

THE 2531: Theologies of Hope and Liberation

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Subject/Discipline: [Theology](#)

School: [St. Joseph's University](#)

Project Area:

Fall 1997

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COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Course Description and Goals

"Theologies of Hope and Liberation" refers to a group of reflections about God, the church, Jesus Christ, and the Christian life in relation to human freedom and fulfillment, that have emerged from the poor and oppressed both in the United States and the "two-thirds" world, and from European theologians, all of whom argue that the task of theology is necessarily entwined with the well-being (spiritual, material, psychological) of the entire community. These two emergent theologies are known, respectively, as liberation theologies from Latin America, in particular, and will also read from liberation theologies written by men and women in the United States, Asia, and Africa, as well as responses to those theologies from the mainstream theological community in the U.S. There will also be opportunities for independent exploration of other liberation theologies and of political theology. For each set of theological reflection we study, we will seek to understand the context from which it has arisen, in particular, the authors' experiences of severe poverty, brutal repression, massive public suffering and racial and gender hatred. We will read the work of those who have spoken out about their understandings of God and the world, via the Christian gospel, as it is seen from these perspectives that are so often strikingly different from our own. We will explore how women in these contexts have both embraced and critiqued the first liberation theologies. And we will consider the effect of 25 years of liberation theology upon mainstream Christianity today.

While suffering and the theological reflection that it generates can never be generalized but must be attended to in its specific, particular, human forms, we are, nevertheless, able to identify a set of characteristics or *paradigm* that constitutes liberation and political theologies and sets them from modern theology. In her book, *The Praxis of Suffering*, Rebecca S. Chopp locates three characteristics that differentiate liberation theologies from other theology in the modern era. Those characteristics are that liberation and political theologies have: 1) a new theological subject; 2) use a new theological method; and 3) have a new experience of Christianity. While we will explore all three in the course of the term, only the first will be discussed below.

If we consider who the authors of Christian theology have been in the modern period, we easily discover that they have been middle-class (often referred to in the literature as "bourgeois"), white and male. And like any human beings reflecting on the relationship between God and the world, they have tended to develop theological discussion from within the boundaries of their own experiences of the world and of God and in such a way as to answer their own particular burning questions---since that is the kind of question theology addresses. Living in a world in which their primary needs for material good (food, shelter, employment, clothing) and political freedoms (the right to self-government) were, for the most part, secured, their theological reflections were directed to other matters. In a world in which Christianity was being challenged by the emergence of experimental science and an increasing awareness of the variety of the world's cultures and religions, then, modern theology has tended to focus on questions of meaning (in a world where science might make religion, including Christianity, irrelevant) and identify (in a world where the relationship of Christianity to other religions is in question). Because the *subject* (that is, the author) of modern theology has been primarily white and middle-class and male, it is to this subject's questions that theology has responded in the modern period.

In the 1960s and 1970s, however, a new theological subject "interrupted" onto the theological scene: the voice of poor and the oppressed. Speaking out of specific situations of suffering, theologians began attempting to shape theological questions and answers that would respond to the kinds of things that poor people, third world peoples, persons of color, women, non-Christians and many others have experienced in *their* lives, day after day, about which they sought a word from God. These theologians attempted to speak of God and the world from the perspective of those who have "suffered history, rather than created it" (Chopp). They attempted to articulate an experience of God and God's desire for humanity and creation that emerges from the "underside of history" (Gutierrez). Thus, the subjects (authors) of liberation and political theologies bring fresh issues to the theological discussion: issues of justice, human freedom, and basic human material need for bread and water. These are different from the theological questions of modern, because they emerge from the experience of a different theological subject: the poor.

In the final section of the course we will return to Kozol's *Amazing Grace* and to North American theologian, Robert McAfee Brown, as we seek answers to the question: What would a liberation theology for North American Christians look like today? In what ways has liberation theology already impacted contemporary American theology and the church? Brown has considered carefully the challenges posed by liberation theologies; we will see how this reflection has changed his perception of the questions today's theology should answer. You will be asked to consider these questions, also.

There are several key components to this course. One is your service placement and your reflection on your experiences at your site in conjunction with our classroom work. A second key part is the freedom you yourself will exercise in completing a portfolio which will serve as your term project. While there are certain parameters within which each student will work, you will have some leeway in developing and creating your portfolio, based on your interests and talents, while taking care to encompass the breadth of the course readings. A third part will be the regularly scheduled writing and discussion leadership assignments that will constitute the major portion of our classroom work together. The integration of all three of these elements is fundamental to a full accounting of your work in this course.

Liberation theologies reflect their communities' learnings: learning to trust their own judgments, to open themselves up to new ways of looking at the world, to set themselves free for the task of working both alone and with others to create a world worth living in. This course is intended as a small step toward such liberation and learning for each of its members. If there are other things that I as an instructor or we as a class might do to further this goal, please do not hesitate to communicate them. They will be taken into serious consideration.

Required Texts:

- Phillip Berryman, *Liberation Theology*
- Curt Cadorette, et. al., editor, *Liberation Theology: An Introductory Reader*
- Jonathan Kozol, *Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation*
- Paul Kivel, *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice*
- *Course Packet of Readings for Theologies of Hope and Liberation.* Available from the University Press.
- Reserve reading as noted by the instructor or in the syllabus.

Recommended Text:

- Alfred T. Hennelley, *Liberation Theologies: The Global Pursuit of Justice*

Reserve Reading:

- David Zucchino, *The Myth of the Welfare Queen* (especially recommended for North Philadelphia placements).
- Jonathan Kozol, "Children of the City Invincible: Camden, New Jersey," from *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools* (especially recommended for Camden placements).
- Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness: An Autobiography* (especially recommended for placements at the Catholic Worker Free Medical Clinic).
- Phillip Berryman, *Stubborn Hope*.
- Penny Lernoux, *Cry of the People*.
- Mark Danner, "The Truth of El Mozote," *The New Yorker*, December 6, 1993.
- Renny Golden, selections from *The Hour of the Poor, The Hour of Women: Salvadoran Women Speak*.
- Selections from *The Dallas Morning News*, on the plight of the world's women, organized by country
- Lisbeth B. Schorr, *Within Our Reach: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage*.

Course Requirements:

1. *Leadership of and participation in discussion of the assigned readings/films/exercises*, following the introductory sessions of the course. Careful reading and reflection upon the assigned material is essential for everyone. The exchange of idea with your fellow students is one of the best learning tools you have at your disposal. It is your responsibility to take advantage of it. Students are to come to class thoroughly prepared to participate.

For most of the class sessions, the class discussion will be organized by student facilitators and respondents.** The facilitator is responsible for chairing the day's discussion, constructing and directing the discussion, seeing that all contribute to the discussion, and keeping the discussion on topic. The respondent is responsible for keeping track of the issues that are discussed, keeping a list of the questions and answers that emerge in the discussion, briefly summarizing the previous class period's discussion at the beginning of the following class meeting, and providing a brief written report, at the time, to the instructor. Everyone will hold these roles at various times throughout the term. 20%.

2. *Eight (8) weekly (*) sort essays*, due on Thursdays, drawing upon the week's reading and discussion. Suggestions will be provided to help guide your writing; 2-3 pages is an appropriate length. Each Thursday, these essays will be distributed among the class members for peer reading and evaluation. Periodically (two or three times), the instructor will collect the essays for grading. Collection days will not be announced in advance. 20%.

3. *Completing of the Service Site Placement requirements as specified in your site contract and the keeping of a journal of reflections* about your site work and

its relationship to our readings and classroom discussions. Journals will be collected periodically and should be in a paper folder, NOT a spiral notebook or 3- ring binder. 20%.

4. *Development and completion of a two-part portfolio as your final term project.* Each part is to be submitted in rough draft form for comments before its final submission. One part will be analytical paper on some aspect of the course agreed upon by you and the instructor; the second part will be either a pedagogical, artistic, or liturgical project. Detailed instructions on the portfolio are in your course packet. 20%.

5. *A final examination,* at a time and place to be announced by the University Registrar. No one should plan to leave campus before the final examination date and time. 20%.

Attendance: A significant portion of your course grade is dependent upon your participation in class discussions. Part of my responsibility is to as course instructor involves making an evaluation of that contribution. The quality of your evaluation is greatly influenced by your class attendance, since your presence is necessary for participation in discussions and small group exercises. Students desiring a superior participation evaluation will begin by attending all sessions, except in superior participation evaluation, but is a prerequisite for it. **More than four absences will make any student liable for the lowering of the course grade. More than six absences will make a student liable for an "FA."** **Tardiness is not permitted and students who arrive after the roll has been called will not be admitted to class.**

Academic honesty: All students are subject to the policy on academic honesty as set forth in the St. Joseph's University catalogue. Make yourself thoroughly familiar with this policy. Any violation of it will result in a *failing grade*. Ignorance of the policy, including ignorance of proper documentation on papers, will not serve to excuse any violation. All written work should give appropriate documentation, *including page numbers*, for the ideas or wording of others. **All papers must include a bibliography; a paper without a bibliography will automatically receive a whole-letter grade reduction.** All papers should give credit for citations and the use of others' ideas. If you have ANY questions about documentation or other questions about academic honesty, speak with the instructor. Adherence to the University Policy is *your* responsibility.

Example of proper informal citation *within* a paper:

1) In her book, *How I Survived College at St. Joe*, Mary Quite Contrary says, "It's all in the wrist" (p. 17).

2) The Big Bad Wolf said he would destroy the little pig's straw house (p. 5).

Example of proper bibliographic form, at the end of a paper:

Cone, James H. "Jesus is Black," *Christology Class Packet*, St. Joseph's

University, Spring 1995.

Kysar, Robert. *John's Story of Jesus*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

Any recognized, standard form of documentation (MLA, Chicago Manual of Style, Turabian, APA, etc.) is acceptable. Just be consistent throughout your paper.

Weekly Assignments:

PART ONE: CONTEXT AND METHOD OF LIBERATION THEOLOGIES

Thursday, September 4: Introduction to the course and to each other;
Introduction to Service Learning (Connie McSherry); "Down-Under Map"

Monday, September 8: Introduction of site supervisors; Poverty in the U.S.;
Asking theological questions.

Reading:

- Kozol, *Amazing Grace*, Chapters 1-5
- McCollough, "Backgrounder: Charity & Justice," Packet

Thursday, September 11: The Face of Poverty in the United States--
Homelessness Film clip: "God Bless the Child"

Reading:

- Kozol, *Amazing Grace*, Chapter 6 and "In Memoriam"
- Budget exercise, Packet
- Poverty Quiz, Packet

Monday, September 15: The Subject and Method of Modern and Liberation
Theologies

Reading:

- Cadorette, "Preface" and "Introduction"
- Poem, "Two Women," Packet
- Balasuriya, "Toward the Liberation of Theology in Asia," in Cadorette

Thursday, September 18: Latin American Liberation Theology: Emergence and
History

Reading:

- Berryman, "Introduction," and Chapters 1, 2 and 5
- C. Boff, "In the Heart of the Endless Jungle," in Cadorette
- "Living on Less than \$200 a Year," Packet
- Maps of Central and South America, Packet

Monday, September 22: Latin America: Reading the Bible in Base Communities
Reading:

- Berryman, Chapter 3
- Mesters, "The Use of the Bible in Christian Communities of the Common People," in Cadorette

Thursday, September 25: Bible, continued
Reading:

- Gutierrez, "God's Revelation and Proclamation in History," Packet

Monday, September 29: Repression in Latin America
Before today's class meeting, see the film "Romero" at times TBA, IMC.
Reading:

- Lernoux, "Torture--The Rise of Fascism--The Agony of the Church," from Cry of the People, Packet
- Berryman, Chapters 6 and 7.
- Diagram, "The Spiral of Violence," Packet
- Study Sheet on "Romero," Packet

Thursday, October 2: Repression, continued, and the Naturing of Liberation Theology in L. Am.
Reading:

- Berrymanm Chapters 9, 10 and 12

PART TWO: CHRISTOLOGY--REFLECTIONS ON JESUS OF NAZARETH

Monday, October 6: History of Christology
Reading:

- Giblin, "Introduction" in Cadorette
- Trinidad, "Christology, *Conquista*, Colonization," Packet

Thursday, October 9: Christology in Latin America

- L. Boff, "How Can We Know Christ?" in Cadorette
- Sobrino, "Jesus and the Kingdom of God," in Cadorette

Monday, October 13: Women's Work for Latin American Liberation
In-class film: "Las Madres: The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo"

Reading:

- Bouvard, "Revolutionary Mothers of Argentina," Packet
- Reflection Sheet, "Las Madres," Packet

[Recommended: Soelle, "How Wanda Became a Feminist," Packet
Portraits of women in Guatemala, Brazil and Mexico, *Dallas Morning News*, on reserve.]

Thursday, October 16: Women and Christology

Reading:

- Nasimiyu-Wasike, "Christology and African Women's Experience," in Cadorette
- Chung Hyun Kyung, "Who is Jesus for Asian Women?" in Cadorette
- Berryman, pp. 162-167

[Recommended: Portraits of Women in "India, Thailand, Kenya, China and Egypt," *Dallas Morning News*, on reserve]

FALL BREAK

Thursday, October 23: Black Liberation Theology in the United States--Historical Context

Film Clips: from "Eyes on the Prize"

Reading:

- Berryman, 167-169
- Kivel, *Uprooting Racism*, Part I
- Study Sheet for "Eyes on the Prize," Packet
- England, Jacobs, "The Struggle Over Slavery," Packet

Monday, October 27: Black Theology in the 1960s and 1970s

Reading:

- Cone, "Black Theology and Black Liberation," in Cadorette
- Kivel, *Uprooting Racism*, Part II

Thursday, October 30: Black Theology: Contemporary Questions

Film: "A Question of Color"

Reading:

- Walker, "The Civil Rights Movement: What Good Was It?" Packet
- Welch, "Human Beings, White Supremacy, and Racial Justice," Packet
- Kivel, *Uprooting Racism*, Part III

PART THREE: ECCESIOLOGY--REFLECTIONS ON THE NATURE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Monday, November 3: The Church in Latin America

Reading:

- Gutierrez, "The Church: Sacrament of History," in Cadorette

Thursday, November 6: The Church in Latin America: Base Communities

Reading:

- Berryman, Chapter 4
- Barbe, "Church Base Communities," Cadorette

Monday, November 10: The Church in South Africa

Film Clip: "Cry Freedom!"

Reading:

- Kivel, *Uprooting Racism*, Parts IV, V and VI

Thursday, November 13: South Africa, cont.

Reading:

- Villa-Vincencio, "A Struggle for the Church's Soul," in Cadorette
- Berryman, Chapter 8

Monday, November 17: Women and Ecclesiology

Reading:

- Aquino, "Women's Participation in the Church," in Cadorette
- Yong Ting Jin, "New Ways of Being the Church," in Cadorette
- Berryman, pp. 170-178

[Recommended: Hunt, "Defining 'Women's Church'," in Cadorette

Portraits of women in Sweden, Bosnia, and the United States, *Dallas Morning News*, on reserve]

PART FOUR: SPIRITUALITY: LIVING AND CELEBRATING CHRISTIAN LIVES

Thursday, November 20: From Latin America

Reading:

- Snyder, "Introduction," in *Cadorette*
- Cardinal, "The Most Important Commandment," in *Cadorette*
- Boff, "Spirituality and Politics," in *Cadorette*

Monday, November 24: From Asian Women

Reading:

- Manazan and Sun Ai Park, "Emerging Spirituality of Asian Women," in *Cadorette*

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Monday, December 1: The Eucharist and Liberation

Reading:

- Balasuriya, "The Eucharist in Contemporary Society," in *Cadorette*
- Ela, "The Granary Is Empty," in *Cadorette*

PART FIVE: LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND MIDDLE-CLASS AMERICA

Thursday, December 4: What Does Liberation Theology Have To Do With Us?

Reading:

- Berryman, Chapter 13
- McAfee Brown, "Reflections of a North American," Packet
- Review, Kozol, *Amazing Grace*

[Recommended: Thistlethwaite and Hodgson, "The Church, Classism, and Ecclesial Community," Packet]

Monday, December 8: Back to the First World, cont.

Presentation of selected Portfolio items

Reading:

- Review, Kozol, *Amazing Grace*

**Reading Day in Wednesday, December 10.
Final Exam Week is Thursday, December 11, through Wednesday,
December 17.**