

1-1-2008

CS 654 Morality at the end of Modernity

James R. Thobaben

Follow this and additional works at: <http://place.asburyseminary.edu/syllabi>

Recommended Citation

Thobaben, James R., "CS 654 Morality at the end of Modernity" (2008). *Syllabi*. Book 92.
<http://place.asburyseminary.edu/syllabi/92>

This Document is brought to you for free and open access by the eCommons at ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Syllabi by an authorized administrator of ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange. For more information, please contact thad.horner@asburyseminary.edu.

MORALITY AT THE END OF MODERNITY

CS 654

Summer 2008

Asbury Theological Seminary

21 25 JULY (2nd summer session)
9 am – 5 pm (class meets over lunch)

James R. Thobaben, Ph.D.

Office Location: AD 304

Office Phone: 858-2369 Home Phone 858-8058

Office Hours: 'By Appointment' during summer

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 a “narrative” 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 [AND](#) :

- Thobaben, James “Holy Knowing: A Wesleyan Epistemology” [The Death of Metaphysics; The Death of Culture](#) (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2006) [available through Info Commons]
- Gardner, John, “Moral Fiction” in [On Moral Fiction](#)

WRITTEN WORK:

TWO-HOUR

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

OPTION 1:

- Exam over readings;
- One 5 – 10 page work of fiction (or a ‘fictionalized’ incident) that portrays
- cultural and interpretive complexity of the early 21st century (DUE FIRST DAY OF CLASS); **AND**, One 5-7 page social analysis of your earlier work of fiction. The fictional piece can be revised for the final analysis. (DUE 15 AUGUST)

OPTION 2:

- Exam over 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 15 AUGUST)

THREE-HOUR

OPTION 1:

- Exam over readings;
- One 5 – 10 page work of fiction (or a ‘fictionalized’ incident) that portrays
- cultural and interpretive complexity of the early 21st century (DUE FIRST DAY OF CLASS); **AND**, One 12 – 15 page social analysis of your earlier work of fiction. The fictional piece can be revised for the final analysis. (DUE 15 AUGUST)

OPTION 2:

- Exam over 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 15 AUGUST)

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

Option 1:	20%	Work of Fiction
	50%	Analysis
Option 2:	70%	Analysis
Exam:	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 654 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.

Introduction & Basic Concepts in Ethics

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

Pre-Modern Use of Literature in Times of Social Change

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

Having An Ideal: Early Modern Images

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

Enlightenment & Romanticism as Purity & Cynicism

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

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

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

The Modern Denial of Sin & the Reality of Evil

Required film to view: Bradbury, Ray Something Wicked This Way Comes

The Modern Use of Untethered Power

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

Who Counts: Identity & “Usefulness”

Required: Kafka, Franz, “Metamorphosis” ALL
AND Capek, Karel R.U.R. OR Huxley, Aldous Brave New World OR

Optional: Steinbeck, John Of Mice & Men PICK
Lewis, Sinclair, Babbitt

Who Counts: Identity & Ethnicity

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

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

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

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 UNLESS previously read, then use alternative/optional.

PICK = students may select one of the readings for the given section.

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.

Complete all reading BEFORE the first day of class.

This is 'enjoyable' summer reading.

Again, please pick books you have not read previously.

Note that on 'Who Counts' #1 two books are required.