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CS 654 Morality at the End of Modernity

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NOTE:

- Dr. Thobaben will be attending the Lausanne Conference in Thailand as a delegate for the bioethics section. Consequently, he WILL NOT be on campus from September 27 – October 8.
- Each class session (there will be 11) , therefore, has 20 minutes added to it to meet the course “contact hours” requirement.
- Since we are scheduled for Monday night, the last session of the class will be on Monday DURING finals week.
- Thank you for your taking these schedule alterations into account in your planning.

MORALITY AT THE END OF MODERNITY

CS 654

Fall 2004

Asbury Theological Seminary

MONDAY 6:15 – 9:20 pm Stanger Hall 404

James R. Thobaben, Ph.D.

Office Location: Estes 107

Office Phone: 858-2369 Home Phone 858-8058
Office Hours: T, W, Th 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 November 8, 2004); **AND**, One 5-7 page social analysis of your earlier work of fiction. The fictional piece can be revised for the final analysis (DUE December 6, 2004).

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 December 6, 2004).

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 8, 2004); **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 6, 2004).

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 6, 2004).

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.

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

September 13 *Introduction & Basic Concepts in Ethics*
The use of “story” as a moral tool in the Scripture and in literature

September 20 *Pre-Modern Use of Literature in Times of Social Change*
Required: Beowulf ALL

September 27 NO CLASS SESSION

October 4 NO CLASS SESSION

October 11 *Having An Ideal: Early Modern Images*
Required: More, Thomas Utopia ALL

Optional: Bunyan, John A Pilgrim’s Progress
Swift, Jonathan, Gulliver’s Travels

Enlightenment & Romanticism as Purity & Cynicism
Required: Voltaire, Candide OR Shelley, Mary Frankenstein PICK

Optional: Rousseau, J.J. Emile

October 18 *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

October 25 *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

November 1

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
- Film to view: Bradbury, Ray Something Wicked This Way Comes

November 8

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

November 15

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 22

READING WEEK

November 29

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 6

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
Lewis, Sinclair, Babbitt

December 13

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)

ALL = everyone in class is to read this work.

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 Oct. 11 and Nov. 8, two books are required.