

Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary

THEO 540 Global Christianity In an Interfaith World
Spring 2021

Instructor:

Hendrik R. Pieterse, D.Phil.

Office: Stead Hall, Office 202

Tel: 847-866-3892

Email: hendrik.pieterse@garrett.edu

Course Description

The course offers an introduction to Christianity as a worldwide movement in the context of a religiously plural world. We study factors that contributed to and sustain Christianity's current shape, reach, and impact and examine key cultural, ethical, and theological challenges facing mission and ministry in a world church. The course fulfills the Basic Graduate Theological Studies requirement for United Methodist ordination.

Course Objectives

- Understand the scope, texture, and identity of global Christianity today as a polycentric, increasingly non-Western movement.
- Appreciate the complex impact of the Western missionary movement and of Western colonial expansion on Christianity's current configuration.
- Examine key theological challenges raised by Christianity's global reach, such globalization and the integrity of Christian witness; culture, context, and Christian identity; and religious pluralism.
- Identify biblical and theological elements appropriate to mission and ministry in a world church today.

Required Texts

Bevans, Stephen B. and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*. Orbis, 2005. ISBN: 978-1570755170. List price (Amazon): \$34.00

Kim, Sebastian and Kirsteen Kim. *Christianity as a World Religion: An Introduction*. Second Edition. Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. ISBN: 978-1472569349. List price (Amazon): \$29.95

Küster, Volker, *The Many Faces of Jesus Christ: Intercultural Christology*. Orbis, 2001. ISBN: 978-1570753541. List price (Amazon): \$25.70

Sanneh, Lamin. *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West*. Eerdmans, 2003. ISBN: 978-0802821645. List price (Amazon): \$16.00

Additional reading (essays, articles) will be uploaded on Moodle

Grade Structure

Reflection posts/responses	20%
Intercultural faith experience reflection	20%
Faces of Jesus reflection	25%
Final Essay	35%

Assignments

All assignments are due on the dates and at the times indicated. No late submissions will be accepted, except in the case of extenuating circumstances, and with prior written approval from the instructor.

Note: All assignments are expected to conform to Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, 7th edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

ASSIGNMENT 1: REFLECTION POSTS

Rationale: The intent of the exercise is to invite you into a critical conversation with your classmates about issues, insights, and challenges raised by the course topics with a view to exploring implications for ministry in a global church today.

Task: (1) Post a reflection (250-300 words) each week on the course Moodle site for *all the sessions* listed on the class schedule. (2) Post a response each week to *two* of your classmates' reflection posts.

Parameters: Reflection posts should be 300-350 words each; responses to classmates' reflections will vary as appropriate

Process:

1. **Submitting your post:** Each student is expected to post reflections (250-300 words each) on the course Moodle site each week for *all the sessions* listed on the class schedule. Reflect on the lecture and assigned reading for the week's topic and select an issue, insight, or question you found particularly important or challenging. Now write a post in which you explore implications of that issue, insight, or question for your ministry as part of a global Christian church today. The aim of these reflections is to help you strengthen the skill of applying new insights creatively and constructively to your practice of Christian ministry.
2. An excellent post: (1) Makes explicit use of course material (reading, lecture), although you're not required to employ both in every post; (2) states clearly the idea, concept, or question you wish to discuss, with sources cited (page numbers, lecture title); (3) shows why the idea, concept, or question is important, stimulating, problematic, etc.; (4) applies insights to life/ministry context that shows the relevance or significance of the idea, concept, or question. Be specific and concrete—vague, sweeping statements are not helpful.
3. **IMPORTANT:** (a) *No late submissions will be accepted.* Students who fail to complete the assignment in a timely manner will forfeit the grade. (b) *Do not submit your post as a Word attachment.* Write it in the field provided in the Moodle post.
4. **Submitting your response:** Each student is expected to respond to *two (2) reflection posts* by classmates each week. The intent of these responses is to foster the practice of critical

theological exchange within a community of inquiry. With this in mind, in writing your response, focus on questions like these: Do you find the classmate's reflection about the topic on point, relevant, and persuasive? Why or why not? What challenges for further exploration or debate does the reflection raise? Be specific. **Note:** "Critical" does *not* mean being disrespectful, demeaning, or unkind but refers, rather, to our shared obligation to pursue the theological task in a spirit of mutual respect, openness, and honesty.

- To write your response to fellow students' reflection posts, click "Reply" on a particular post and enter your response.
- Failure to post the assignment in a timely manner will forfeit the grade.

Note: *These reflections are meant to be thoughtful theological engagements with the day's topic, not off-the-cuff musings. So, your posts (both your own reflections and your responses to your class mates' posts) should reflect critical engagement with the week's assigned readings and lecture.*

ASSIGNMENT 2: INTERCULTURAL FAITH EXPERIENCE REFLECTION

Rationale: The intent of this exercise is to invite you to experience and then reflect on an expression of Christian faith different from your own culture, ethnicity, and/or nationality.

Aim: Your task is to interview a Christian leader (pastor, layperson, other congregational leader) different from your own culture/ethnicity/nationality and prepare a reflection on the experience.

Parameters: An essay of 800-900 words in length, submitted in Microsoft Word format, double-spaced, Times font, 12pt type

Process:

1. Select a Christian leader whose experience (beliefs, worship life, spirituality, etc.) is clearly different from your own culture, ethnicity, and/or nationality (ex., a white student interviewing an African-American or a South Asian Indian leader; a Korean student interviewing a white or Latinx leader).
2. Interview the leader and write a reflection on the experience, using questions like these: (a) What aspect of the leader's Christian experience did I find most intriguing or appealing? Why? (b) What aspect of the experience did I find most challenging? Why? (c) What did the experience show me about the place of culture in Christian faith?
3. Write an essay of 800-900 words and upload to Moodle.

IMPORTANT: *Given COVID restrictions, you can conduct the interview via phone or Zoom, or—when deemed safe and observing social distancing protocols—in person.*

ASSIGNMENT 3: "FACES OF JESUS" REFLECTION

NOTE: *While there are four options to choose from, you are required to complete only ONE essay. So, write your essay on Asian or African or Latin American or North-American faces of Jesus.*

Aim: The intent of this exercise is to examine the “face” of Jesus in a particular context and explore its meaning and impact across cultural boundaries.

Task: Your task is to select an image or a movement (ex., Jesus as ancestor; Jesus as black Messiah; Minjung theology; etc.) from Küster’s *Many Faces of Jesus Christ*, critically reflect on its key claims, and ponder implications of this image or movement for the meaning and experience of Jesus in your own context.

Parameters: An essay of 1,600-1,700 words in length, submitted in Microsoft Word format, double-spaced, Times font, 12pt type

Process:

1. Select an image or movement from Küster’s *Many Faces of Jesus Christ* that you find intriguing or challenging and read the relevant material in Küster.
2. Now read the relevant primary literature, as found under “Additional Required Reading” on Moodle.
3. Summarize the main features of the image or movement in two pages. Then critically reflect on the implications of this image or movement for the meaning and experience of Jesus in your own context by asking questions like the following:
 - What aspect or feature of this “face” of Jesus do I find most appealing or intriguing? Why?
 - What aspect or feature do I find strange or perhaps offensive? Why?
 - What aspect or feature do I find most challenging for my own understanding and experience of Jesus? For my own faith community or church? Why?

ASSIGNMENT 4: FINAL ESSAY

Rationale: The intent of this exercise is to offer you an opportunity to practice the skills of constructing a theological argument that creatively interprets the meaning and significance of the central Christian convictions we have studied throughout the semester for a particular life situation today.

Task: Your task is to write an essay in which you use Bevans and Schroeder’s model of “prophetic dialogue” (Part III, pp. 281-395) as a framework for constructing a mission-shaped vision for effective congregational ministry in an increasingly global North American context today. (Students for whom the primary ministry context is not the United States are free to select a different ministry context, in consultation with the instructor.)

Parameters: The essay should be 2,700 words in length and be submitted in Microsoft Word format, double-spaced, Times font, 12pt type.

Process:

1. Reread the relevant section in *Constants In Context*: Part III, pp. 281-395. Note that the chapters are closely interrelated in the authors’ argument. That is, the chapter dealing explicitly with “prophetic dialogue” (ch. 12) cannot really be understood adequately without the groundwork laid in chapters 9-11.

2. Summarize the key features of Bevans and Schroeder's understanding of mission as "prophetic dialogue."
3. Using the Bevans/Schroeder model as a framework and drawing on the other required texts, additional required reading, lectures, and online discussion, as well as at least two additional resources (books, articles), construct a mission-shaped approach for effective congregational ministry in an increasingly global North American context. Do the following:
 - Identify the feature or features of the U.S. religious context that you consider the most compelling challenge for Christian ministry today.
 - Explain in detail what makes this feature (or features) a missional challenge for congregational ministry.
 - Use the model of "prophetic dialogue" to construct a missional approach that can help your congregation respond faithfully and effectively to this challenge. The approach must show how a particular component (or components) of the model (ex., witness and proclamation; justice, peace, and the integrity of creation; reconciliation) can provide the congregational practices your congregation will need in order to confront the missional challenge.
 - **Note:** *Feel free to select a ministry setting other than a congregation, but discuss your choice with the instructor.*
4. Upload your essay to the appropriate assignment tab on Moodle.

Students for Whom English Is a Second Language:

Students for whom English is a second language often seek outside proofreading assistance. In such cases, you can make use of the following process in completing and submitting your written assignments. (1) Submit the complete but unproofread essay on Moodle by the assignment due date. (2) Inform the instructor that the essay is being proofread and when proofreading will be complete. (3) Email the proofread essay to the instructor, when received.

Note: (1) *The unproofread essay as submitted is the complete essay. It may not be amended or edited for content.* (2) *The weekly reflection posts DO NOT fall under this language accommodation.*

Class Policies

1. **Respect.** (a) Respect one another's perspectives, viewpoints, and differences. Speak the truth, but do so in love; so, critique viewpoints and perspectives, **not** persons. (b) Respect the classroom as an environment for learning. Therefore, participate fully, thoughtfully, respectfully, and in a timely fashion in all activities as assigned.
2. **Integrity.** Do not cheat. Own your own ideas and honor the ideas of others. Plagiarism is an extremely serious breach of integrity and is addressed forthrightly by the seminary. Review the seminary's policy on plagiarism carefully (*Student Life and Academic Handbook*, *G-ETS Bulletin*, etc.). It describes the various kinds of plagiarism and how to correct them. You are expected to familiarize yourself with this document. If you have any questions, please contact the instructor.

Disabilities Policies and Procedures

Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary is committed to providing equal access to its programs of graduate professional education for all qualified students with learning, physical, medical, or

psychological disabilities. The seminary aims to provide reasonable accommodation for qualified individuals with a disability (based on clinical documentation) to ensure their access to and participation in seminary programs. For details, see “Disabilities Policies and Procedures” in the *2008-2009 Student Handbook*, p. 62. Please contact the Dean of Students for consultation.

Class Schedule (see Moodle)

Grading Rationale

Score Levels	Content	Conventions	Organization
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is well thought out and supports the thesis of the paper ▪ Reflects application of creative and critical thinking ▪ Has clear goal that is related to the topic ▪ Is pulled from a variety of sources ▪ Is accurate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors ▪ High-level use of vocabulary and word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information is clearly focused in an organized and thoughtful manner. ▪ Information is constructed in a logical pattern to support the thesis statement.
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is well thought out and supports the thesis ▪ Has application of critical thinking that is apparent ▪ Has clear goal that is related to the topic ▪ Is pulled from several sources ▪ Is accurate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Few (1 to 3) spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors ▪ Good use of vocabulary and word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information follows discernable pattern of organization ▪ Information supports the thesis statement of the paper.
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supports the thesis ▪ Has application of critical thinking that is apparent ▪ Has indistinct goal ▪ Is pulled from a limited number of sources ▪ Has some factual errors or inconsistencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimal (3 to 5) spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors ▪ Low-level use of vocabulary and word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project has a focus but might stray from it at times. ▪ Information appears to have a pattern, but the pattern is not consistently carried out in the paper. ▪ Information loosely supports the thesis statement.
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides inconsistent information for the thesis ▪ Has no apparent application of critical thinking ▪ Has no clear goal ▪ Is pulled from few sources ▪ Has significant factual errors, misconceptions, or misinterpretations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More than 5 spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors ▪ Poor use of vocabulary and word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Content is unfocused and haphazard. ▪ Information does not support the solution to the thesis statement. ▪ Information has no apparent pattern.