

## **Christology (THEO 605/SP 650)**

**Note:** *This is a summary of the syllabus. The complete syllabus will be posted by December and emailed in January to students who have signed up for the course. There are no books to buy for this course.*

Instructor: Nancy E. Bedford

This class is an examination of the doctrine at the heart of the Christian faith: Christology. In critical and constructive dialogue with Scripture and theological tradition writ large (including representations of Jesus in art). We will consider explicitly the insights and limitations provided by our experiences, and will see to do theology in response to the urgent demands of the present. Two main questions will drive our trajectory: (1) Who do we say that Jesus is? (cf. Matt. 16:15). (2) What are the implications for the here and now of following Jesus by the Spirit in community?

Our premise is that spirituality is intertwined with Christology to such an extent that it is impossible to separate Christology from Pneumatology and the confession of God as Triune. Thus, this course is cross-referenced for theology and for spirituality.

The class will be offered in the blended synchronous modality. You will register for one modality (face-to-face or remote) and stick to it all semester.

Topics:

1. Introduction to Christology and to the class
2. An expectant Christology: With Mary on the Way
3. Incarnation: The Wonderful Exchange
4. Jesus the Child: The “Two Trinities”
5. Jesus the Teacher (1): “You call me Teacher...”
6. Jesus the Teacher (2): Jesus and Prayer
7. Jesus the Teacher (3): The Sermon on the Mount
8. Jesus the Brother (1): Siblings of Christ
9. Jesus the Brother (2): Trinitarian Implications
10. Jesus the Friend (1): The Promise of the Other Advocate
11. Jesus the Friend (2): Theology of the Cross
12. Jesus the Friend (3): Resurrection and Ascension
13. Concluding/summative session

All readings will be provided on Moodle or will consist in Bible passages. The structure of our sessions will revolve around these texts, so it will be important to commit to engaging deeply with our readings.

## Expectations/Assignments:

- Eleven **short reflections** (300-400 words) on the reading of the day. Each reflection is worth 10 points. No late work is accepted, but the lowest grade will be omitted from the calculation, for a total of ten reflections worth maximally 100 points. These reflections will be due by 8 AM on Tuesdays in preparation for our sessions on Wednesdays. (30% of grade)
- **Interview.** The student will conduct a conversation with an elder (defined as somebody over 50 who is a practicing Christian) about the interviewee's Christology. Who is Jesus? Why is Jesus important to them? How does Jesus fit into the bigger picture of faith and praxis for them? How did they learn what they know about Jesus? What is their mental picture of Jesus? What are their unresolved questions about Jesus? Students will write a 5-7 pp. (double-spaced, 12-pt TNR or Calibri font) report on the interview. This is raw reportage rather than analysis of content. (10% of grade)
- **Book review.** The student will choose a book on Christology in consultation with the instructor and review it. Students should choose a book that interests them, perhaps one that touches on a topic not found in the syllabus or that they want to explore more deeply. Not only non-fiction, but also novels that focus on Jesus are a possibility. The length should be 6-7 pp. (double-spaced, 12-pt TNR or Calibri font) with about three-fourths as summary of the book and one-fourth as evaluative comments. (20% of grade)
- **Final paper or project.** There will be various options for this assignment:
  - **Option 1: A summative paper** that is a tentative answer to the question: "Who is Jesus and what does it mean to follow him?" (cf. "Who do you say that I am?" Matt. 16:15). Proceed in the following way: (a) Develop a tentative or working thesis (you may want to revise it while writing the paper); (b) Return to your interview and ponder it. Connect it to the readings and to your own current understanding of Christology. Does your own Christology sufficiently address the questions, concerns or convictions raised by your interviewee? (c) Reference at least five of our readings as well as your reviewed book. The paper should be 3,000-4,000 words. Follow Turabian style.
  - **Option 2: An ordination prep** paper, oriented toward students who are seeking ordination in the UMC. Some of the questions relating to ordination in *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* are explicitly christological, especially the following:
    - How do you interpret the statement "Jesus Christ is Lord?"

- What is your understanding of the kingdom of God; the resurrection; eternal life?

For this final paper, develop an argument that addresses these questions. As with the option above: (a) Develop a tentative or working thesis (you may want to revise it while writing the paper); (b) Return to your interview and ponder it. Connect it to the readings and to your own current understanding of Christology. Does your own Christology sufficiently address the questions, concerns or convictions raised by your interviewee? (c) Reference at least five of our readings as well as your reviewed book. The paper should be 3,000-4,000 words. Follow Turabian style.

- **Option 3: A creative project.** This can be a painting, a short story, a short film, or another artifact developed in conversation with the instructor. The goal of the project is to depict an answer to the question “Who do you say that I am?” (Matt. 16:15). The purpose of this project is to put your own Christology in conversation with the theological tradition. Thus, the artifact will be accompanied by a written explanation of the artifact that references at least five of our readings as well as the reviewed book and the questions, concerns or convictions raised by your interviewee (the paper should be about 2000 words) and follow Turabian style.

The final paper is worth 30% of the grade.

- **Participation.** The course will be driven not only by lectures, but also by textual analysis and conversation. For the latter to be substantive, active, and engaged participation is necessary. Participation will include a “**Christological sharing.**” This 3-minute activity consists in presenting a physical or virtual artifact (e.g., a cross, a song, an image, etc.) and explaining its christological significance for the student to the class. It will serve as a moment of meditation as we begin our time together. Sign-up sheet on the first day. (10% of grade)

N.B. The final version of the syllabus will include rubrics for all the assignments.