



Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary

THEO 540 Global Christianity in an Interfaith World

Fall 2024

Instructor:

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MODALITY: Hyflex (in-person and/or synchronous online)

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 as 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:

Green, Gene L., Stephen T. Pardue, and K.K. Yeo, eds. *Jesus without Borders: Christology In the Majority World*. Majority World Theology Series. Langham Global Library, 2015. ISBN: 978-1783689170. List price (Amazon): \$24.99.

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

Bevans, Stephen B. and Roger P. Schroeder. *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections On Christian Mission Today*. Orbis Books, 2011. ISBN: 978-1570759116. List price (Amazon): \$37.00

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

GRADE STRUCTURE:

Reflection posts/responses	20%
Intercultural faith experience reflection	20%
Interpretations 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** as listed on the class schedule. (2) Post a response each week to **two** of your classmates' reflection posts.

Parameters: Reflection posts should be 250-300 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** as 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) **Late submissions will be penalized.** Students who fail to complete posts and responses in a timely manner risk a grade reduction. Please consult with the instructors when you anticipate a delay. (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 classmates' 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.

NOTE: *I strongly encourage you to review the examples in the folder "Intercultural Faith Experience Assignment: Samples" on the Moodle site before you begin.*

Task: Your task is to visit a congregation different from your own culture/ethnicity/nationality and prepare a reflection on the experience. You can visit in groups or individually (*although each student must write their own reflection to submit*). If allowed by the congregation, you are encouraged to take videos, pictures, sound recordings, or other multimedia recordings as part of your visit.

Parameters: A PowerPoint presentation consisting of six slides: a title slide with your name on it and one slide to answer each of the five questions listed below (see "Process"). The slides should follow the 1/5/5 rule. Each slide should include at least one image (picture or video—ideally taken during your visit if allowed) and should not include more than five lines of text with five words on each line. In addition, use the speaker notes section under the slide to provide further explanation of your slide, including any appropriate references to course materials or fuller descriptions and reflections than the slides allow.

Process:

1. Identify a congregation and visit it. Ideally, the visit happens during an event (whether a worship service, a dinner, a festival, or anything else). If you cannot do this, you can set an appointment to meet with a congregational leader who can help explain the church to you. Also, while in-person visitation is ideal, attending an event virtually is possible. Please contact the instructors if you do not foresee being able to visit in-person.

2. Develop a PowerPoint presentation in which you reflect on the visit, using the following questions:
 - Introduce the congregation and explain its uniquely formed culture, ethnicity, and/or nationality.
 - What aspect of the Christian experience did I find most intriguing or appealing? Why?
 - What aspect of the experience did I find most challenging? Why?
 - What might people from this congregation find challenging or strange about how my ministry site worships? Why?
 - What did the experience show me about the place of culture in Christian faith?
3. Upload your PowerPoint to the appropriate assignment tab on Moodle.

ASSIGNMENT 3: INTERPRETATIONS 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 interpretations of Jesus. DO NOT DO MORE THAN ONE ESSAY.

Aim. The intent of this exercise is to examine an interpretation of Jesus in a particular context and explore its meaning and impact across cultural boundaries.

Task. Your task is to select an interpretation of Jesus (ex., Jesus as ancestor; Minjung theology; etc.) from the assigned reading (*Jesus without Borders*, selections in Additional Required Readings folder), critically reflect on its key claims, and ponder implications of this interpretation for the meaning and experience of Jesus in your own context.

Parameters. An essay of 1,600-1,700 words in length (5-5 ½ pages), submitted in Microsoft Word format, double-spaced, Times font, 12pt type

Process.

1. Select an interpretation of Jesus from Africa, Asia, Latin America, or North America from the course material that you find intriguing or challenging.
2. Read the relevant chapter in Kim/Kim (ex., ch. 2: "Asian Christianities").
3. Now read the appropriate chapters in *Jesus without Borders*, as well as the relevant selections in the "Additional Required Reading" folder on Moodle.
4. Summarize the main features of the interpretation in two pages. Then critically reflect on the implications of this interpretation for the meaning and experience of Jesus in your own context.

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 using the model of prophetic dialogue for a particular ministry setting today. **NOTE:** “Ministry setting” can take different forms—for example, a congregation, a campus ministry, a house church, a social justice initiative. Also, choose a ministry setting in a place most relevant to you—for example, Korea, Burundi, the United States.

Task: Your task is to write an essay in which you think about how Bevans and Schroeder’s model of “prophetic dialogue” can help you examine faulty views and practices of mission in your ministry setting and construct a new missional vision that can renew mission practices.

Parameters: The essay should be 2,600-2,900 words (8-9 pages, double-spaced) in length and be submitted in Microsoft Word format, double-spaced, Times font, 12pt type.

Process:

1. Reread the appropriate chapters in *Prophetic Dialogue*.
2. Summarize the key features of Bevans and Schroeder’s understanding of mission as “prophetic dialogue.”
3. Then, using the Bevans/Schroeder model, and drawing on the other sources we’ve studied (course texts, additional required reading, lectures, online discussion), describe how the model of prophetic dialogue can help you rethink *mission* in your ministry setting. **Be creative!**

Ask yourself:

- How can the model of prophetic dialogue help me identify and challenge faulty theological views of mission in my ministry context?
 - How can the model help me construct a new missional vision for my ministry context?
 - How might one or more of the six components of the model (ex., “witness and proclamation”; “justice, peace, and the integrity of creation”; “reconciliation”) help us renew or build new missional *practices* in my ministry context? (Ex., the component of “peace, justice, and the integrity of creation” might change the way we practice our public witness; the component of “interreligious dialogue” might deepen our collaboration with our Muslim neighbors down the street, or perhaps help us *begin* a relationship.)
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.** Engaging perspectives other than our own in an intercultural environment can be both energizing and unsettling. How we engage with one another is crucial. Therefore: (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 intercultural 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 RUBRIC:

Score Levels	Content	Conventions	Organization
A- to A+ 90-100%	<p>Is well thought out and supports the thesis of the paper</p> <p>Reflects application of creative and critical thinking</p> <p>Has clear goal that is related to the topic</p> <p>Is pulled from a variety of sources</p> <p>Is accurate</p>	<p>No spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors</p> <p>High-level use of vocabulary and word choice</p>	<p>Information is clearly focused in an organized and thoughtful manner.</p> <p>Information is constructed in a logical pattern to support the thesis statement.</p>
B- to B+ 80-89%	<p>Is well thought out and supports the thesis</p> <p>Has application of critical thinking that is apparent</p> <p>Has clear goal that is related to the topic</p> <p>Is pulled from several sources</p> <p>Is accurate</p>	<p>Few spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors</p> <p>Good use of vocabulary and word choice</p>	<p>Information follows discernable pattern of organization</p> <p>Information supports the thesis statement of the paper.</p>
C- to C+ 70-79%	<p>Supports the thesis</p> <p>Has application of critical thinking that is apparent</p> <p>Has indistinct goal</p> <p>Is pulled from a limited number of sources</p> <p>Has some factual errors or inconsistencies</p>	<p>Significant spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors</p> <p>Low-level use of vocabulary and word choice</p>	<p>Project has a focus but might stray from it at times.</p> <p>Information appears to have a pattern, but the pattern is not consistently carried out in the paper.</p>

			Information loosely supports the thesis statement.
D- to D+ 60-69%	<p>Provides inconsistent information for the thesis</p> <p>Has no apparent application of critical thinking</p> <p>Has no clear goal</p> <p>Is pulled from few sources</p> <p>Has significant factual errors, misconceptions, or misinterpretations</p>	<p>Numerous spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors</p> <p>Poor use of vocabulary and word choice</p>	<p>Content is unfocused and haphazard.</p> <p>Information does not support the solution to the thesis statement.</p> <p>Information has no apparent pattern.</p>