Models of Contextual Theology: An Asian Perspective

KNT2621HF (Winter of 2012)

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I. Course Description

The purpose of this course is to help students realize the contextual nature of theology through lectures on contextual theology as well as seminars on Asian theologians and their theologies. With this format, this course aims to help non-Asian students to get some knowledge of Asian cultures and Asian indigenous religions, and Asian students to develop a theology based on their Asian heritage and experiences. Consequently, this course aspires to help theological students, both Asian and non-Asian, to overcome Western parochialism and contribute to a development of Christian theology for the coming multicultural and pluralistic century that we have been already embarked on.

II. Course Objectives: Knowledge, skills and competencies

This course aims to help students to:
1) Realize the contextual nature of theology
2) Identify and describe diverse theological developments in Asia.
3) Become familiar with the major themes, distinctive features, and methodologies of Asian theologies
4) Formulate a broader/global perspective in their theological thinking in relation to our local context
5) Demonstrate skills to express their ideas in both oral and written forms, using proper research formats.

III. Required Texts: available at Crux Bookstore.

(Reserved at Knox College library. Other books available are also reserved.)

IV. Course Requirements and Evaluative Criteria

Grade scale and grade expectations are contained in the TST Basic Degree Handbook.

1. Class attendance and participation (10%): Students are expected to attend all classes. Absence from more than two classes normally results in a grade of “incomplete.” For each class, there is a list of required reading that students must read prior to the class. Class participation includes student contributions to group discussions.
2. Four short reflection papers on weekly reading assignments (20%): Students need to choose four weeks and write short reflection papers (3-5 pages). Half of the content should be review and the other half should be his/her personal reflection of the weekly reading material. The paper is due in class before the class presentation starts.

3. Presentation (30%). After the fourth week, one student will be invited to initiate the class discussion. This student will first review and then critically comment on the class’s required reading together with his/her other readings and personal experience. It should not take longer than 30 minutes. Finally s/he will lead the class discussion. The student is expected to prepare a handout or other visual aid to enhance the effectiveness of his/her presentation.

4. A research paper (40%): Students are required to hand in one research paper (12-15 pages) by the last class. This paper aims to provide the student with the opportunity to research an Asian issue in greater depth, drawing on the course content, and formulating his/her viewpoint on the topic. Students need to choose a topic relevant to the course, and utilize at least 6 sources of information. Before the reading week, students are expected to present a written plan of their research paper, including the thesis statement, outline and preliminary bibliography.

* All papers should be submitted in class. No e-mail submission is allowed unless previously arranged due to some special circumstances.

V. COURSE POLICIES

Policies for courses are contained in the TST Basic Degree Handbook and the Knox Student Handbook. In particular, note:

**Late Policy:** 4 points deducted per week late.

**Completion of Course Work:** All course work (including any late work) must be completed by the end of term, the last day of exams. Only in the case of illness (with a note from a doctor), bereavement or other unusual circumstances will an extension be considered and this must be authorized by the Basic Degree Committee and the Faculty. An SDF request form must be submitted.

**Style Guidelines for Papers:** See *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, by Kate L. Turabian.

**Email Assignments:** Papers and assignments are not accepted by email, except in rare cases by prior permission of the instructor.

**Plagiarism Policy:** See TST Basic Degree Handbook.

**Consultation:** Please do not hesitate to consult the instructor about any questions you may have. Email is normally the most immediate form of contact.

**Attendance:** A minimum attendance of 80% is required for a passing grade. Habitual lateness for class will be counted as absence.

VI. GRADING SCHEME

The grading scheme for this course, as with all TST courses, is as follows:
A+ 90-100 profound and creative
A  85-89 outstanding
A- 80-84 excellent: clear evidence of original thinking, of analytic and synthetic ability; sound critical evaluations, broad knowledge base.
B+ 75-79 very good
B  73-76 good: good critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues, good familiarity with the literature
B- 70-72 satisfactory: adequate critical capacity and analytic ability; some understanding of relevant issues and with the literature
FZ 0-69 failure: failure to meet the above criteria

COURSE OUTLINE

Part I: Contextual Theologies

[Questions: Why is it important? Why another theology? Why bother?]

[Key words: The Gospel, the Scriptures, Tradition and traditions, interpretation, incarnation, inculturation, and redemption.]

Week 1: The foundation for “theologies”: Christianity as interpreted, contextualized realities in one and diverse manifestation.

* Read for the Next Week


Week 2: The definition, context, and characteristics of Asian Theology

* Read for the Next Week


Part II: Asian Cultures and Religions.
Week 3 Asian Religions: Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism

[Questions: What are the roots of the ways of Asian thinking and living? What are main characteristics of some of Asian religions? What are the issues, methodology and key points of Asian theologians in their attempts to dialogue with Asian religions and cultural traditions?]

[Key words: Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism.]

* Read for the Next Week

Week 4 Characteristics of Asian Thinking and Living [class held at the East Asian Library]

[Questions: What are the struggles of Asian theologians in relation to their own tradition?]

[Key words: Asian Texts, Asian traditions]

* Read for the Next Week

  Kosuke Koyama, Water Buffalo Theology (Chapters 2, 4, 8, 10, 11, 17)

Part III: Asian Theologians and their Theologies

Week 5 Kosuke Koyama 1

[Questions: What is the peculiar context Koyama’s theology formed in? What is his perception of Western Christianity and Asian religion (Buddhism) and how does he synthesize them?]

[Key words: methodology, temporal vs spatial religions, theology of the cross]

* Read for the Next Week

  Kosuke Koyama, Mount Fuji and Mount Sinai: A Critique of Idols.

Week 6 Kosuke Koyama 2

[Questions: What is the peculiar context Koyama’s theology is formed in? What is his perception of Western Christianity and Asian religion (Buddhism) and how does he synthesize them?]

4
[Key words: methodology, temporal vs. spatial religions]

* Read for the Next Week
  C. S. Song, *Jesus, the Crucified People*, Prologue - chap. 4. (100 pages)

[Feb. 22 Reading Week: no class]

**Week 7 C. S. Song 1**

[Questions: What is the context from which Song discusses his Christology? What are similarities and differences between Song’s theology and Minjung theology?]

[Key words:]

* Read for the Next Week
  C. S. Song, *Jesus, the Crucified People*, Chap. 5 - 10. (133 pages)

**Week 8 C. S. Song 2**

[Questions: What is the context from which Song discusses his Christology? What is similarity and difference between Song’s theology and Minjung theology?]

[Key words: context, Christology]

* Read for the Next Week
  1. Kwok Pui-lan. *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World*

**Week 9 Kwok Pui-lan and Chung Hyun Kyung**

[Questions: What are key points of the two Asian feminist theologians? What are their methodology and attitude toward the Western tradition (including the Scriptures)?]

[Key words: women’s oppression, patriarchy]

* Read for the Next Week
  4. Kim Yong-Bock, “Korean Christianity as a Messianic Movement of the People,” in *Minjung Theology*, pp. 80-119. (60 pages)
**Week 10 Korean Minjung Theologians**

[Questions: What is the geo-political situation of Korean people in history? What are more immediate context that gave rise to Minjung Theology? How do these theologians use Asian sources as well as western sources?]

[Key words: Han, Minjung]

* Read for the Next Week
  Chun-hoi Heo, *Multicultural Christology: A Korean Immigrant Perspective*. (Chapters I, IV, V)
  Andrew Park, “The Han of the Korean-American Community” in *Racial Conflict and Healing*

**Week 11 Asian-North American Immigrant theology**

[Questions: Who is Christ for us here and now? How does my context affect my perception of Christ and how legitimate is that view? How does Heo’s Christology affect those of us in multicultural Canada?]

[Key words: liberation and reconciliation]

* Read for the Next Week

**Week 12 Final Overview: Asian theologies as contextual theology / Theology for here and now**
Selected Bibliography


Chung, Hyun Kyung. Struggle to be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women’s Theology (Orbis Books, 1990; Fourth Printing, 1993);


