

(22-857) ETHICS OF HOPE IN AN AGE OF CRISIS

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Course Description

The context in which the Good News of Jesus Christ is to be lived and proclaimed today is marked by an increasing number of distinct but interrelated crises. Environmental devastation. Economic inequality. Political corruption. Financial indebtedness. Climatic disruption. Cultural disorientation. It is clear that serious Christian responses can be defined neither by naïve optimism, despairing cynicism, nor willful ignorance. But what is the lived witness of hope that Christians might offer the world, as individuals and congregations, amidst the *krisis* of this present age? This course draws upon a range of theological and critical perspectives in seeking to affirm an ethics of hope that is grounded in the promise of the resurrection, the history of faithful struggle, and the inbreaking energies of God's new creation.

Course Objectives

Knowing – To sharpen one's understanding of the dominant social, political, economic, and environmental forces shaping contemporary existence as well as several key theological and ethical responses being proposed today.

Being – To deepen one's personal hope in God's power for life over death.

Doing – To gain proficiency communicating and engaging theo-ethically for the sake of empowering congregations and individual Christians to struggle for a more just, sustaining, and hopeful world.

Course Texts

Byrne, Janet. *The Occupy Handbook*. New York, NY: Back Bay Books, 2012 (ISBN: 9780316220217, Price \$10.87 at amazon.com).

Coleman, Monica A. *Making a Way Out of No Way: A Womanist Theology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008 (ISBN: 978-0800662936, Price \$19.55 at amazon.com).

Heinberg, Richard and Daniel Lerch, eds. *The Post Carbon Reader: Managing The 21st Century's Sustainability Crisis*. Healdsburg, CA: Watershed Media, 2010 (ISBN: 9780970950062, Price: \$16.47 at amazon.com).

McFague, Sallie. *Blessed Are the Consumers: Climate Change and the Practice of Restraint*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013 (ISBN: 9780800699604, Price \$16.32 at amazon.com).

Moltmann, Jürgen. *Ethics of Hope*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012 (ISBN: 9780800698584, Price \$19.14 at amazon.com).

Rieger, Joerg and Kwok Pui-lan. *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude*. United Kingdom: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012 (ISBN: 9781442217911, Price \$37.83 at amazon.com).

Speth, James Gustave. *America the Possible: Manifesto for a New Economy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012 (ISBN: 9780300180763, price \$19.80).

Wright, N.T. *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2008 (ISBN: 978-0061551826, Price \$15.77 at amazon.com).

Course Requirements for Seminary Credit

1. Reading of all assigned literature and active participation in class discussions.
2. Weekly one-page response papers with summary and reaction of assigned texts, as well as questions for discussion. Due the Monday before class by 5pm.
3. Midterm Paper (6-8 pages). Drawing on the course readings, lectures, and class discussions, provide a critical theo-ethical assessment of a major crisis shaping the context of Christian existence and church ministry today.
4. Final Paper (18-20 pages). Building upon your first paper, while drawing on the course readings, lectures, and discussions, offer a theological ethics of hope that addresses the crisis you've described and provides practical recommendations for how individual Christians and worshipping congregations might participate in redemptive solutions.

Course Requirements for Auditors

1. Reading of all assigned literature and active participation in class discussions.
2. Weekly one-page response papers with re-description, analysis, and reaction of assigned texts.

Final Grading

1. Class Participation – 20 %
2. Weekly Response Papers – 15%
3. Midterm Paper – 25%
4. Final Paper – 40%

Grading Criteria for Papers

1. You accomplish what the assignment asks of you.
2. Your paper offers a clear thesis statement, follows a logical organization, is well developed, and is free of grammatical and spelling errors.
3. You enter into intelligent, critical conversation with the course texts and lectures.
4. You demonstrate a depth of insight in your theological and ethical claims.

Grading Criteria for Class Participation

1. You attend every class period and are on time.
2. You demonstrate familiarity with the assigned readings for the day.
3. You listen carefully to the instructor and to your classmates.
4. You are an active participant in the class discussions.

Course Schedule

I. Hope in God

- Feb. 5:** Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 3-108
Speth, *America the Possible*, 19-66
- Feb. 12:** Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 109-188
Byrne, *Occupy Handbook*, 7-17, 79-84
- Feb. 19:** Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 3-44
Byrne, *Occupy Handbook*, 44-78, 85-99, 117-131

II. Hope for the People

- Feb. 26:** Coleman, *Making a Way Out of No Way*, 1-84
Byrne, *Occupy Handbook*, 150-163, 196-208, 280-294
- Mar. 5:** Rieger and Pui-lan, *Occupy Religion*, 1-82
Byrne, *Occupy Handbook*, 164-172, 209-255

III. Hope for the Earth

- Mar. 12:** Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 109-164
Heinberg and Lerch, *Post Carbon Reader*, 13-24, 97-115, 194-203
- Mar. 19:** McFague, *Blessed Are the Consumers*
Heinberg and Lerch, *Post Carbon Reader*, 43-52, 207-246

IV. Hope for the Future

- Mar. 26:** Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 165-239
Speth, *America the Possible*, 67-198
- April 9:** Coleman, *Making a Way Out of No Way*, 85-174
Byrne, *Occupy Handbook*, 309-396
- April 16:** Rieger, *Occupy Religion*, 83-134
Byrne, *Occupy Handbook*, 397-499

- April 23:** McFague, *Blessed Are the Consumers*
Heinberg and Lerch, *Post Carbon Reader*, 25-40, 63-73, 140-150, 184-193, 409-418, 442-451, 455-458
- April 30:** Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 189-290
- May 7:** Presentation of Constructive Proposals