Theologies of Liberation* (Saint Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 281-287.

- Wednesday – Mary Evelyn Tucker, “Women, Religion, and the Ecological Crisis,” Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed. *Feminist Theologies: Legacy And Prospect* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).
- Friday – Discussion

Week 12: Case Study: Queer Theologies I

- Monday – Stuart, 1-32 (Chapters 1-2)
- Wednesday – Stuart, 33-64 (Chapters 3-4)
- Friday – Discussion

Week 13: Case Study: Queer Theologies II

- Monday – Stuart, 65-88 (Chapters 5-6)
- Wednesday – Stuart, 89-116 (Chapters 7-8)
- Friday – Discussion

Week 14: **Reading Week (No Classes)**

- Monday –
- Wednesday –
- Friday –

Week 15: Evaluation Group Presentations and Review

- Monday –
- Wednesday –