



**Hartford International**  
UNIVERSITY FOR RELIGION & PEACE



## **TH 605 Contextual Theologies**

**Fall 2023**

**Synchronous Online Mode**

**Thursdays, 7:00 – 9:00 PM**

**Final Syllabus**

### **Instructors:**

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### **Office Hours:**

Dr Mosher's office is in northeast Florida. Ms. Lama's office is on campus. Office Hours schedules will be announced by September 1st. Appointments for other times may be arranged by email.

### **Course Description:**

Theology—often defined as “faith seeking understanding”—is always informed by context: the particularities of the setting in which such understanding is sought. This course foregrounds situatedness as it facilitates exploration of multiple perspectives on Christianity's core doctrines and its traditions of belief and practice. Students will be introduced to a spectrum of models and methods of contextual theologizing as they read and discuss classical and contemporary Christian discourse from various parts of the world. In the process, they will progress in their ability to explain how factors such as geographic location, race, ethnicity, gender, environment, socio-economic-political situation, or experience of colonialism bear on understandings of Christian faith and have influenced the development and interpretation of Christian theological concepts.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

As a result of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Develop the skills necessary for reading theological texts critically in order to understand the breadth and diversity of (Christian) theologies and to write a constructive reflection on faith and practice.
- 2) Identify or explain several models of contextual theology.
- 3) Identify and analyze factors that shape and intersect in contextual theologies presently.
- 4) Explain and evaluate different strategies employed by Christian theologians in various geographic locations to connect Christian faith with their particular contextual inquiries.
- 5) Write or speak thoughtfully about their perspective on the influence of experience and location on theological development and thought.
- 6) Conduct and report on research into some aspect of contextual theology.

### **Program Goals Addressed**

MAIRS GOAL #1. Articulate your own worldview or religious belief system while empathically and respectfully engaging people whose worldviews, religious practices, and religious beliefs differ from your own.

MAIRS GOAL #2. Demonstrate fluency in the foundational concepts, insights and methods of Interreligious Studies and the application of those methods within contemporary multifaith settings.

MAIRS GOAL #6. Express your ideas and perspectives clearly in oral and written communication.

MAC GOAL #1. In accord with competencies advocated by the Association of Professional Chaplains: demonstrate a self-reflective professional identity, ethic of conduct and function of compassionate care rooted in the knowledge of one's own religious scripture, theology, and spiritual tradition of care.

MAIRS GOAL #7; MAC GOAL #1. Conduct research on the Master's level in the field of Interreligious Studies or Chaplaincy Studies.

### **Required Textbooks:**

Jones, Serene and Paul Lakeland, eds., *Constructive Theology: A Contemporary Approach to Classical Themes* (Fortress Press, 2005). ISBN 978-0800636838

Bergmann, Sigurd. *God in Context: A Survey of Contextual Theology* (Routledge, 2003). ISBN 978-0754606154.

Bevans, Stephen B. *Models of Contextual Theology*, revised and expanded edition (Orbis, 2002). ISBN 978-1570754388

NOTE: Additional course materials are provided on this course's Canvas website or are available through the Digital Theological Library.

### **Recommended Reading:**

Bergmann, Sigurd and Mika Vähäkangas, eds. *Contextual Theology: Skills and Practices of Liberating Faith* (Routledge, 2020).

Lartey, Emmanuel Y. and Hellena Moon, eds., *Postcolonial Images of Spiritual Care: Challenges of Care in a Neoliberal Age* (Pickwick, 2020).

Lee, Jung Young. *The Trinity in Asian Perspective* (Abingdon, 1996).

Migliore, Daniel L. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Eerdmans, 1991).

Park, Hirho Y and Cynthia A Bond Hopson, eds. *Contextual Theology: Intersectionality of Gender, Race, and Class* (United Methodist General Board of Higher Education, 2020)

Pears, Angie. *Doing Contextual Theology* (Routledge, 2010).

### **Course format and structure:**

**How it takes place:** This course is in *synchronous online* mode. It meets weekly at a specific time via Zoom but also requires independent online work. On Thursdays at 7:00 PM (Eastern), enrollees are required to be in a secure location with adequate microphone, camera, and sound capabilities to ensure class participation. Students are also required to use Canvas to access lectures, reading materials, instructions, assignments, grades, and discussion forums. The Canvas website will provide the most up-to-date information on all aspects of the course. If you have difficulty accessing or navigating the site, call the Canvas Support Hotline: (877) 249-4494.

**What to expect:** This course has been planned and will be taught collaboratively by two instructors. Both will deliver lectures, lead discussions, and mark student work. If you have questions about course content, contact either instructor. This course has three overarching elements: study of Christian doctrine; development of familiarity with models and methods of contextual theology; and analysis of examples of contextual theology. Content is organized as a series of modules. Each module offers resources to be engaged between Friday morning and Wednesday evening, a Discussion Forum prompting you to post a summary of insights gained from those resources, and a two-hour Zoom session. Here is our calendar:

#### ***Preliminary Matters: Orientation (9/7)***

Opening Zoom Session (9/7)

#### ***Module 1: Contextual Imperatives (9/8 – 9/14)***

Zoom Session: 9/14

#### ***Module 2: Revelation, Scripture, Interpretation, and Authority (9/15 – 9/21)***

Zoom Session: 9/21

#### ***Module 3: God (9/22 – 9/28)***

Zoom Session: 9/28

#### ***Module 4: Creation (9/29 – 10/5)***

Zoom Session: 10/5

**Module 5: Theological Anthropology / Doctrine of Human Being (10/6 – 10/12)**

Zoom Session: 10/12

**Module 6: Deep Dive (10/13 – 10/19)**

Zoom Session: 10/19

**Module 7: Christology; the Person & Work of Jesus (10/20 – 10/26)**

Zoom Session: 10/26

**Module 8: Midterm Review + Theology and the Visual Arts (10/27 – 11/2)**

Zoom Session: 11/2

**EXCURSUS: Claiming a Personal Theological Position (11/3 – 11/9)**

Zoom Session: 11/9

**Module 9: Ecclesiology (11/10 – 11/16)**

Zoom Session: 11/16

**EXCURSUS: Reading Week and Thanksgiving Break (11/17 – 11/26)**

Work on Culminating Project; no Zoom session

**Module 10: Pneumatology (11/27 – 11/30)**

Zoom Session: 11/30

**Module 11: Eschatology; Doctrine of Last Things; Christian Hope (12/1 – 12/7)**

Zoom Session: 12/7

**Module 12: Synthesis (12/8 – 12/14)**

Zoom Session: 12/14

**Assignment Categories**

**Zoom Prep:** Prior to each Zoom session, students will be expected to post on Canvas a brief response to a question or request regarding that module's material and themes.

**Reading:** Assignments for each module are indicated on Canvas.

**Asynchronous lecture-watching:** Lectures to be watched independently in preparation for a Zoom class are provided via VoiceThread—a tool that invites commenting and question-raising. Points are earned for watching and commenting.

**Short Essay-writing:** There will be two such assignments:

- 1) *Personal Cultural Analysis:* a short narrative describing your own social location and how that has influenced your formation for ministry or scholarship: what culture are you shaped by? What roles have been played by family, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, culture, able/disabled body?
- 2) *Personal Theological Position Paper:* a synthetic, integrative, and carefully argumentative essay. Detailed instructions will be provided. Some research will be expected.

**Culminating Project:** An opportunity to summarize one's new understanding of contextual theology by means of a paper, webinar, podcast, or art form.

**Other graded activities:** Simple research tasks, introducing online discussions, and other activities that fall outside the above categories.

## **Assessment**

Summary reflection (Zoom preparation, participation)	40%
Lecture-watching	20%
Short essays	20%
Culminating project	15%
Miscellaneous	5%

## **HIU Grading Scale**

- A (95-100) Demonstrates excellent mastery of the subject matter, a superior ability to articulate this, and provides helpful connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.
- A- (90-94) Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, ability to articulate this well, and makes connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.
- B+ (87-89) Demonstrates a very good understanding of the subject matter, able to articulate lessons learned in the assignment well. Meets course expectations.
- B (83-86) Demonstrates an understanding of the subject matter and the ability to articulate lessons learned. Meets expectations of the course.
- B- (80-82) Demonstrates an understanding of the material at hand, has some difficulty articulating this, and basic connection of the material to daily life or contemporary issues/life. Meets basic expectations for the course.
- C+ (77-79) Demonstrates a basic comprehension of the subject matter, weak articulation and connections. Barely meets expectations for the course.
- C (70-76) Demonstrates a minimal comprehension of the subject matter and has difficulty making connections—or is egregiously late in submitting homework. Barely expectations of the course.
- F (below 70) Is unable to meet the basic requirements of the course.

## **HIU Values for Collaborative Teaching and Learning**

In our courses, we expect that instructors and students alike will strive to be:

- Showing mutual appreciation and respect for others—modeling the privilege to learn from and partner with each other.
- Engaging in cross-disciplinary content and teaching
- Paying attention to the whole personhood of another—history, race, religion, knowledge, gender, and rank
- Demonstrating how to disagree respectfully and well
- Embodying mutuality—learning to construct ideas and skills and experiences together

## **Plagiarism and Academic Integrity**

Academic honesty and integrity are expected of all students. Plagiarism exists when: a) the work submitted was done, in whole or in part, by anyone other than the one submitting the work, b)

parts of the work, whether direct quotations, ideas, or data, are taken from another source without acknowledgement, c) the whole work is copied from another source [especially a web based source], or d) significant portions of one's own previous work used in another course.

### **Inclusive Language**

Hartford International University for Religion and Peace is committed to a policy of inclusion in its academic life and mission. All members of the community are expected to communicate in language that reflects the equality of genders, openness to diverse cultural and theological perspectives, and sensitivity to one another's images of God.

### **Accommodations**

The Americans with Disabilities Act ensures equal access to qualified individuals with disabilities, and prevents discrimination on the basis of a disability. It is HIU policy to provide reasonable accommodations on a case-by-case basis, which may mean working with outside social and governmental agencies to provide the necessary range of services for student success. Students with disabilities who wish to receive accommodations must contact the Student Services Coordinator. Students with disabilities are eligible for disability support services when they are enrolled in courses and they have disclosed their disability and requested related accommodations during enrollment and/or before the start of each semester. All students seeking accommodation must fill out the Request for Disability Accommodations form.

### **Official Handbooks**

For all other questions you might have regarding policies or procedures, please check the student handbook and university policies at [hartfordinternational.edu](http://hartfordinternational.edu). Academic policies are listed on the HIU website.

### **Communication and Technology**

Students will be expected to use their Hartford International email for communication regarding the course. In addition, all students will need to log into the course site several times per week in order to take part in discussions and to access readings, videos, mini-lectures and other course materials. Students must also create a free account with VoiceThread and have access via the VoiceThread app, in Canvas, or in a separate browser window. Within Canvas, the *Announcements* feature will be used to convey information "for the good of the order."

### **About CANVAS:**

This course's Canvas website is your primary roadmap for this course.

- Be sure to explore the site thoroughly before you begin.
- If you have difficulty navigating or operating any aspect of the site, do take advantage of the "Help" button (indicated by a question-mark). The "live chat" feature works very well; you can expect prompt and clear responses to your questions. You may also phone the Canvas Support Hotline: (877) 249-4494.
- If you have questions about course content (or you tried Canvas Help but are still mystified), please do email or text-message your professor right away. If the situation is better addressed voice-to-voice, request a specific time for a phone or Zoom

conversation. (Making an appointment ensures that your professor is ready to talk with you seated at her desk rather than standing in the supermarket!)

- On the Canvas website, course material is organized into “modules”. Within each module you will find a variety of items such as detailed instructions for reading assignments; downloadable files; audio-visual lectures by your professor (usually making use of VoiceThread technology); other audio-visual or audio-only items; case studies; or discussion-board prompts requiring responses.

### **Attendance**

Active attendance in Zoom class is required. If you know you will be unable to attend a class session please inform the professor in advance. In the case of an absence, the professor will reserve the right to ask the student for a brief essay (250–750 words) on the required reading for that session. Active use of the Canvas site is also required. Failure to log on for seven consecutive days is tantamount to absence from class and may incur a penalty.

### **Email Policy**

The instructor will use the official HIU student email addresses for all course communications. Please check your *hartfordinternational.edu* email account regularly.