(THEO-521)
THEORIES AND THEOLOGIES FOR PUBLIC JUSTICE

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

Instructor: Dr. Timothy Eberhart
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Office Hours: By Email Appointment

Class Time: 3 hours, with two 10-minute breaks
Modality: Online Synchronous via Zoom

Online Classroom

We will meet for class synchronously online via Zoom. You can access the link at the top of the Modules page listed under About the Course.

Please join the Zoom classroom ***on time*** from a *private, quite location,* eliminating all potential background noise or visual disruptions. You will want to test your microphone and video settings beforehand to ensure that all technical aspects are working properly, you are set up correctly, and you are fully prepared to participate in class. We will take two 10-minute breaks, but otherwise, you are expected be as present and engaged as you would for an in-person course. Please **turn video on** during class time, so that your instructor, TAs, and classmates can see your face.

A few helpful tips on online presence:

- elevate your camera so that you are looking straight into rather than down upon the camera
- center yourself on the screen, neither too close nor too far
- set up a light source in front of instead of behind you
- mute your microphone when not speaking – and unmute to speak ☺
- reduce distractions to you and others (e.g. ringing cell phone, barking dog, checking email/social media/browsing)
- when technical difficulties occur, be patient and gracious with others and yourself

Course Description

This course provides a survey of prominent theories and theologies for public justice from the 19th century to present alongside an examination of the primary logics and dynamics at work in multiple public spheres today. Students will be immersed in various strands of radical Christian thought in understanding and responding to the interconnected sins of economic exploitation, structural racism, social inequality, environmental degradation, and more. The course serves as a requirement in the Master of Arts in Theology and Ministry degree but is open to students from other degree programs if space allows.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students who graduate from this course will be able to:

1. *Recognize* and *explain* the dominant economic, political, ecological, social, and cultural ideologies, institutions, and dynamics shaping public life today.

2. *Define* and *apply* key theological and theoretical terms and concepts related to the work of dismantling systems of injustice and realizing justice.

3. *Identify* and *interpret* the intersections between particular manifestations of injustice related to racism, economic exploitation, hetero-sexism, ecological degradation, and related forms of systemic inequity and harm.

4. *Describe* and *assess* one's unique social identities and locations in relation to the dominant conceptual frameworks operative in structuring society today.

5. *Analyze* important figures and traditions in radical Christianity from the 19th century to the present and *evaluate* their understandings of the nature and scope of public justice.

6. *Critique* oppressive theological frameworks complicit in systems of injustice, as well as *communicate* constructive theological frameworks supportive of the realization of public justice.

Required Text

Adams, Maurianne, Warren J. Blumenfeld, D. Chase J. Catalano, Keri Dejong, Heather W. Hackman, Larissa E. Hopkins, Barbara Love, Madeline L. Peters, Davey Shlasko, Ximena Zuniga, eds., *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice, 5th Edition*., Routledge 2026 (ISBN 9781032283944)

Selected Readings (Provided Electronically as PDF via Google Classroom)

Boff, Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*

Cheng, Patrick, *Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology*

Cone, James, *God of the Oppressed*

Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*

Eisland, Nancy L, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*

Kim, Grace Ji-Sun and Hilda P. Koster, *Planetary Solidarity: Global Women's Voices on Christian Doctrine and Climate Justice*

Knitter, Paul, *Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions*

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engles, *The Communist Manifesto: A Modern Edition*

Nixon, Rob, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*

Rauschenbusch, Walter, *A Theology For the Social Gospel*

Rieger, Jorge and Kwok Pui Lan, *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude*

Ruether, Rosemary R., *Sexism and God Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*

Stoller, R.L., *The Kingdom of Children: A Liberation Theology*

Tinker, George E., *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty*

Course Requirements and Rubrics

A. Weekly Journal (2 page single-spaced, Times Roman, 1 inch margins, cite page numbers from the readings) **– 33%**

1. *Summarize the key theoretical terms and concepts related to the week's focus concerning a) the nature of the injustice analyzed and b) concrete proposals toward realizing public justice.*
2. *Summarize the primary theological terms and concepts related to the week's focus concerning a) the nature of the injustice analyzed and b) concrete proposals toward realizing public justice.*
3. *Apply both theoretical and theological terms and concepts in providing a brief analysis of a relevant contemporary situation.*

Grading Rubric (11 total submissions)						
	a) Did I complete each of the required tasks for the assignment? b) Do my summaries reflect an accurate and substantive understanding of the key terms and concepts from the readings? c) Does my analysis suggest an appropriate and relevant application of the key terms and concepts? d) Do I demonstrate nuance and depth in my analysis?					
(No)	0.0	0.75	1.5	2.25	3.0	(Yes)

C. Class Participation – 22%

Based on the readings, journal work, and review of the shared research document, be prepared to engage your instructors and classmates by:

1. *Offering an opening prayer/meditation relevant to the week's focus at least once (sign up will take place the first day of class).*
2. *Contributing work from your journal in a shared class mapping of key terms, concepts, and proposals for the week.*
3. *Drawing systemic connections between the week's focus and other forms of injustice by exploring patterns of historic intersection, mutual reinforcements, exponential impacts, etc.*
4. *Reflecting on your social identity in relation to the week's focus (e.g. race, class, gender) by describing a) where that identity locates you along the dominant/non-dominant hierarchies of structural power, perceived value, and access to resources in society today, b) what you've learned about being that identity through personal, familial, institutional, and cultural socialization, and c) the social rewards for playing by the rules, as well as the punishments for breaking them.*
5. *Applying the combined materials and insights from the week to a shared analysis of a concrete case/situation/context of injustice.*

You are expected to be in the classroom by the start of class time. You are allowed only one excused absence, granted if requested ahead of time and if based on legitimate reasons, for the course.

Grading Rubric						
	a) Am I on time and in attendance for every class period? b) Do I demonstrate, verbally and non-verbally, that I am present to, engaged with, and respectful of my instructors and classmates? c) Do I consistently contribute to class discussions in all areas of engagement listed above? d) Does my participation contribute to the upbuilding of others, shared learning and collaboration, and a constructive, enjoyable classroom environment?					
(No)	0	5.5	11	16.5	22	(Yes)

D. Final Paper (10 pages double-spaced, Times Roman, 1 inch margins, *and* 5-7 minute class presentation) **– 45%**

1) Provide a critical intersectional analysis of an orienting public problem (e.g. public school funding, lead contamination of city water, gun violence) that 2) draws equally upon three of the primary socio-political lenses of the course (e.g. race, economy, gender, environment) and both 3) identifies the malformed theological roots of the problem, as well as 4) offers a constructive theological vision of justice realized.

Grading Rubric

	a) Does my paper sufficiently address each of the 4 assignment requirements? b) Does my paper offer a strong thesis statement within the introduction, are my ideas clearly arranged, well-developed, and convincingly tied to my thesis, and is my writing free of grammatical, spelling, and citation errors? c) Does my paper substantively and accurately engage a breadth of high quality and relevant sources to support my thesis? d) Do my analyses and constructive proposals reflect a careful and insightful interpretation of differing perspectives, are my respective claims integrated and nuanced, and do my conclusions show promise of advancing public theological and ministerial work toward the realization of justice? e) Is my class presentation accessible, informative, and engaging?						
(No)	0	9	18	27	36	45	(Yes)

Grading Scale

94-100	A	77-79	C+
90-93	A-	74-76	C
87-89	B+	70-73	C-
84-86	B	60-69	D
80-83	B-		

Academic Policies

Academic Policies

All students are required to abide by the academic policies detailed in the Academic Handbook for the current academic year. The following policies are of particular importance to the successful completion of one's coursework:

Writing

- **Academic integrity and plagiarism:** (See 2425 Handbook, 13, 69-75) All professors are required to respond to all suspected incidents of academic dishonesty, especially plagiarism. Repeated incidents of plagiarism or academic dishonesty may result in dismissal from the school.
- **Writing and citations:** The Turabian Manual for Writers and the Chicago Manual of Style footnote/bibliography format provide the standard formats for all introductory courses. Basic information on these formats is available online here. In advanced courses an

instructor may require another style guide appropriate to the discipline (such as APA). (2425 Handbook, 71)

- **Writing Support:** The Writing Center at Garrett-Evangelical offers programs to support all students' theological research and writing. See https://www.garrett.edu/student-life/student-services "Writing Center" for more detailed information.

Attendance and Class Participation

- **Inclusivity/Diversity:** The basic commitments of the seminary to mutual love and searching for the truth in Christ lead to a principle that in the classroom and in course assignments, persons are always to be respected and ideas are to be freely discussed....All participants in the teaching-learning process have an obligation to honor and respect varying perspectives on relevant issues. (See 2425 Handbook, 10-11)

- **Attendance and lateness policies:** Attendance is required. Students who miss more than 20% of the class sessions (e.g., more than 2 classes in the weekly schedule, a proportionate amount for other class formats) should not expect to pass the class. (2425 Handbook, 20-21)

- Some faculty may limit on the usage of electronic devices such as cell phones during class. At the least, all devices should be silenced during the whole of a class session.

Academic Accommodations

- Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary is committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact the Director of Academic Support and Student Thriving (melanie.baffes@garrett.edu or 847-866-3869) to get started with the established accommodation process. If you are a continuing student who has already established accommodations with Student Access, you should receive a copy of your access letter at the start of the semester when it is emailed to the faculty member of each course you are enrolled in. Please contact your instructors prior to the first class session so the instructor can work with you to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential under FERPA regulations, so no one other than the access coordinator, Academic Affairs staff, and your professors will see your accommodation letter (2425 Handbook, 13).
- **Extensions:** For Masters students, extensions, if granted, are normally for four weeks following the last day of class in spring and fall semesters or the final due date for coursework for January and summer terms. Extensions may not exceed three months following the end of the term. (2425 Handbook, 21)

AI Policy

The use of AI technology must be in consultation and agreement with the instructor(s). With the permission of the instructor(s), AI technology may be used for research, writing, editing/proofreading,

note-taking, image and video creation, disability assistance, and other classroom matters. Since the development of AI technology is ongoing, the instructor(s) and the students must constantly remind, exchange, and update each other about their concerns and use of AI technology for the duration of the course. Moreover, the instructor(s) has the prerogative to prohibit the use of AI technology in his/her/their classroom due to the fluidity of the development of AI technology. If the instructor(s) are intentionally using AI technology for teaching, grading, and/or other classroom matters, then the instructor(s) are required to disclose this and are encouraged to allow the students to use AI technology as aforementioned.

This course uses AI in the following ways:

Not Allowed	Allowed with appropriate acknowledgment	Allowed and no acknowledgement needed
Generative AI help with papers (generating topics, ideas, outlines, arguments) Generative AI help with writing (paraphrasing, summarizing, generating language for assignments) Generative AI help with reading (summarizing or outlining reading assignments) Editing, polishing, or revising paper drafts Proofreading Presentation design Citation generation Research Note-taking		Language translation Language assistance for non-native English speakers
You must consult the professor(s) for uses not mentioned above.		
To properly cite the use of AI in Chicago/Turabian style, access this link: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/data/faq/topics/Documentation/faq0422.html.		

Course Schedule

1. Introduction, Terms, and Methodology

Adams et. al., *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*

2. Capitalism (Social Gospel Theology)

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engles, *The Communist Manifesto: A Modern Edition*
Rauschenbusch, Walter, *A Theology For the Social Gospel*

3. Imperialism/Colonialism (Indigenous Theology)

Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*
Tinker, George E., *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty*

4. Patriarchy/Misogyny (Feminist Theology)

Adams et. al., *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*
Ruether, Rosemary R., *Sexism and God Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*

5. Racism/White Supremacy (Black Liberation Theology)

Adams et. al., *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*
Cone, James, *God of the Oppressed*

6. Economic Inequality/Poverty (Latin American Liberation Theology)

Adams et. al., *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*
Boff, Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*

7. Deep Solidarity (Theology for the Multitude)

Adams et. al., *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*
Rieger, Jorge and Kwok Pui Lan, *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude*

8. Ecological Degradation (Ecological Theology)

Nixon, Rob, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*
Kim, Grace Ji-Sun and Hilda P. Koster, *Planetary Solidarity: Global Women's Voices on Christian Doctrine and Climate Justice*

9. Heterosexism (Queer Theology)

Adams et. al., *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*
Cheng, Patrick, *Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology*

10. Adultism (Child Theology)

Adams et. al., *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*
Stoller, R.L., *The Kingdom of Children: A Liberation Theology*

11. Ableism (Disability Theology)

Adams et. al., *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*
Eisland, Nancy L, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*

12. Religious Oppression (Interreligious Theology)

Adams et. al., *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*
Knitter, Paul, *Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions*

13. Concluding Reflections (Paper Presentations)