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CS 654 Morality at the End of Modernity

James R. Thobaben

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MORALITY AT THE END OF MODERNITY
CS 654
Fall 2006

Asbury Theological Seminary

MONDAY 6:15 – 9:20 pm M 305

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Office Hours: M, T, W 1:30 - 3:30 & by appointment

PURPOSE:

The course examines different perspectives on the meaning of “modern” and the implications for the culture by analyzing fictional portrayals of society, especially utopias and dystopias. The moral implications of various conceptualizations of freedom, free-will, personal identity, etc. are considered in light of changing technologies and forms of social organization. Special emphasis is placed on the implications for Christian social ethics by examining Christian and non-Christian authors.

Students will develop methods for understanding narratives as moral presentations in both fiction and “real life.” Students will examine how stories reinforce or challenge social views. Students will consider how stories impact the understanding of Christianity in the broader society and how Christians can tell the Gospel story in light of significant social change. The course will provide students with knowledge of literature commonly used among non-Christians as a means of framing moral conversation. The course will model another means for Christian ministries to present moral issues and ethical analysis in congregations.

OBJECTIVES:

- To introduce students to tools of cultural analysis;
- To introduce students to content analysis and related literature techniques of sociology;
- To help students consider how literature is an argument with unstated assumptions and intended moral conclusions;
- To familiarize students with literature used in secular discussions of secular social ethics (in particular in medical ethics, political ethics, & technology ethics);
- To introduce students to Christian responses to non-Christian understandings of social order;
- To help students develop ways of responding to non-Christian responses to social (especially technological and organizational) change;
- To provide students with a different way of teaching/preaching.

TEXTS:

See Schedule.

WRITTEN WORK:

TWO-HOUR

(NOTE: 2-hour enrollees do not need to read A Canticle for Lebowitz during the final week)

OPTION 1:

- Weekly 5-minute quizzes on materials covered in class and/or readings;
- One 5 – 10 page work of fiction (or a ‘fictionalized’ incident) that portrays cultural and interpretive complexity of the early 21st century (DUE TBA); **AND**, One 5-7 page social analysis of your earlier work of fiction. The fictional piece can be revised for the final analysis (DUE TBA).

OPTION 2:

- Weekly 5-minute quizzes on materials covered in class and/or readings;
- One 14 - 17 page paper on issue of social ethics covered in course (the paper should include research on topic and how it appears in literature) (DUE TBA).

THREE-HOUR

OPTION 1:

- Weekly 5-minute quizzes on materials covered in class and/or readings;
- One 5 – 10 page work of fiction (or a ‘fictionalized’ incident) that portrays cultural and interpretive complexity of the early 21st century (DUE November 7, 2005); **AND**, One 12 – 15 page social analysis of your earlier work of fiction. The fictional piece can be revised for the final analysis (DUE December 12, 2005).

OPTION 2:

- Weekly 5-minute quizzes on materials covered in class and/or readings;
- One 20 - 25 page paper on issue of social ethics covered in course (the paper should include research on topic and how it appears in literature) (DUE December 12, 2005).

EVALUATION (for either 2- or 3- hour):

Option 1:	20%	Work of Fiction
	50%	Analysis
Option 2:	70%	Analysis
Quizzes:	30%	
Class Participation:		Deduction if lacking
Reading:		Deduction if lacking

Analyses should use cultural, social, and theological tools (psychological, if appropriate).

All paper are to be typed with one inch margins (top, sides, bottom) using 12 point print.

There will be a penalty for late papers commensurate with the degree of lateness and the adequacy of the excuse.

DRAFT

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All written work must use inclusive language when reference is made to human beings (male and female). This provides for both greater inclusion and greater precision. For more information on this topic see ‘Suggestions for Using Inclusive Language’, available in the Dean of Student’s Office. Exceptions may be made for the fictional piece if the theme warrants such.

Class participation will be evaluated on the basis of attendance and participation in full class discussions.

Grade Range: Work for CS 740 will be evaluated at a graduate/professional school level.

Grade Range: Work for CS 601 will be evaluated at a graduate/professional school level.

- A = Exceptional work: surpassing, markedly outstanding achievement of course objective
- A- =
- B+ =
- B = Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives
- B- =
- C+ =
- C = Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives
- C- =
- D+ =
- D = Marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives
- D- =
- F = Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives

Please note:
Some of these books may be available in the ATS Bookstore, but others may not be. Ask/ Order/ Obtain in plenty of time.

September 11 Introduction & Basic Concepts in Ethics

The use of “story” as a moral tool in the Scripture and in literature

September 18 Pre-Modern Use of Literature in Times of Social Change

Required: Beowulf ALL
(PLEASE!!! Lehman edition, or if already own Heany editions)

September 25 Having An Ideal: Early Modern Images

Required: More, Thomas Utopia OR Bunyan, John A Pilgrim’s Progress ALL
Optional: Swift, Jonathan, Gulliver’s Travels

October 2 Having An Ideal: Early Modern Images

Required: More, Thomas Utopia OR Bunyan, John A Pilgrim’s Progress ALL
Optional: Swift, Jonathan, Gulliver’s Travels

October 9 Enlightenment & Romanticism as Purity & Cynicism

Required: Voltaire, Candide OR Shelley, Mary Frankenstein PICK
Optional: Rousseau, J.J. Emile

October 16 The Optimistic Moral Anthropology of Modernity

Required: Golding, William Lord of the Flies OR Burroughs, Edgar Rice, Tarzan of the Apes PICK
Optional: Grey, Zane, Riders of the Purple Sage
Mark Twain, Tom Sawyer

October 23***The Modern Denial of Sin & the Reality of Evil***

- Required: Stevenson, R.L. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde OR
Conrad, J. The Heart of Darkness PICK
- Optional: Melville, Herman, Moby Dick
- Required film to view: Bradbury, Ray Something Wicked This Way Comes

October 30***The Modern Use of Untethered Power***

- Required: Sinclair, Upton The Jungle OR Orwell, George Animal Farm PICK
- Optional: Orwell, George Nineteen Eighty-Four
Wells, H.G., Island of Dr. Moreau

November 6***Who Counts: Identity & "Usefulness"***

- Required: Kafka, Franz, "Metamorphosis" ALL
- AND** Capek, Karel R.U.R. OR Huxley, Aldous Brave New World OR
Steinbeck, John Of Mice & Men PICK
- Optional: Lewis, Sinclair, Babbitt

November 13***Who Counts: Identity & Ethnicity***

- Required: Baldwin, James Go Tell It on the Mountain ALL
- Optional: Speare, Elizabeth George The Witch of Blackbird Pond
Gilman, Charlotte Perkins, Herland

November 20***READING WEEK*****November 27*****The Modern Avoidance of Death***

- Required: MacDonald, G. "Gifts of the Child Christ" ALL
- Optional: Tolstoy, L. The Death of Ivan Ilych
Wilde, Oscar, Picture of Dorian Gray

December 4***Challenges to Modernity***

- Required: Abbott, Edwin A. Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions OR
Dostoyevski, Fyodor Notes From Underground PICK
- Optional: Chesterton, G.K., The Man Who Was Thursday
Lewis, C.S. Till We Have Faces

December 11***Is the Modern World Past (what is "post-modernity")?***

- Required: Miller, Walter A Canticle for Leibowitz
(REQUIRED READING FOR 3-HOUR STUDENTS ONLY)
- Optional: Umberto Eco, The Name of the Rose

This final session meets DURING finals week. Make plans accordingly.

ALL = everyone in class is to read this work UNLESS previously read, then use alternative/optional.

PICK = students may select one of the readings for so designated for that week

OPTIONAL = in addition to readings OR if student has previously read all/pick books for that week

Fiction reading is much easier (for the most part) than non-fiction philosophical and theological writing and you may flow rather quickly through the pieces, but do try to read the works with an analytical mind.

Again, please pick books you have not read previously.

Note that on Nov. 6, two books are required.