

THE KING'S UNIVERSITY

Theology 369

Saving God? Contemporary Theology

Fall 2017 Syllabus

Time and Location

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30-1:50, room N117

Instructor

Michael Buttrey

office: N246

email: michael.buttrey@kingsu.ca

My scheduled office hours are 1-3pm Wednesdays, except that I will be away on Sept 6, Oct 11, and Nov 15. Please stop by if you have any questions about the course, readings, or assignments. If you cannot make Wednesday afternoons, please contact me to arrange a different time to meet.

Description

In the past century there has been an explosion in the depth and breadth of constructive work in theology. While the church in the “post-Christian” West struggles to redefine its voice and mission amidst a highly secularized and pluralist culture, the vigour and growth of the church in the “developing” world is contributing new, powerful, and often critical voices to an increasingly global conversation. In this course students engage directly with the work of significant 20th and 21st century theologians on selected themes and topics shaping Christian thought today.

Objectives

1. To spark interest in the work of theology.
2. To introduce you to prominent figures, topics, and trends in contemporary theology.
3. To develop your ability to articulate your own theological arguments and questions in conversation with your colleagues and the work of contemporary theologians.

Learning Methods

This class is a seminar. In the first few classes I will give lectures providing some intellectual, social, and historical background to contemporary theology. The rest of the term I (or an occasional guest speaker) will give at most short lectures, with a clear majority of class time devoted to discussion. To make this course a success for yourself and for others, you will need to complete the assigned readings, prepare written responses to the readings, and be willing to discuss the readings and your responses in class.

Texts

You will need a personal copy of David Ford & Mike Higton, eds. *The Modern Theologians Reader* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). Copies are available in the bookstore.

You should also have a **Bible**. I will generally use the New Revised Standard Version in class, but another good recent translation (e.g. the New International Version) or study bible will do.

The following books are valuable references on a variety of theologians and theological topics, and have been placed on reserve in the library for you to consult:

- David Ford, ed. *The Modern Theologians*. BT 28 M59 1989 (24-hour reserve)
- Gareth Jones, ed. *The Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology*. BT 75.3 B58 2004 (24-hour reserve)
- Alister McGrath, ed. *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*. BR 95 B58 1993 (on shelf; library use only)

Evaluation

Component	Weight	Due Dates
Attendance and Participation	10%	Every class
Reading Responses	45%	Sept 14, 19, 28; Oct 5, 12, 19, 26; Nov 2, 7, 16; Dec 5
Review Essay and Presentation	25%	Between Nov 21 and Nov 30 depending on class size
Take Home Final Exam	20%	To be determined by the registrar's office

Written Assignments

Most weeks I will ask you to respond to specific questions on the assigned readings in a **reading response** of between 400 and 600 words. Each response is worth 5%; if you submit more than nine reading responses, only the nine with the highest marks will count towards your final grade.

You will also prepare a **review essay** of about 2,500 words, including comparative and critical analysis, on a major work by a significant 20th or 21st century theologian, and then make a 10 to 15 minute **presentation** in class, followed by discussion. I will provide more information on the essay and presentation format later in the term.

For the **take home final exam** I will ask you to answer essay questions on the assigned readings, with a focus on aspects we have covered in class and in the reading responses.

Class and Reading Schedule

Numbered readings are from *The Modern Theologians Reader*; others will be distributed in class and on Moodle. All readings should be completed *before* the beginning of class. An asterisk (*) indicates a critical reading engagement is due; a double-angle (») indicates a reading that should be read first. Readings may change with advance notice.

Introductions

- 1 September 5 Syllabus and Guidelines
- 2 September 7 Acts 13 and 17, 1st Corinthians 1 (The Bible); Introduction (Reader)
- 3 September 12 Garrett Green, "Modernity" (17 pages)
- 4 September 14* Schleiermacher

Scripture

- 5 September 19* » 1.1 Karl Barth; 16.1 Rudolf Bultmann (12 pages total)
September 21 *IS Conference, no class*
- 6 September 26 » 33.1 J.I. Packer; 4.2 Henri de Lubac (13 pages)
- 7 September 28* 29.1 Fernando F. Segovia; 29.2 Musa W. Dube (11 pages)

Christ

- 8 October 3 6.1 Hans Urs von Balthasar; 30.1 Joint Declaration (10 pages)
- 9 October 5* » 1.2 Karl Barth; 2.2 Dietrich Bonhoeffer (14 pages)
- 10 October 10 25.2 Elsa Tamez; Kathryn Tanner, "Justification and Justice" (13 pages)

Method

- 11 October 12* 17.2 Alvin Plantinga; 18.2 Jean-Luc Marion (14 pages)
- 12 October 17 19.1 John Polkinghorne; 19.2 Nancey Murphy (9 pages)
- 13 October 19* 13.1 George Lindbeck; 13.2 Hans Frei (10 pages)

Church

- 14 October 24 » 11.2 Reinhold Niebuhr; 10.2 Rowan Williams (11 pages)
- 15 October 26* 24.1 Gayraud S. Wilmore; 26.2 Mercy Abma Oduyoye (11 pages)
- 16 October 31 20.1 Ernst Troeltsch; 20.2 John Milbank (13 pages)

Trinity

- 17 November 2* » 8.2 Jurgen Moltmann; 6.2 Hans Urs von Balthasar (12 pages)
- 18 November 7* Elizabeth Johnson, "Female Symbols"; Karen Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection" (17 pages)
- November 9 *Fall term break, no class*
- 19 November 14 23.2 Janet Martin Soskice; Sarah Coakley, "Recasting" (16 pages)

Presentations

20	November 16*	Readings to be determined
21	November 21	Student presentations
22	November 23	Student presentations
23	November 28	Student presentations
24	November 30	Student presentations or readings to be determined (depending on class size)

Wrap-up

25	December 5*	Readings to be determined depending on class interests
26	December 7	14.2 Robert Jenson (7 pages)

Policies

If you have been diagnosed with a disability which may affect your academic performance or access to education at King's, please identify yourself to the Student Life Office within the **first 3 weeks** of the semester. To receive accommodation services, you will need to provide the office with documentation that states the nature of the disability and the services you require. In some cases, additional financial supports may be available. You may contact the Student Life Office in office A125, by email at slo@kingsu.ca, or by phone at 780-465-8309.

To be an honest and just scholar means doing your own work and giving credit to others when you adapt or repeat their ideas and words.¹ For this reason, you are required to understand and uphold King's standards of academic **integrity**, described in the King's Academic Calendar under the section "Scholarly Ethics and Academic Honesty."²

A separate document of **guidelines** on attendance and participation, electronic devices, assignment submission and extensions, assignment formatting, inclusive language, citations, and plagiarism will be distributed with this syllabus and on Moodle.

¹ This is therefore a good point to acknowledge this syllabus builds on a course designed by Douglas Harink. I also benefited from consulting syllabi by Matthew Eaton, Remkes Kooistra, Joanne Moyer, and Sameer Yadav. Alexander Abecina, Jon Clemens, Matt Eaton, Lance Green, Fiona Li, and Bethany Sollereeder suggested supplemental readings. Finally, Robyn Boéré, Irene Buttrey, Matt Eaton, Doug Harink, Rem Kooistra, and Allison Murray provided helpful feedback.

² Also available online at <https://registry.kingsu.ca/Calendar/CalendarPDF/Academic%20Information.pdf>.