CS 700 Servant as Liberator

James R. Thobaben

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CS 700: Servant as Liberator  
Asbury Theological Seminary  
Spring 2001

SECTION A: M & W  1:00 - 2:15  
James R. Thobaben, Ph.D.  
Office Location: McPheeters Center 307  
Office Phone: 858-2369  
Office Hours: M 2:30 - 4:00, Th 12:30 - 2:00 & by appointment

SECTION B: T & Th 11:00 - 12:15  
Christine Pohl, Ph.D.  
Office Location: McPheeters Center 308  
Office Phone: 858-2284  
Office Hours: T & Th 12:30 - 3:00 pm & by appointment

Purpose:
To prepare students for ministry by training them to analyze and address social problems from a Christian perspective. To develop ministers who are responsive to the needs, contexts, and insights of various marginalized groups in society and in the church. To enable ministers to equip their congregations for understanding moral responsibility and for practicing social ministry. To assist in training ministers who will draw all persons, including those who are excluded by society, into the care and guidance of the community of faith under the Lordship of Christ.

Objectives:
To provide a Biblical basis for social concern, care, and responsibility.
To introduce various historical and contemporary Christian interpretations of social issues.
To teach the vocabulary of ethical analysis.
To introduce approaches to social analysis.
To examine mechanisms for responding to social concerns at local, national, and international levels as an individual and as a Christian community.
To consider how responses to social problems shape congregational life.

Texts:  
Dayton, Donald W., Discovering an Evangelical Heritage  
Marquardt, Manfred, John Wesley’s Social Ethics [trans. Steely & Gunter]  
Packet (readings are not in order in packet)

Evaluation:
20%  Required Historical Paper: 4 - 5 page limit
50%  Research Paper: 12-15 page limit
30%  Final Examination
Debit:  For inadequate class participation and/or late or incomplete reading.
Extra credit of one grade level (e.g., B+ to A-; B to B+) on final exam for full attendance at and participation in "Breathtaking Decisions" (bioethics conference March 10 & 11).

Grade Range:  Work for CS 700 will be evaluated at a graduate/professional school level.

A- = Unusually high quality, exceptional work
A+ = Far above average, fine work
B+ = Above average for graduate work
B = Very good, but average for graduate work
B- = Slightly below average for graduate work
C+ = Meets requirements, but with noticeable inadequacies for graduate work
$C = \text{Meets requirements, but with significant gaps for graduate work}$
$C- = \text{Meets requirements, but with serious gaps for graduate work}$
$D+ = \text{Minimal work, barely acceptable for specific assignment}$
$D = \text{Failure; unacceptable work}$

**Historical Paper:** Wesley's theological commitments shaped his understanding of social service and action. Consider social reform in light of Wesleyan ecclesiology and understanding of sanctification; discuss why these doctrines, in particular, were important. Show how they would help to shape an adequate Christian response to a contemporary social problem **DUE 2/28 (A); 2/29 (B).**

**Research Paper:** Students may choose a specific area to study in greater depth. Possible topic areas include: poverty, child or spouse abuse, AIDS, abortion, homelessness, mental retardation, substance abuse, racial discrimination, environmental issues, public education. Topics should be chosen early in the semester so that students can conduct research and reflect upon interweaving themes. The paper must reflect an approach to the problem that includes a specifically church-centered response. The body or notes of the paper should reflect a working knowledge of resources currently available in the community and church, as well as alternatives and improvements you might prefer. Consult with the professor in choosing your topic. **DUE 4/24 (A); 4/25 (B).**

**Final Examination:** The one-hour exam will be oriented toward objective knowledge. **Section A on Monday 5/15 at 10:30 am; Section B on Thursday 5/18 at 9:00 am.**

**Participation:** Students are required to complete all assigned readings. Reading Records will be collected on the last day of class. Failure to complete readings on time may result in a lowering of the final grade, as will poor attendance for class. Attendance will be taken. The deduction for low participation and/or late or incomplete reading of assigned material will be up to 10% against the final grade (a full letter grade reduction).

**Written Work:** All written work must be typed with 12 point type, one inch margins on all four sides, and true double spacing. Follow page limit requirements. There will be a penalty for late papers commensurate with the degree of lateness and the adequacy of the excuse. Papers are due in class on assigned date.

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.

**INTRODUCTION: BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ETHICS**

**Week 1 (2/7):** Overview of course & introduction to terms, Biblical themes, and tools of social analysis

**Week 2 (2/14):** Continue 'terms, themes, and tools'

- **Assigned Scriptures**
  - Plantinga, Cornelius "Spiritual Hygiene and Corruption" Not the Way It's Supposed To Be
  - Wheeler, Sondra Ely "A Constructive Proposal" Wealth as Peril and Obligation

**Week 3 (2/21):** Historical foundations for contemporary Christian social ethics

- Marquardt, entire text
- Heitzenrater, Richard, "The Imitatio Christi and the Great Commandment: Virtue and Obligation in Wesley's Ministry with the Poor."
  - Portion of the Poor (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1995)

**Week 4 (2/28):** Continue 'historical foundations'
THE CHURCH AS A MORAL COMMUNITY

Week 5 (3/6) Church as a Community of Reconciliation
Hauerwas, Stanley “The Servant Community: Christian Social Ethics” The Peaceable Kingdom
Volf, Miroslav “Exclusion and Embrace: Theological Reflection in the Wake of Ethnic Cleansing” in Dyrness, William A. Emerging Voices in Global Christian Theology

Bioethics Conference Participation

Week 6 (3/13) Reconciliation: Gender Relations

Week 7 (3/20) Reconciliation: Race Relations
Douglass, Frederick “Appendix,” Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass.

CHRISTIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE SPHERES OF SOCIAL LIFE

Week 8 (3/27) Christians and the Church in the Political Sphere

READING WEEK

Week 9 (4/10) Christians and the Church in the Economic Sphere
Week 10 (4/17) Continue 'economic sphere'

Week 11 (4/24) Christians and the Church in the Familial Sphere
Meilander, Gilbert, “The Eclipse of Fatherhood” First Things (June/July 1995)
Pipher, Mary "Protecting Families -- Houses with Walls" The Shelter of Each Other
Mathews-Green, Frederica "Subversive Civility" Park Ridge Center Bulletin May/June 1999
Hauerwas, Stanley, Abortion Theologically Understood (not in packet)
RESEARCH PAPER DUE IN CLASS – Monday 4/24 (A); Tuesday 4/25 (B)

Week 12 (5/1) Christians and the Church in the Cultural (popular) Sphere
Taylor, Daniel "Deconstructing the Gospel of Tolerance," Christianity Today January 11, 1999
"An Evangelical Declaration on the Care of the Creation"

Week 13 (5/8) Health Care: The Confusion of Overlapping Spheres

FINAL EXAM:
Section A – Thobaben: Monday 5/15 10:30 am - 12:30 pm
Section B – Pohl: Thursday 5/18 9:00 am - 11:00 am

READING RECORD: Due with Final Exam