**WESLEY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

**COURSE OF STUDY PROGRAM**

**CS-522 CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY**

**SYNCHRONOUS ZOOM SESSIONS: Friday, November 1 and Saturday, November 2**

**9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon, 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

Rev. Bruce G. Epperly, Ph.D. [drbruceepperly@aol.com](mailto:drbruceepperly@aol.com)

508-240-4355 [bepperly@wesleyseminary.edu](mailto:bepperly@wesleyseminary.edu)

We are all theologians. We all seek to have a framework for understanding our lives, the world, and the challenges we face. Theology involves loving God with the mind, and also with the heart and hands. Theological reflection joins spirituality and scripture as well as the current world in which we live, science and literature, and the real life and ideal vision of God’s realm in the world. Theology is an essential guidepost for ministerial excellence and exists within the poles of seeking the truth and recognizing that we can never fully apprehend the truth. We must be passion and hopeful and also humble and open to growth in dialogue with others to be faithful theologians.

As pastoral leaders, we need to think theologically and join our theology with our prayer life and responsibility to the world beyond the church. Christian theology is always church theology and yet it goes beyond the church to shape our social order, bring healing and welcome to outsiders, and preach good news to seekers and persons in need of healing and wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and relationships. Theology is always timely. We must consult the wisdom of the past and also realize that God is always doing a new thing in relationship to our changing world.

Theology is a holy adventure, prayerful and open to growth in wisdom and stature as we learn to see God’s light and then share God’s light with our unique setting and historical context. Theology is never exact, and is always growing as our understanding of the world and human life expands.

Theology is also pastoral and practical, especially for pastors, who must mediate theological reflection with issues of trauma, illness, aging, mortality, and ethical and political dilemmas.

Moreover, good theology is grounded in spiritual experience and nurtures the spiritual experiences of individuals and communities alike.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course covers significant individuals, movements, events, and theological

developments from the nineteenth century to the present in light of GBHEM goals:

1. Explore the current theological situation with an eye to joining tradition and innovation and responding to the realities of our time. The Reformation is always reforming and we need a theology as lively as the world in which we live.

2. Understand the origins and theological tenets of theological liberalism from the early

19th century to the present, including its influence on ecumenism and process theology.

2. Understand and distinguish reactions to liberalism, including Fundamentalism,

Neo‐Orthodoxy, and Evangelicalism.

3. Understand the historical development and theology of the Holiness Movement, Pentecostalism, and the Charismatic Movement.

4. Understand the origins and tenets of Liberation, Environmental, and Contextual Theologies

**TEXTS**

**Required:**

Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding.*

Bruce Epperly, *Jesus: Mystic, Healer, and Prophet*

Grace Ji-Sun Kim, *Spirit Life*

**SYNCHRONOUS SESSIONS**

Synchronous sessions are class meetings on the Zoom online platform. Our five synchronous sessions are scheduled for five Saturdays, eastern time:

**Friday, November 1 – 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon and 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

**Saturday, November 2 - 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon and 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

**READING ASSIGNMENTS**

Please do your reading before class and in a timely manner. Theology has its own language and often takes time to digest. You might do a personal journal noting challenges and insights related to the reading.

**WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**

* **Utilize the assigned books as sources for your papers.**
* **Papers are due by class times (synchronous sessions). Have a hard copy at hand for discussion.**
* **Papers must be submitted in Microsoft Word both to: 1) drbruceepperly@aol.com and 2) posted on Blackboard . Be sure to save a copy.**
* **The Course of Study program’s expectation is that there be a total of twenty pages of writing for every course. Your writing needs to meet that expectation.**

**PRE-COURSE ASSIGNMENTS ARE IN-DEPTH AND SHOULD BE STARTED IN LATE SEPTEMBER!**

**PRE-COURSE ASSIGNMENTS: To be explained in late May on an on-line conversation to be scheduled.**

**Due November 1:** Write a brief reflection, synopsis and critique of five of the main topics of chapters 1-14 in *Faith Seeking Understanding.* Your paper should be approximately ten pages long, with at least two pages on each topic.

**Due November 8:** Reflect on the significance of spirituality, healing, and prophetic ministry in the life of the church.

**Due November 10:** Reflect on your understanding of the importance of theological reflection and pastoral ministry, with consideration of a particular issue (for example, political conflict in the church, illness, trauma, a crisis in the community, pluralism)

**PRE-COURSE ASSIGNMENT: DISCUSSION BOARD**

There is a discussion board for our class on Blackboard. The purpose of the discussion board is to promote conversation among students about contemporary theology. This work is necessary to meet GBHEM’s requirement for asynchronous time for online COS courses.

**Students are required to post two responses: one, a response to the prompt, and two, a response to a fellow student’s post for five weeks, October 1-October 31**. (**I will begin to post questions on the Discussion Board by September 20.)** A question/prompt of the week will be posed by the instructor on Monday. The questions/prompts will be based on assigned readings and YouTube videos.

**Each student should post a 100-150 word response to the question/prompt plus at least a 50 word response to a fellow student's post every week**.

**Posts to the prompts are due on Thursdays; responses to fellow student posts are due on Sundays. The first postings are due October 7.**

**CRITERIA FOR GRADING PAPERS:**

1. Understanding of the subject matter.
2. Quality of insight and clarity. Clarity counts.
3. Relevance and insight in relationship to pastoral ministry.