B50FF03 Contextual Theology

Bachelor of Divinity Degree
Pacific Theological College
Semester 1A, 2015
Course Lecturer: Dr Richard Davis, Richard.Davis@ptc.ac.fj

Course Description

This course aims to provide students with an introduction to the study and practice of theology. It will look at what theology is, who does theology, where it is done, and for what purpose. The traditional sources of theological reflection, such as the Bible, traditions, experience and reason will be examined. The contextuality of all theologies will be stressed, and the relativity of traditional Western theology will be exposed, and newer approaches to theology will be explored, including liberation theologies of the two-thirds world. Students will be encouraged to bring a Pacific focus to their own work, drawing on various models of contextual theology with a view to identifying, describing and critically analysing the methods that undergird such models.

Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Be aware of and describe the context in which they do theology
- Define what theology is and understand the role of the theologian
- Describe several sources for doing theology
- Appreciate several different models of doing contextual theology
- See how key doctrines have been interpreted through contextual methods

Method of Teaching

A combination of lectures, readings, writing and discussion.

Assessment

There is no exam for this course. Assessment will be through two pieces of written work. Both essays must engage with the class materials, readings, and additional scholarly materials (books, journal articles, and generally not online materials) and provide referenced evidence of this engagement. Every effort should be made to write correct English and format the essay properly. Include a cover sheet with your name and essay title.

1) Reflection on your Context (40%)
   1000-1500 words due in class on Monday 2 March 2015.
   Write a reflection on your own context as a theologian. This may include an analysis of your church, nation, city/town/village, family, culture, gender, economic status and other relevant factors. This is an open questions and you are free to work within in. You may describe those
aspects of your background that you think have been most important in forming your understanding of God, or you might write about the theologies you wish to react against and go beyond.

2) Essay (60%)
2000-2500 words due Friday 27 March 2015. This essay MUST be emailed to the lecturer at Richard.Davis@ptc.ac.fj by 11:59pm on Friday night. No exceptions.
From your context (which may include gender, economic, nation, cultural group etc) use one of Bevans' six methods to write about one of the doctrines mentioned in the course (eg. Trinity, Christology) for others in your context. For example, I could write about "A Pakeha approach to Creation through a Praxis Model". In this task it is important for you to demonstrate a good working knowledge of the model chosen and sound knowledge of the doctrine too. You may build on assignment one for this assignment, but you'll get no marks for simply cut and pasting part of your previous work.

Texts and Readings

The textbook for this course is Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002 (Revised and Expanded Edition). This is available from the PTC bookshop. We are reading most of this book for the course so you need to have it.

This book is supplemented by a number of other Required Readings from books and journals. The books from which these are taken will be kept on closed reserve in the PTC library. Ask at the issue desk for them. It is up to you whether you read them in the library or photocopy them for your personal study. Journals article and book chapters will either be available through the library's online ATLA Religion Database, or in the library's filing cabinet.

Optional Additional Readings are for students wanting to pursue topics further, perhaps in essays.

Other Recommended Readings

In addition to the set readings for each lecture outlined below there are few books which are recommended on the general topic of contextual theology.


For a general introductions to the subject of theology you may turn to these:

- John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* [various editions with SCM Press].
- Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* [various editions with Blackwell].
- Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*
Contextual Theology from the Pacific / Oceania

The library holds a fine collection of contextual theology from the region. One of the best sources is the *The Pacific Journal of Theology*. Another is the thesis collection of former PTC students.

Course Outline

**Week 1 - (week beginning 2 February 2015)**

**Session 1: Course Introduction: The Seamless Garment of Theology**

There are no readings for this session.

**Session 2: Contextual Theology and the Theologian**

Required Reading

- Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*. Chapter 1: Contextual Theology as a Theological Imperative

Optional Additional Reading


**Week 2 - (week beginning 9 February 2015)**

**Session 1: Sources of Theology 1: Revelation, Scripture, Tradition**

Required Reading

Optional Additional Reading


Session 2: Sources of Theology 2: Reason, Worship, Experience

Required Reading


Optional Additional Reading


Week 3 - (week beginning 16 February 2015 )

Session 1: Theology with Adjectives 1: Postmodern Theologies / God

Required Reading


Optional Additional Reading


Session 2: Theology with Adjectives 2: Postcolonial Theologies / The Trinity

Required Reading


Optional Additional Reading

5: 'Postcolonial theologies'. [in library]

**Week 4 - (week beginning 23 February 2015 )**

**Session 1: Theology with Adjectives 3: Feminist Theologies / Christology**

**Required Reading**

**Optional Additional Reading**

**Session 2: Theology with Adjectives 4: Liberation Theologies / The Bible**

**Required Reading**

**Optional Additional Reading**

**Week 5 - (week beginning 2 March 2015 )**

**Session 1: Contextual Theology 1: The Translation Model / The Human Being**
Required Reading
- Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*. Chapter 4: The Translation Model

Optional Additional Reading

Session 2: Contextual Theology 2: The Anthropological Model / Sin and Redemption

Required Reading

Optional Additional Reading
- Alister E. McGrath, Christian Theology: An Introduction [various editions with Blackwell]. Chapter on 'The Doctrine of Salvation in Christ' [in library]

Week 6 - (week beginning 9 March 2015)

Session 1: Contextual Theology 3: The Praxis Model / The Church

Required Reading

Optional Additional Reading

Session 2: Contextual Theology 4: The Synthetic Model / Eschatology

Required Reading

Optional Additional Reading

**Week 7 - (week beginning 16 March 2015 )**

**Session 1: Contextual Theology 5: The Transcendental Model / Creation**

**Required Reading**
■ Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*. Chapter 8: The Transcendental Model

**Optional Additional Reading**
■ Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Chapter on "The Good Creation"

**Session 2: Contextual Theology 6: The Countercultural Model / Ethics**

**Required Reading**

**Optional Additional Reading**
■ On ethics see the works of Stanley Hauerwas. [several in library]