

Readings in Religion (Rel 439)
Benedict College
Columbia, South Carolina
Spring 2011

Instructor: Dr. Harry Singleton

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Office Hours: M-W 10am-11am, 12pm-1pm, 3pm-4pm; T-Th 12pm-1pm or by appt.

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Course Description

This doctoral seminar-style course takes an intensive look into the thought of two of the most passionate and influential theologians of the twentieth century: Rudolph Bultmann and Howard Thurman. In particular, the student will engage in a thorough, detailed reading of the Christological treatments of each thinker, namely Bultmann's *Jesus Christ and Mythology* and Thurman's *Jesus and the Disinherited*. As this course is primarily designed for the preparation of Religion/Philosophy majors for graduate and seminary work, the student will be expected to carry out *all* reading assignments and participate extensively in class discussions. In this sense the course will seek to ground the student in the rudiments of honing his/her reading comprehension skills of scholarly texts for the purpose of developing his/her ability to articulate the theological commitments of the selected theologians with reasonable clarity in both oral and written dimensions.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- 1) have a cursory knowledge of the background of the selected theologians;
- 2) identify the thesis of the books and major presuppositions of the selected theologians;
- 3) clearly articulate the theological projects of the selected theologians;
- 4) determine why the selected theologians contributions continue to endure.

Course Requirements

Weekly Reflection Papers (10 [Five-Bultmann, Five-Thurman] at 5% each or 50%)

Summation Papers (2 [One-Bultmann, One-Thurman] at 25% each or 50%)

Papers

Reflection Papers

The weekly reflection papers are to be *one full page* in length with *no cover page, headers or footers* and should cover a specific topic (selected at the student's or instructor's discretion) from the readings and class discussions that particular week. The papers should reflect the student's knowledge of a particular aspect of the theologian's thought for approximately three-quarters of a page and the student's personal thoughts on and/or critique of that aspect the last quarter of the page. **The student will be expected to draw substantive conclusions in his/her comments and not fall prey to anecdotal or shallow analysis!**

Summation Papers

The summation papers are to be *three full pages* in length and must contain a cover page. They will be on each of the theologians covered and due at midterm and at the end of the semester. The student will be expected to articulate in as clear a manner as possible the methodological presuppositions (or theological summation) of the selected theologians and why these presuppositions are seen by the theologians as essential for relevant theological reflection. Further, it is expected that with the summation papers the student will devote the entire three pages to the program of the theologian, i.e., no personal comments are expected.

All papers must be typed with a font size 12 and double-spaced with one-inch margins throughout and supporting documentation.

All papers will be graded on spelling, grammar, documentation, clarity of comprehension, and aesthetic quality.

Papers are due on the days designated by the instructor! Papers will not be accepted late under any circumstances! Failure to turn in papers on time could result in a failing grade for the course!

Grade Scale

A 100-90

B 89-80

C 79-70

D 69-60

F 59-below

Cheating

It is hoped that the student would conduct his/her research independently and that the student's work is an original construction. Duplicating someone else's work will result in a failing grade for the course. These measures will be taken in addition to whatever action(s) Benedict College deems appropriate.

Attendance

Given that regular attendance is imperative for student success, **students will be allowed two unexcused absences. After the second unexcused absence, a point will be deducted from the student's final average for each subsequent absence!** When in class, students are expected to demonstrate a rigorous engagement with the weekly readings through informed participation in class discussions. Students who are unable to do this will lend the impression they are not serious about honing their analytical skills and will not likely do well in the course!

Electronic Devices

Other than a laptop or recording device for class discussions, electronic devices are strictly prohibited in the classroom. **In particular, cell phones and listening devices are prohibited from use during class!** They are to be turned off before entering the classroom and not used for the duration of the class. Students in violation will be disciplined or dismissed from the class.

Required Course Texts

Rudolph Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.

Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1996.

First published by Abingdon Press, 1949.

Course Outline

Phase I – Rudolph Bultmann's, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*

<u>Week(s)</u>	<u>Reading(s)</u>	<u>Topic(s)</u>
1	None	Course Introduction
2	Jesus Christ and Mythology Chapter 1	The Message of Jesus Reflection Paper #1
3	Jesus Christ and Mythology Chapter 1	The Problem of Mythology Reflection Paper #2
4	Jesus Christ and Mythology Chapter 2	Mythology and Eschatology Reflection Paper #3
5	Jesus Christ and Mythology Chapter 3	Christology and Modernity Reflection Paper #4
Board of Trustees Meeting, Thursday, February 10		
6	Jesus Christ and Mythology Chapter 4	The Bible and Existentialism Reflection Paper #5
7	Jesus Christ and Mythology Chapter 5	God As Acting
8	Midterm Week	First Summation Paper Due
Spring Convocation, Tuesday, March 1		
9	Spring Break	No Classes

Phase II - Howard Thurman's, *Jesus and the Disinherited*

<u>Week(s)</u>	<u>Reading(s)</u>	<u>Topic(s)</u>
10	Jesus and the Disinherited Foreward	Vincent Harding
11	Jesus and the Disinherited Chapter 1	Jesus Interpreted Reflection Paper #6
12	Jesus and the Disinherited Chapter 2	Living Fear, Living Jesus Reflection Paper #7

<u>Week(s)</u>	<u>Reading(s)</u>	<u>Topic(s)</u>
13	Jesus and the Disinherited Chapter 3	Jesus and the Deception of the Disinherited Reflection Paper #8
14	Jesus and the Disinherited Chapter 4	Jesus and Hate Reflection Paper #9
15	Jesus and the Disinherited Chapter 5/Epilogue	Jesus: The Greatest Love Teacher Reflection Paper #10
Board of Trustees Meeting, Thursday, April 21		
16	Course Wrap-up	Second Summation Paper Due

*****Senior Examinations***** Tuesday, April 26-Thursday, April 28

*****Common Final Examinations***** Friday, April 29, Saturday, April 30, 8am-6pm

*****Final Examinations***** Monday, May 2 - Friday, May 6

*****Commencement***** Saturday, May 7

Although this is the stated outline, it is subject to change as dictated by either time availability or unforeseen circumstances.