

Short Syllabus “At a Glance”:

The Holy Spirit, Imagination, and Creativity

Bethany Theological Seminary, Spring 2023 Weekend Intensive

February 10&11; March 10&11; April 21&22

Professor: Dr. Joelle A. Hathaway, hathajo1@earlham.edu

Course Description:

This course explores the doctrine of the Holy Spirit through the lens of God as Triune Creator and humans as creative and imaginative creatures. It emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in animating, sanctifying, beautifying, and perfecting the created world, and it suggests implications for human participation in the Spirit’s ministry through various forms of artmaking. We will engage scriptural, Patristic, and contemporary theological voices from both East and West, as well as a range of art works, to consider what it might mean to claim, for example, that an artist is “inspired” or that art is “spiritual”.

Course Objectives:

1. Read and interpret the assigned texts carefully, critically, and generously.
2. Identify and explore the theological significance of various works of the arts.
3. Exhibit deepening awareness of multiple themes in and expressions of the central doctrines of Christian faith explored in this course: The Holy Spirit (pneumatology), the doctrine of creation, and human creativity and imagination (theological anthropology).
4. Write insightfully and analytically about theological themes and questions raised in this course.

Required Texts:

Trevor Hart, *Making Good: Creation, Creativity, and Artistry*

Malcolm Guite, *Faith, Hope, and Poetry: Theology and the Poetic Imagination*

Steven R. Guthrie, *Creator Spirit: The Holy Spirit and the Art of Becoming Human*

Selections from the following authors will be available on the Moodle site: Jeremy Begbie, Hildegard of Bingen, John Coltrane, M. Shawn Copeland, Kerry Dearborn, Ross Gay, Seamus Heaney, Willie Jennings, Luke Powery, James K. A. Smith, J. R. R. Tolkien, Czeslaw Milosz, and more.

Course Themes:

Weekend One: The Creator Spirit and Creaturely Particularity

Our first weekend will focus on the character of the created world and God’s status as Creator, particularly the Holy Spirit’s work in animating, sustaining, and particularizing creation and what that might mean for human participation in the Spirit’s work.

Weekend Two: Limit and Formation of the Imagination: *Racially, Poetically, and Liturgically*

Our second weekend turns to the question of the imagination more directly and considers various ways in which our imaginations are formed – or deformed and malformed – and the need for a transformation of our imaginations.

Weekend Three: Imagination, Creativity, and Living into the New Creation

Our final weekend looks to the ways in which God’s New Creation, by the Spirit, “breaks into” our time now. What does it look like, for us, to anticipate, embody, and imitate the Spirit’s previewing of the New Creation in our midst?

Assignments:

Three Reading Engagement Essays:

There is a short essay – 1250-1500 words (5-6 pgs.) – due the first afternoon (before class!) of each of our weekends together. The goal of these essays is to critically engage and reflect on individual readings and the relationships between the course readings and prepare you to discuss these readings in class.

Lenten Poetry Assignment: Rhythms Forming the Imagination

The Christian season of Lent begins on Wednesday February 22nd this year, Ash Wednesday. The rhythm of the church year has, for many Christians through the ages, been significantly formative for imagination and personal spirituality. For this assignment, students are to choose a poetry collection with a poem-a-day for Lent and Easter. Students will write a brief 3-page reflection on this experience of poetic and spiritual rhythm; responsive poetry welcomed. Further instructions will be posted on Moodle.

Final Project: Book Review/Review Essay or Research Essay

Students may elect to choose one of the following two options for their final project: either a critical book review or research essay. The book review can take one of two forms; it may either be a review of a single book or a comparative review of two or more books on a similar topic. Texts available for review will be provided in class. The second option is a thesis-driven theological research paper on some theme related to the Holy Spirit, creation, poetry, imagination, or creativity, to be developed in conversation with the professor.