

Syllabus

The Minister as Public Theologian

Pacific School of Religion

Summer, 2012

MTWThF, July 9-13, 9am-1pm

Instructor: Hubert G. Locke

Office Hours: by appointment

E-mail: hubertlocke609@comcast.net

Brief Course Description: What is the responsibility and what are the tasks of the minister, rabbi, imam in times of public crisis, beyond those of serving as spiritual leader to followers of her/his faith tradition? What are the challenges and demands that the larger society poses for the religious leader who takes the position of public leadership seriously? This course will explore Biblical, theological and political sources that illumine these and related questions, will examine the experiences of examples of moral leadership in the modern era, and undertake practical exercises in preparing and presenting public critiques on current issues of moral import.

Learning Outcomes: Students should complete this course with a heightened confidence in the ability to assess and discuss persuasively in public venues issues that are part of the public debate in our society. Each student is expected to deepen her/his capacity to think critically and perceptively about the tasks of the minister as public theologian.

Class Schedule and Calendar of Assignments

Monday, 9 July

9am Introduction to the Course

9:30 am The Minister as Public Theologian: The Biblical Context

10:30am Case Study: Martin Niemöller

11:30am

Tuesday, 10 July

9am The Minister as Public Theologian: The Political Realities

10am Case Study: Reinhold Niebuhr

11am Class Participant Presentations*

12noon Critiques and Summary

Wednesday, 11 July

9am The Perils of the Public Pulpit

10am Case Study: Sisters of St. Francis [Sister Nora Nash] and
Bishop Thomas Gumbleton

11am Class Participant Presentations*

12noon Critiques and Summary

Thursday, 12 July

9am The Issues
• Income Inequality
• The Secular Idolatries [nationalism, patriotism, multiculturalism]

10am Case Study

11am Class Participant Presentations*

12noon Critiques and Summary

Friday, 13 July

9am Progressive Christianity vs. the Political Pulpit

10am Case Study: William Sloane Coffin, Jr.

11am Class Participant Presentations*

12noon Critiques, Summary and Final Observations

*Each class participant will be asked to prepare a daily op ed column for her/his local newspaper reflecting his/her views on a self-selected issue as a public theologian; the column will be distributed, discussed and critiqued by the class. And yes, there will be several short breaks during the morning].

Reading List: It would be, in the words of the U.S. Constitution, “cruel and unusual” to assign a text for a five day course. Compounding the problem is the lack of any single publication that deals adequately with the range of problems and issues this course hopes to address. Accordingly, what follows are a list of recommended readings, one of which each student should immerse her/himself in sufficiently to

serve as the class specialist on the volume. This should provide the basis for a well-informed and lively discussion.

If Reinhold Niebuhr is the quintessential public theologian, then the two of his many works that are most relevant for this course are:

Moral Man and Immoral Society, New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1960.
The Irony of American History, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952.

Three books that examine important political facets of the problem are:

Jeffrey K. Hadden, *The Gathering Storm in the Churches* [Doubleday, 1969] and Harold Quinley, *The Prophetic Clergy* [John Wiley and Sons, 1974]. Hadden "remains the landmark assessment of the changing political role of American churches during the 1960s", while Quinley presents a trenchant analysis of social activism among Protestant clergy.

Martha Nussbaum has such a wide-ranging set of works that expound on issues relevant to this course that it's difficult to make a choice between any of them. Students may find *Fragility of Goodness* [Cambridge University Press, 1986], *Cultivating Humanity* [Cambridge University Press, 1997] which the *New York Times* hailed for its "passionate, closely argued defense of multiculturalism" and *Sex and Social Justice* [Oxford University Press, 1998] in which, among other positions she argues in support of the legalization of prostitution, to be of especial interest.

Robert Wuthnow's *Restructuring of American Religion*, [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988], with one glaring omission, lays the groundwork, raises the issues and sets the context for the discussions that will inform and hopefully enliven this course.

The obvious problem with this reading list – it's woefully dated but partially, by design, in order to encourage students to seek out more recent sources that will bring the discussion into the current period.

Grading

Since this course is held in a very concentrated time period, class attendance is essential. A fifteen page paper, on a topic of mutual agreement between student and instructor will be due one week after the end of the course, on Sunday, July 22nd. Students taking the course for academic credit are graded as follows: attendance & participation: 40%; paper: 60%. Students taking the course for CEUs or personal enrichment are expected to complete readings and in-class assignments but are exempt from the final paper.

Academic Policies

Grading and Plagiarism Policy: Please consult: <http://www.psr.edu/grades> and <http://www.psr.edu/plagiarism-policy>.

Incomplete Policy: Please consult: <http://www.psr.edu/extensions-lapsed-time-rule>.

Use of Technology in Classroom: Use of laptops is permitted for note taking. For all other uses, please consult: <http://www.psr.edu/use-technology-classroom>.

English as Second Language (ESL) Policy

1. Upon request by the ESL student to the PSR faculty, the faculty member will extend the deadline for papers one week to allow time for editing.
2. Upon request by the ESL student, PSR faculty will allow twice as much time for ESL students to complete in-class written exams.

The PSR curriculum aims to develop Progressive Christian leadership in students.

A Progressive Christian leader:

1. Is rooted in Christian tradition
Has the ability to re-appropriate tradition for new times/places
Can critically analyze texts and traditions
2. Understands the contextual nature of knowing and understanding
Understands one's own perception is limited
Understands the reality and value of multiple perspectives
Understands ambiguity and complexity and can hold the tensions related to difference
can critically evaluate a context and respond
3. Is self aware/spiritually grounded
Has an engaged spirituality
Is self-reflective and reflexive
4. Works in partnership
Is actively involved in ecumenical and interfaith conversations
Appreciates the value of diversity and moves beyond appreciation to engagement
Is socially connected and can work collaboratively
Is competent in cross-cultural situations
Nurtures the development of leadership in others
5. Can envision and engage in the creation of a more just world
Holds a liberation perspective
Has a global consciousness
Works for social change and has a systemic perspective
Is involved in institutional transformation
PSR's policies on plagiarism and ESL are applicable.