

THEO 551: FAITH, CULTURE & ETHNICITY

Dr. Jonathan Y. Tan

Tel: 745-3794

E-mail: ProfessorJTan@gmail.com

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Tue 6:00-8:30 p.m. (Alter 324)

Office: 121 Hinkle Hall

Office Hours: by appointment

ONLINE COURSE WEBSITE

<http://staff.xu.edu/~tan/551/>

Please bookmark and visit the online course website regularly for announcements, research and writing resources, as well as other supplementary materials to complement this print syllabus.

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

This course explores the contemporary discourses and emerging frameworks that define and shape the interactions between faith, culture, race, and ethnicity in an increasingly diverse and pluralistic United States Christianity. After introducing students to the salient theoretical, historical, and methodological perspectives, students will discuss the significance and implications of ethnic and identity constructions, race and racialization, hybridity and multiple belongings, negotiations and contestations, privilege and marginality, ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism, as well as postmodern, postcolonial, diasporic, and transnational discourses that define and challenge the interactions of faith, culture, race, and ethnicity in the twenty-first century United States Christianity. The goals and objectives of this course include:

- (i) familiarizing students with how the identities of culture, race, and ethnicity, including religious identities within a given culture or ethnicity, as well as the identity of the members of a racial or ethnic group and their ethical values are constituted, negotiated and contested;
- (ii) encouraging students to be aware of, and sensitive to the emerging aspirations and concerns of various racial and ethnic communities;
- (iii) challenging students to examine more critically their own socio-cultural locations and racial, ethnic, and religious identities, while at the same time identifying and deconstructing stereotypes and biases towards others from different cultural, ethnic, racial, or religious backgrounds;
- (iv) providing a critical framework for students to appraise current ethical and moral issues that are relevant to interracial/interethnic relations in contemporary United States Christianity, as well as reflect upon and discuss the attractions and perils of privilege, nativism, racialization, essentialism, and ethnocentrism on the one hand, as well as the complexities and nuances of hybridities, multiple belongings, and ethnorelativism on the other hand; and
- (v) helping students to develop an empathy and concern towards racial and ethnic communities other than their own.

II. COURSE PROCEDURES & REQUIREMENTS

1. Organizational Structure and Procedures of Class Discussion

Unless otherwise indicated in the Weekly Schedule/Readings, all class sessions will be held in the discussion format according to the following procedures:

- (i) The instructor will begin each class session by introducing the background, context, principal ideas or issues, key issues, and/or important events for class discussion on that day.

- (ii) For the remainder of the class, the instructor will moderate a discussion and analysis of the materials and relevant issues among the students.

2. **Attendance and Participation**

As the primary format of this course is discussion, it is imperative that students complete all reading assignments before class, as well as attend and participate at all class sessions. Students are expected to do all the required readings assigned for every class before coming to class on that day, and encouraged to read the readings marked "Additional Readings," which complement the required readings and provide additional discussion for those who are interested to explore further. A 1% point will be deducted for each class you miss without excuse. Excuses will be accepted only for grave emergency situations (e.g., major illness with proper written documentation, death in family) or university-approved activities off-campus (e.g., varsity sports) and only at the instructor's discretion. Every two late arrivals will count as an unexcused absence and a 1% point will be deducted accordingly. Please note that any student with six or more unexcused absences will receive a grade of F for this course.

3. **Research Paper**

Please visit the Research Paper section for detailed instructions and important deadlines about this research project.

4. **Prohibition against the Use of Electronic Devices**

Please turn off all cellphones, pagers, laptops, notebook computers, tablet PCs, PDAs, and other electronic devices when class is in session. Laptops, notebook computers, and tablet PCs may not be used in this class. A first-time offender will receive a one-time warning and the confiscation of the electronic device in question for the duration of the class. Thereafter, subsequent violations will result in the loss of all extra credit privileges for this course, as well as the reduction of the student's final grade for this course by 5% for each violation.

5. **Academic Honesty**

According to the provisions on Academic Honesty in Xavier University's Graduate Academic Policies and Regulations:

The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon the integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include ... cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests ... All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student's own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another's efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one's own.

Please be warned that there is a zero tolerance policy on academic dishonesty in this course. The instructor expects all work that appears under the student's name to be that student's own, and will follow up on evidence that a student has contravened the university's regulations on academic honesty. If an incident of academic dishonesty is established, the student will automatically receive a grade of F for the entire course, in addition to a letter of warning from the Dean and details of the offense being noted down in the student's record file.

III. REQUIRED BOOKS

The following required textbooks are available for purchase at the university bookstore:

- (1) Robert J. Priest & Alvaro L. Nieves, eds., *This Side of Heaven: Race, Ethnicity, and Christian Faith* (Oxford, 2007)
- (2) Peter C. Phan & Diana Hayes, eds., *Many Faces, One Church: Cultural Diversity and the American Catholic Experience* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2005)
- (3) Dwight N. Hopkins, *Introducing Black Theology of Liberation* (Orbis, 1999)
- (4) Miguel A. De La Torre & Edwin D. Aponte, *Introducing Latino/a Theologies* (Orbis, 2001)
- (5) Peter C. Phan & Jung Young Lee, eds., *Journeys at the Margins: Toward an Autobiographical Theology in American-Asian Theology* (Liturgical Press, 1999)

IV. RESEARCH PAPER

1. This course requires a 25-page double-spaced and typed research paper in Microsoft Word (doc or docx), WordPerfect (wpd), PDF or Open Office document format on a topic related to the course material, with the prior approval of the instructor, to be formatted according to the *Modern Language Association* or *Turabian* writing style.
2. Please consult the instructor within the first four weeks of the semester on your choice of research topic before beginning any work on your research paper.
3. All students are required to e-mail a 3-4 page double-spaced and typed research paper proposal to **ProfessorJTan@gmail.com** for review and approval **by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, 8 October 2008**. This proposal will comprise 50% of your mid-term grade. Late submission will be penalized with a one-letter grade reduction. Students should begin work only after the instructor has approved their research paper proposal. The proposal should be in Microsoft Word (doc or docx), WordPerfect (wpd), PDF, or Open Office document format and should comprise the following:
 - (i) the title of the proposed research topic (this will be the title of your research paper),
 - (ii) an introduction to the issue or question to be investigated,
 - (iii) the thesis statement (i.e., a statement of the claim or interpretation that is to be established by your research paper and an explanation of the relevance or importance of this claim or interpretation),
 - (iv) a description of the method(s) and approach(es) that you will use to establish your thesis claim, and
 - (v) a complete bibliographical listing of the literature (books and journal articles) to be cited in your research paper (minimum requirements: at least five books or ten journal articles, or a combination of books and journal articles that is acceptable to the instructor).
4. In view of the fact that the Xavier University Library lacks a comprehensive collection of print resources in the study of religion, race, culture, and ethnicity, you will need to visit the University of Cincinnati's Walter C. Langsam Library (Main Library) in person to browse their stacks for books, journals, and other print resources, in order to write a decent research paper for this course. Your XU ALLCard (or Library/ID card) gives you admission and borrowing privileges at all UC Libraries. Browsing the stacks in person enables you to locate books in the same call number range that would be relevant to your research topic. You may also encounter titles that jump up at you, which you could then check out for further reading.
5. Each student will have approximately 15 minutes to present their research to their peers. For this purpose, students may use a PowerPoint presentation (with a maximum of 20 slides) to

accompany their research presentation. After each presentation, the instructor and students will have the opportunity to ask questions or give feedback on the subject matter of the student's research. Based on the feedback received, students should revise their research papers accordingly. Please reserve a date to make your in-class presentation by 30 October 2008. Your presentation will comprise 10% of your final grade for this course.

6. Please e-mail: (i) the completed research paper (in Microsoft Word (doc or docx), WordPerfect, PDF, or Open Office document format), together with (ii) your PowerPoint presentation (if any) to ProfessorJTan@gmail.com by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, 12 December 2008. The research paper will comprise 50% of the final grade for this course. For grading criteria, please refer to the Theology Department's Grading Policy (http://www.xavier.edu/theology/grading_policy.cfm). All late submissions will be penalized with a one-letter grade reduction. Please be warned that the instructor will not accept any late submissions beyond 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, 18 December 2008 (the last day of Finals), and will accordingly assign a zero for the research paper component of your final grade.
7. Please visit Xavier University's James A. Glenn Writing Center if you require assistance in writing this term paper. The university's writing center has tutors to assist you and resources on formatting term papers.

V. COMPUTATION OF GRADES

The final grade for this course is computed as follows:

- (1) Research Paper Proposal (20%)
 - (2) Research Paper (40%)
 - (3) In-class Presentation of Research Paper (20%)
 - (4) Attendance and in-class Discussion (20%)
- LESS: absences/deductions (if any)

VI. THEOLOGY DEPARTMENT'S GRADING GUIDELINES

(approved by the Theology Department: 20 March 2002 and 22 August 2005)

The full version of the Theology Department's Grading Policy is available on-line at:
http://www.xavier.edu/theology/grading_policy.cfm

Grades indicate *a professor's assessment of a student's academic performance* and not a student's effort. **Grades are not an entitlement – you have to earn your grade for this course.** In accordance with University policy and the Theology Department grading guidelines, letter grades in undergraduate theology courses mean the following:

- A:** Exceptional academic performance (that is, uncommonly high academic achievement, which demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, uncommon skills in critical analysis and effective communication, and imagination).
- B:** Good academic performance (that is, high quality academic achievement; demonstrated competency in the discipline above the average or standard).
- C:** Satisfactory academic performance (that is, academic achievement that meets an average or standard level of competency in the discipline).
- D:** Minimal academic performance, sufficient to pass.
- F:** Failure.

This course uses the following plus/minus grading scale:

A (94-100)	B+ (90-91)	C+ (82-83)	D+ (74-75)	F (0-67)
A- (92-93)	B (87-89)	C (79-81)	D (71-73)	
	B- (84-86)	C- (76-78)	D- (68-70)	

The Grading of Class Participation

- A:** The student is consistently well prepared for class, actively listens, and contributes thought provoking insights.
- B:** The student is prepared for class and demonstrates thoughtful engagement with the material.
- C:** The student is inconsistently prepared for class and is infrequently engaged with the material.
- D:** The student is minimally prepared for class and shows a lack of interest in the course material.
- F:** The student shows a lack of interest in the course, is frequently late or absent, and regularly demonstrates a lack of commitment to the class.

The Grading of Written Assignments (including Extra Credit Assignments)

Grades reflect the accuracy, coherence, clarity, and completeness of your written assignments. In grading your assignments, the following elements will be evaluated:

1. comprehension of the materials under consideration,
2. ability to articulate one's understanding with clarity,
3. correct usage of standard English grammar, spelling and punctuation,
4. organization of material,
5. ability to establish relationships and synthesize ideas, and
6. ability to reflect on the material with an eye to raising serious, critical questions.

VII. COURSE OUTLINE, SCHEDULE & READINGS

26 Aug: Introduction.

REQUIRED READINGS: Priest & Nieves, pp. 1-15.

2 Sep: Thinking Critically about Culture, Race, and Color, Part I

REQUIRED READINGS: Priest & Nieves, chapters 1-3

9 Sep: Thinking Critically about Culture, Race, and Color, Part II

REQUIRED READINGS: Priest & Nieves, chapters 4-6

16 Sep: Faith, Culture, Ethnicity, & Race in U.S. Christianity

REQUIRED READINGS: (1) Phan & Hayes, Introduction, chapters 1-2
(2) Priest & Nieves, chapter 7

23 Sep: African American Christianity, I

REQUIRED READINGS: Hopkins, Introduction, chapters 1-3

30 Sep: African American Christianity, II

REQUIRED READINGS: Hopkins, chapters 4-6

7 Oct: African American Christianity, III

REQUIRED READINGS: Phan & Hayes, chapters 3 & 7

14 Oct: Latino/a Christianity, I

REQUIRED READINGS: Torre & Aponte, chapters 1-3

21 Oct: Latino/a Christianity, II

REQUIRED READINGS: (1) Torre & Aponte, chapter 5
(2) Phan & Hayes, chapter 4-5

28 Oct: Latino/a Christianity, III

REQUIRED READINGS: Torre & Aponte, chapters 4 & 6

4 Nov: Asian American Christianity, I

REQUIRED READINGS: (1) Phan & Hayes, chapter 6
(2) Phan & Lee, Introduction, chapters 7-8
(3) Priest & Nieves, chapter 16

11 Nov: Asian American Christianity, II

REQUIRED READINGS: Phan & Lee, chapters 2, 4, 5 and 6

18 Nov: Issues & Challenges pertaining to Multicultural & Multiracial Congregations

REQUIRED READINGS: Priest & Nieves, chapters 15, 17-18, and Conclusion

25 Nov: TBA

2 Dec: Living Personalities Project Presentations

9 Dec: Living Personalities Project Presentations. Conclusion. Review & Student Feedback.

REMINDER: Please e-mail your Living Personalities Project paper to ProfessorJTan@gmail.com by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, 12 Dec 2008.