

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Karen B. Enriquez, Ph.D

Mentor: Chris Anderson, Ph.D. (History)

THE FOUR WEEKS OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES IN THEO 111

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Theo 111 is the introductory course in theology that all students are required to take. In this course, students are introduced to theology as a mutually critical dialogue between human experience and religions. Moreover, as part of the Ethics/Religion and Society (E/RS) focus of Xavier's core curriculum, this course asks students to engage in critical, theological reflection on ethical and/or religious questions of social significance, using human experience and religious traditions as resources to address these issues.

MISSION-DRIVEN COMPONENTS

As I started reading the materials on key principles in Ignatian Spirituality, I was especially inspired by the readings from Pedro Arrupe, S.J. on a "faith that does justice" and Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J. on the challenge of interreligious dialogue and the importance of diversity.¹ I realized that many of the themes that I had been teaching could easily be understood within the framework of these key issues identified by the past Superior-Generals of the Jesuits grounded in Ignatian principles. For this reason, I started to re-structure my syllabus around the Four Weeks of the Spiritual Exercises, focusing on some key principle for each of the weeks and reflecting more specifically about how those principles could be applied today in terms of contemporary issues relevant to our students and to the world.

For Week 1: Exploration of what it means to be human and to be a "loved sinner".

For this section, the focus was to understand:

1. The unconditional love of God and the goodness of being human: We explored aspects of being human including our sexuality and intimate relationships and how all these are good, and are all ways by which we are able to "find God in all things"
2. In light of (1), we questioned those who are considered "sinners" and outside the love of God due to their gender or sexuality, and explored new responses that more closely remind us of the love of God and the goodness of *all*.

For Week 2: The Contemplation of Christ and the Call to Discipleship

For this section, I tried to introduce Ignatian contemplation, by looking more deeply into image of Jesus encountered through the Gospel of Mark. I asked the students to pay attention to Jesus' emotions, his words and how these reflect his self-understanding and his understanding of his mission. We also tried to compose the scenes by looking at the various characters (crowds, disciples, authorities) to see how they reacted to Jesus and what titles they used to try and

¹ See Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in Jesuit Higher Education" and "The Service of Faith in a Religiously Pluralistic World: The Challenge for Jesuit Higher Education" in *A Jesuit Education Reader: Contemporary Writings on the Jesuit Mission in Education, Principles, the Issue of Catholic Identity, Practical Applications of the Ignatian Way and More*, edited by George W. Traub, S.J., (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008) 144-176.

understand him. Moreover, I tried to emphasize the “Call” and “the double invitation to be with Christ and to work for a world of justice, love, and peace”.²

For Week 3: The Contemplation on Jesus’ Death and Innocent Suffering Today

For this section, inspired by Jesuits such as Roger Haight and Jon Sobrino, we looked at the dynamics of the death of Christ, and used it to contemplate the continued innocent suffering and death of people today, allowing ourselves to feel sorrow and begin to develop compassion and solidarity for them, even as we contemplate and feel sorrow for the suffering and death of Christ.

One student made this important link when, having researched the topic of sex trafficking, he wrote the following reflection:

Sex trafficking is a prime example of innocent suffering caused by others that we talked about in class in relation to the death of Jesus. It points clearly to the great evil in existence in the world today and the evil tendencies of the human heart. I feel like many victims of sex trafficking can relate to the suffering of Christ. The feeling of abandonment, rejection, and pain that they experience are all things that we see Jesus experience on the cross.

For Week 4: Exploration of Solidarity and a Faith that Does Justice

In this second half of the course, I focused on the understanding of the contemplation to attain love as the unity of love of God and the love of neighbor. In light of this, we explored the various ways of understanding the concepts of justice and solidarity today by looking at:

1. The complexity of the multiple forms of injustice or oppression, both local and global. In this way, we deepened our understanding of what makes us human including our social/economic status, gender, race, religion, etc.
2. In light of (1), we broadened our understanding of solidarity to include these various forms of oppression and the realization that as Arrupe argued, “to be just, it is not enough to refrain from injustice,” and that we need to be “agents of change in society; not merely resisting but actively undertaking to reform unjust structures and arrangements” (*Men and Women for Others*). This is the kind of work that humanizes us in a world that has dehumanized many.
3. They also read on the examples of others who have led this life of solidarity and justice such as Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Teresa and Jon Sobrino.
4. They were asked to reflect upon the world today by writing their own “composition” of our time and place. The instructions were as follows:

The “Composition” is an important tool within the Spiritual Exercises. It is used to prepare the retreatant to enter more deeply into the meditation by using the imagination to “compose” the physical place where that which one wants to contemplate on is taking place. The reading from Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J. is an example of this “Composition” by trying to describe the complexity of the world we live in today with very specific details and events. Similar to the “Composition” by Fr. Kolvenbach, reflect upon your time and place. What are the issues today? What are the pressures and values in today’s world? Where are the conflicts and difficulties? Where can progress or hope be found? You may use your visit to the Freedom Center and the research on slavery and discussions on poverty to help inform your “composition” and/or you may also use your own experiences,

² James Martin, S.J. *My Life with the Saints* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2006) 92.

information learned from other classes, conversations with friends, family, etc. in order to help you imagine and describe and “compose” the world you live in today.

5. Following on the call of General Congregation #34, the last section of the course, focused on the importance of dialogue and solidarity with other religious traditions. In this last section, we explore the similarities and differences of Buddhism and Christianity and how dialogue can lead not just to a deeper understanding of each other and one’s own faith, but also to collaboration in working toward ending suffering in our world today.

IMPACT ON FUTURE CLASSES AND RESEARCH

Inspired by Fr. Kolvenbach who wrote that “solidarity is learned through “contact” rather than through “concepts,”³ I am planning to include a service-learning component to my Theo 111 class next Fall. For this reason, I applied to be part of the Eigel Center’s Community Engaged Faculty Curricular Development Program, which for next year focuses on addressing poverty in Cincinnati. I’ve also decided to strengthen the spirituality component of my Theo 111 to demonstrate the ways that spiritual practices can lead one to become more aware of oneself and the realities of the world, and as resources in one’s fight for justice. I have received a Wheeler Grant that will enable me to work on incorporating spiritual practices in my course this coming summer and Fall.

In terms of my research focused on Buddhist-Christian dialogue, the immersion into Ignatian Spirituality and the Spiritual Exercises has made me more aware of the dynamic of conversion and the importance of spiritual texts and practices that make such conversion possible. In light of this, I have started exploring comparative texts of conversion in the Buddhist and Christian traditions in order to trace these resonances. One particular comparison will be on the *Spiritual Exercises* and Shantideva’s *The Way of the Bodhisattva*. I will be presenting the first fruits of this comparison at a panel at the American Academy of Religion, and I am hoping to continue such comparisons for the future.

³ Kolvenbach, *A Jesuit Education Reader*, 155.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

DATE	TOPIC	READING	ASSIGNMENT
Jan. 7	Introduction		
Jan. 9		“Religion, Why Bother?” in <i>Faith, Religion, and Theology</i> by B. Hill, P. Knitter and W. Madges, 133-159.	See Guide Questions
Jan. 11		“Ignatius of Loyola” in <i>My Life with the Saints</i> by James Martin, S.J., 73-102.	See Guide Questions
FIRST WEEK: PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION Human Beings as “Loved Sinners”			
Jan. 14	The goodness and purpose of creation	“Principle and Foundation” in <i>Draw Me Into Your Friendship</i> by D. Fleming, 26-27. Genesis, Chapters 1-2 “Creation in God’s Image” in <i>Understanding Catholicism</i> by M. Hellwig, 29-33.	See Guide Questions
Jan. 16	The limits of being creature The goodness of limits	“First Week: First Exercise” in <i>Draw Me Into Your Friendship</i> by D. Fleming, 42-43 and 46-47. Genesis, Chapter 3 “Experiencing the Mystery of not being God” in <i>Doing the Truth in Love</i> by M. Himes, 23-37.	See Guide Questions
Jan. 18	Loved Sinners	“First Week: Second Exercise” in <i>Draw Me Into Your Friendship</i> by D. Fleming, 50-53. “Dis-grace” in <i>Tattoos on the Heart</i> by G. Boyle, 41-60.	Worksheet #1
<i>Questioning who are considered “sinners”</i>			
Jan. 21		NO CLASS	
Jan. 23	Homosexuality	Watch: Glee Episode: “Born This Way” (on reserve)	Worksheet #2
Jan. 25	Scripture and Church teaching on Homosexuality	Church Teaching on Homosexuality (see Blackboard) Genesis 19: 1-11, Leviticus 18 and 20, Romans 1:18-32 “The Bible and Homosexuality” in <i>The Sexual Person</i> by T. Salzman and M. Lawler, 214-226.	See Guide Questions
Jan. 28	Conscience and Discernment	“A Call to Listen: The Church’s Pastoral and Theological Response to Gays and Lesbians” in <i>Sexual Diversity and Catholicism</i> by T. Gumbleton, 3-21.	Worksheet #3
DATE	TOPIC	READING	ASSIGNMENT
Jan. 30	Equality of Women and Men and the Question of Women’s Ordination	“Why Feminism” and “Why Christian Feminist Theology” in <i>Introducing Feminist Theology</i> by A. Clifford, 13-17 and 28-32. “Feminist Theology” in <i>Transforming Grace</i> by A. Carr, 7-9. “Challenging the Church, Finding My Faith” in <i>From the Pews in the Back</i> , 81-87. “Encountering a Priesthood of All” in <i>From the Pews</i>	Worksheet #4

		<i>in the Back</i> , 123-127.	
Feb. 1	Use of Scripture	"Theology and the Use of Scripture" in <i>Faith, Religion, and Theology</i> , 331-341. "The Women in Jesus' Family Tree" (see Blackboard)	See Guide Questions
Interlude: Finding God in All Things / Seeking God in Relationships			
Feb. 4	Hook-up Culture and sexual violence	"Hook-ups, Ho's and Losing It" in <i>Sex and the Soul</i> by D. Freitas, 126-164 (esp. 144-156)	See Guide Questions
Feb. 6	Spirituality and Sexuality	<i>My Life with the Saints</i> by J. Martin, 197-207. Video: Ignatian Spirituality and Sexuality (Center for Mission and Identity at Xavier; see link on Blackboard)	See Guide Questions
Feb. 8	EXAM 1		
SECOND WEEK: THE CALL OF CHRIST			
Feb. 11	Introduction to the Gospels Infancy Narratives	"The Narrative Books - Gospels and Acts" (see Blackboard) Chapters 1-2, Gospel of Matthew and Luke	See Guide Questions
Feb. 13	Jesus in the Gospel of Mark	Gospel of Mark, Chapter 1 - Chapter 8 verse 30	Worksheet #5 (Turnitin)
Feb. 15	Words and Deeds of Jesus	"The Second Week," in <i>Draw Me into your Friendship</i> by D. Fleming, 82-85 "Kinship" in <i>Tattoos on the Heart</i> by G. Boyle, 187-212.	See Guide Questions
THIRD WEEK: The PASSION AND DEATH of JESUS (SOLIDARITY WITH JESUS)			
Feb. 18	On Discipleship	Gospel of Mark, Chapter 8:31 - Chapter 16	Worksheet #6 (Turnitin)
Feb. 20	Suffering and Death of Jesus	"Peter" in <i>My Life with the Saints</i> , 229-251. "The Third Week," in <i>Draw Me into Your Friendship</i> by D. Fleming, 152-155 "Week Three: The Suffering and Death of Jesus" in <i>Christian Spirituality for Seekers</i> by R. Haight, 234-243	See Guide Questions
Feb. 22	The Death of Jesus	"Success" in <i>Tattoos on the Heart</i> by G. Boyle, 167-186. "Easter Story Highlights Role of Women in Jesus' Life and Death" (see Blackboard)	Worksheet #7
SPRING BREAK: FEB. 25 - MAR. 1			

DATE	TOPIC	READING	ASSIGNMENT
FOURTH WEEK: CONTEMPLATION TO ATTAIN LOVE			
Solidarity and a Faith that does Justice			
Mar. 4	Poverty in the U.S.		Research Paper (Turnitin)
Mar. 6	Women and Men for Others	“Pedro Arrupe” in <i>My Life with the Saints</i> by J. Martin, 103-125. “Men and Women for Others” by P. Arrupe (see Blackboard)	
Mar. 8	Poverty in the Third World	“A ‘Composition’ of our Time and Place” in <i>A Jesuit Education Reader</i> by P. Kolvenbach, 152-155. “Awakening from the Sleep of Inhumanity” in <i>The Principle of Mercy</i> by Jon Sobrino, 1-11.	Worksheet #8
<i>Models of Contemplation and Action</i>			
Mar. 11		“Mother Teresa” in <i>My Life with the Saints</i> , 153-178	See Guide Questions
Mar. 13		“Dorothy Day” in <i>My Life with the Saints</i> , 209-228	Worksheet #9
Mar. 15	Discernment and Contemplation	"Contemplation" in <i>Draw Me into your Friendship</i> by D. Fleming, 174-181. “Discerning our Call to Serve” in <i>Doing the Truth in Love</i> by M. Himes, 55-62. <i>Great Mystics and Social Justice</i> by S. Rakoczy, 1-5, 15-17	See Guide Questions
Interlocking Systems of Oppression			
Mar. 18	Different types of oppression injustice today	“Interlocking Structures of Forms of Oppression” in <i>Reimagining the Human</i> by E. Fernandez, 31-49. Watch: “Slumdog Millionaire”	Worksheet #10 (Turnitin)
Mar. 20	Poverty and Race	“Letter from Birmingham City Jail” by Martin Luther King, Jr.	Worksheet #11
Mar. 22	Poverty, Race, and Gender (Womanist Theology)	“African-American Women and Domestic Violence” in <i>The Power of Naming</i> by D. Williams, 96-104. “The Challenge of the Darker Sister” In <i>White Women’s Christ and Black Women’s Jesus</i> by J. Grant, 209-214.	See Guide Questions
Mar. 25	Poverty and Gender (Prostitution/Sex Trafficking) [immigration]	“The Church and Prostitution in Asia” in <i>Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader</i> by M. Katoppo, 114-122. Excerpts from <i>Casting Stones</i> by R. Brock and S. Thistlethwaite, 1-8, 26-31, 238-241.	See Guide Questions
Mar. 27		EXAM 2	
EASTER BREAK (Mar. 29 – Apr. 1)			

DATE	TOPIC	READING	ASSIGNMENT
Apr. 3	Poverty and Ecology		
Apr. 5	Christian Response to environmental issues	“Francis of Assisi” in <i>My Life with the Saints</i> , 271-295. “Creation and an Environmental Ethic” in <i>Fullness of Faith</i> by Himes, 104-114.	See Guide Questions
Solidarity with other Religions			
Apr. 8	Christ and other Religions	Church Teachings on other religions (see Blackboard) “Religions - Why so Many?” in <i>Faith, Religion and Theology</i> , 209-216.	Worksheet #12
Apr. 10	Dialogue and Solidarity with other religions	“Religions - Why so Many?” in <i>Faith, Religion and Theology</i> , 191-209. “New Forms of Solidarity” by J. Fredericks, 112-115. “The Challenge of Interreligious Dialogue” in <i>A Jesuit Education Reader</i> by P. Kolvenbach, 169-175.	See Guide Questions
Introduction to Buddhism			
Apr. 12	The Life of the Buddha and the Four Noble Truths	Watch: The Life of the Buddha (see Blackboard) “American Zenophilia” (link on Blackboard) “Origins of Buddhist Ethics” by D. Keown, 286-290.	Worksheet #13
Apr. 15	Ethical Teachings of Buddhism	“Origins of Buddhist Ethics,” 290-295. Thich Nhat Hanh, “Right Speech”, “Right Action,” and “Right Livelihood” in <i>The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching</i> , 84-98, 113-118.	Worksheet #14
Apr. 17	Engaged Buddhism and Thich Nhat Hanh	“In Engaged Buddhism, Peace Begins with You” Interview with Thich Nhat Hanh by J. Malkin (see link on Blackboard) “The Fourteen Precepts of Engaged Buddhism” (see link on Blackboard) Excerpts from <i>Love in Action</i> by Thich Nhat Hanh, 65-71, 101-112, 119-125.	See Guide Questions
Apr. 19	Comparison: Jesus and Buddha	“Jesus and Buddha: a Conversation” in <i>Faith, Religion, and Theology</i> , 255-281.	See Guide Questions
UNDERSTANDING THEOLOGY			
Apr. 22		“Understanding Theology” in <i>Faith, Religion, and Theology</i> , 285-298	
Apr. 24	REVIEW		
Apr. 26	REVIEW		
	FINAL EXAM		