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UNITED METHODIST THEOLOGY (2 Hours)

Spring 2003

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I. WELCOME

Hello, from the great state of Indiana! I extend a warm welcome to you and look forward to developing our relationship as we examine United Methodist Theology. I am amazed that I can lead this class in Marion, Indiana through Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky with you living somewhere else in the United States or world. Wow!

It is my privilege to serve as your guide on this ExL journey. I have a passion for theological thought. Theology shapes every aspect of ministry. One of the primary reasons I am a United Methodist pastor today is because of The United Methodist Church's doctrinal teaching. With your help and insights, we will deepen our understanding, as well as our appreciation, of Methodist thought and make connections to parish ministry.

I am excited about being apart of this venture with you. However, I know there may be times when my instructions and directions are unclear. Please do not hesitate to seek clarification and offer periodic feedback on how the class is going. We will be making our journey together.

II. COURSE DESCRIPTION

At Asbury Theological Seminary, there are four classes designed to meet the denominational requirements of The United Methodist Church for ordained ministry. They are DO 628 - The Theology of John Wesley; CH 623 - United Methodist History; PM 604 - United Methodist Polity; and this class DO 670 - United Methodist Theology.

The purpose of this class is (1) to examine what constitutes United Methodist doctrine as well as its standards and norms, (2) to survey Methodist theology after John Wesley to the present with a special focus upon its American developments, (3) and to study a variety of theological perspectives existing presently within the denomination.

III. COURSE OBJECTIVES

As a result of this course, our class both individually and corporately should be equipped to do the following:

(1) We will be able to appreciate, articulate and explain United Methodist doctrinal standards.

(2) We will be acquainted with some of the representative theological trends, movements, and theologians within United Methodism.

(3) We will be acquainted with some of the representative theological trends, movements, and theologians outside the United Methodist tradition that are impacting the United Methodist Church.

(4) We will be able to critically assess past and present theological trends in light of United Methodist doctrinal standards.

(5) We will be able to recognize the relationship of United Methodist Theology to all spheres of parish and denominational life and make applications.

(6) We will be prepared to address the doctrinal questions, stated in The Discipline of the United Methodist Church, which are a part of the Church's ordination requirements.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The success of our class is dependent on the timely completion of all assignments, in active participation in class discussion, and in building relationships with one another. During the semester you will be required to do the following for individual grades:

(1) Assigned Readings: You will be responsible for all reading assignments specified in each module. Reading must be completed during the two - week period assigned in the syllabus. This will be key to your participation in the Discussion Center. (10% of final grade)

(2) Research Paper: You will select a topic from those covered during the semester and write a 10-15 page research paper (typed, doubled spaced) on that topic. The research paper will be due the last day of class. On questions of style with regard to paper organization and references, see Carole Slade, *Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports, Theses* (10th ed.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997). (30% of final grade)

(3) Reflective Essays: You will be given a reflective question in modules 02 - 06 (a total of five questions) to help you critically process course materials and connect it to the local church. These essays (700-900 words) will be done individually and in groups and posted in the Discussion Center for group response. (30% of final grade)

(4) Class Participation: You will actively and thoughtfully participate as a member of a learning community. DO670XL is not an independent study. We will be

interacting with and learning from one another. Expectations will be spelled out in each module. (30 % of final grade)

During the semester you are asked and encouraged to do the following:

(1) Pray Daily for All Participants in Our Course: I encourage you to pray for everyone in our class and for our ExL office. Please feel free to share prayer requests through out the semester. Know that I will pray daily for you individually and as a group.

(2) Enjoy and Go Deeper: God has given us the awesome ability to know each other and to know Him. This semester in our work, in our discussions, in our readings, and in our chats we will have an opportunity to deepen our connection to Christ and to deepen our relationship with each other.

V. ASSIGNED TEXTS

These textbooks may be obtained from the Asbury Theological Seminary Cokesbury Bookstore. You may e-mail your request to exlbooks@asburyseminary.edu or call (859)-858-4242.

- *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, 1996 or 2000.
- Abraham, William J. *Waking from Doctrinal Amnesia: The Healing of Doctrine in The United Methodist Church*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.
- Chiles, Robert E. *Theological Transitions in American Methodism: 1790-1935*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984.
- Campbell, Dennis. *United Methodism and American Culture Vol. III, Doctrines and Disciplines*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.

VI. COURSE OUTLINE

The following is a broad outline of the seven modules for the course. A detailed outline with specific instructions, assignments, and a complete list of assigned reading will be given when the class begins.

Our course will begin on Monday, February 10 at 12:00 noon (ET). On that day the first complete module will be accessible within the Course Center. A new module will be accessible every two weeks by 12:00 noon (ET) on the dates specified. Each module will close at 11:00 p.m. (ET) on the dates specified.

Module 01: Introduction and United Methodist Doctrinal Standards

- Module begins February 10 and ends February 23.

- Assigned Reading:
The Book of Discipline 1996, pp. 39-83.
Waking from Doctrinal Amnesia, entire book.

Module 02: UM Doctrinal Standards and Theological Task

- Module begins February 24 and ends March 9.
- Assigned Reading:
United Methodism and American Culture: Doctrines and Disciplines, entire book.

Module 03: Theological Developments in American Methodism from 1790 to 1935

- Module begins March 10 and ends March 23.
- Assigned Reading:
Theological Transition in American Methodism, pp 13-114.

Module 04: Theological Developments in American Methodism from 1790 to 1935

- Module begins March 24 and ends April 6.
- Assigned Reading:
Theological Transitions in American Methodism, pp. 115-213.
Further reading to be announced

Module 05: Contemporary Trends in United Methodism

- Module begins April 7 and ends April 20.
- Assigned Readings:
Further reading to be announced

Module 06: Contemporary Trends in United Methodism

- Module begins April 21 and ends May 4.
- Assigned Readings:
Further reading to be announced

Module 07: Contemporary Trends in United Methodism and Conclusion

- Module begins May 5 and ends May 18.
- Assigned Readings: To be announced.
- Term paper due May 20.

VII. GRADING

Asbury Theological Seminary uses the 4.00-point system for grading and evaluation. The grading system is:

A 4.00

Exceptional work: outstanding achievement of course objectives

A- 3.70

B+ 3.30

Good work: substantial achievement of course objectives

B 3.00

B- 2.70

C+ 2.30

Acceptable work: essential achievement of course objectives

C 2.00

C- 1.70

D+ 1.30

Marginal work: minimal or inadequate achievement of course objectives

D 1.00

D- 0.70

F 0.00

Unacceptable work: failure of course objectives

VIII. CONTACT AND INTERACTION WITH YOUR GUIDE

During the course of the semester, as your guide, I want to be available to you. Here are some of the ways you can depend on me to be there for you.

(1) As specified earlier, I will have all of your materials and assignments on-line by 12:00 noon (ET) at the starting date for each of our seven learning modules.

(2) I will respond to all of your messages on a first come first serve basis during my office hours on Tuesday afternoon between 2:00-4:00 (ET). I will also check my e-mail most weekdays in case of a question or an "urgent" message (simply write URGENT in caps in the subject line).

(3) I will offer, as far as possible, prompt feedback to your essays and questions.

(4) If you can afford the phone call, I would be glad to talk to you in person or you can leave a voice mail with me at (765)-677-0972 and I will return your call.

(5) While I might not participate in all the discussions, I will monitor our group conversations and participate as needed.

(6) I will check in with you during the semester to see how you are doing individually and how you are feeling about this ExL experience.

(7) I will be praying for you and thinking of you as we study and grow together through this experience.

IX. WINDOWS AND ICONS

While you have been instructed in the use of the items in the DO670XL folder, I will review their uses for this class.

The Course Center: The Course Center will contain a copy of the final official syllabus for our class as well as all our class modules.

The Discussion Center: The Discussion Center will be used for all group communications. Anytime you have a question or comment about the course, the modules, assignments, or anything else of interest to all of us you should post it to the Discussion Center.

The DO670XL Office: The DO670XL Office is for private correspondence between you and me. Items you do not want to appear before your fellow participants or items you think may embarrass me need to be posted here.

The Archives Center: The Archive Center will be used for storing correspondence that has already been explored during the semester in the Discussion Center. This will be done after the completion of each module and at my discretion.

The Chat Center: The Chat Center is intended primarily for real-time interaction among participants. You can meet with other members to study, ask questions, or explore topics. None of the conversations in this location are ever saved.

The Resource Center: The Resource Center provides access to a number of specific tools available to all ExL participants. These include access to Asbury Theological Seminary's B. L. Fisher Library, the services in Estes Chapel, ExL Updates, Guidelines for Success, Helpful Hints, Interesting Links, a PowerPoint Viewer, and a Real Audio player.

X. TECHNICAL AND LIBRARY SUPPORT

When you have questions about the technical and logistical aspects of this course, please consult a staff member on the campus of Asbury Theological Seminary. These staff members are unfailingly helpful, and I urge you to contact any of them if you need assistance. Here are some of the key personal and locations.

(1) The ExL Program at Asbury Theological Seminary
Kevin Osborn at exl_director@asburyseminary.edu
or
Amy Jo Adams at exl_coach@asburyseminary.edu

(2) Technical Support (for computer and software support):
Andy Adams at exl_support@asburyseminary.edu

(3) General and Reference Library Assistance:
Hannah Kirsch at Hannah_Kirsch@asburyseminary.edu

(4) Inter-Library Loan Assistance:

Dorothy James at Dot James@asburyseminary.edu

Questions relating to the syllabus or course assignments should be directed to me in the DO 670XL Office (open only to me) or the DO670XL Discussion Center (open to me and to all the members of the class). Sometimes, a sentence that is clear to me might not be clear to you. If something in the course is not working, let me know as soon as possible. I desire to make this internet course as helpful to you as possible.

God bless and enjoy the journey!

Chris Bounds