

TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY

Directed Study Course Syllabus

English 590: Studies in Individual Authors: Thomas Merton (3 sem. hrs.)

Spring 2012

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Year: 2012

Program: MAIH

Office: #119

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Meetings: As required

PREREQUISITES: Admission to the MAIH program

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

As a modern man who had already seen around the corner to the postmodern condition and eventually wrote extensively about deconstruction as we know it in literature, Merton as a radical monk, was living existentially in that liminal space that Kearney describes as anatheism and trying to identify the conditions in which the “God who might be” was part of his platform for inter-religious dialogue and extra-territorial thinking about the future of religion and more importantly, personhood as it relates to the concept of the Divine.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To study Merton’s approach to the relationship between humanity and the Divine and in so doing become familiar with his writings and their critics in this regard.
2. To become familiar with the intercultural and inter-religious dialogue that Merton records and assesses as a means of understanding the impulse in human beings to relate to the Divine and to define it.
3. To relate Merton’s reading and writing on these matters to that of Richard Kearney, Rene Girard, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and other seminal writings on religion and spirituality in recent times.
4. To develop reading, writing and research skills that will allow the student to participate in graduate level studies of anatheism in relation to the matters at hand.

REQUIRED TEXT(S):

Kearney, Richard. *Anatheism*.

Kilcourse, G. *Ace of Freedoms: Thomas Merton’s Christ*.

Labrie, R. *Thomas Merton and the Inclusive Imagination*.

Merton, Thomas. *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*.

---. *Disputed Questions*.

---. *Love and Living*.

---. *Mystics and Zen Masters.*

---. *New Seeds of Contemplation.*

---. *Raids on the Unspeakable.*

---. *The Behavior of Titans.*

---. *The New Man.*

---. *Thoughts on the East.*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. To provide reading notes and discussion questions to be submitted at agreed upon times and at meetings convened for this purpose.
2. To prepare an annotated bibliography of at least 20 sources in support of the major research paper and secondary sources for the course readings.
3. To prepare a seminar presentation to be given for other graduate students who have an interest in Merton studies.
4. To research and write a major paper (of at least 5000 words) on a topic related to the objectives of the course.

PROPOSED COURSE OUTLINE:

Topics to be addressed in the course:

1. Anatheism and its implications for ideas about God after postmodernism and the “death of God.”
2. Inter-religious dialogue as a pathway to understanding the relationship between humanity and God.
3. Thomas Merton, public intellectual, inter-religious pioneer and Christian spiritual master.
4. Possibilities for redefining our ideas and experience of God and Christ and “the new monasticism” for which Merton was a contemplative mentor.

DETERMINATION OF FINAL SEMESTER GRADE

All assignments must be completed for agreed upon deadlines

Notes and Discussion Questions	15	%
Annotated Bibliography	15	%
Seminar Presentation	15	%
Research Paper	55	%
		%
		%
TOTAL	100	%

NOTE: All assignments, including the final exam, must be handed in by the last day of the University exam period.

GRADING SYSTEM

TWU's standard grading system used can be found on P.37ff of the 2009-10 Academic Calendar. OR, *If you choose not to adopt the TWU percentage system, please indicate this and elaborate on your alternate system.*

LATE ASSIGNMENTS POLICY

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ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND AVOIDING PLAGIARISM AT TWU

As Christian scholars pursuing higher education, academic integrity is a core value of the entire TWU community. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship at TWU. This includes, but is not limited to, avoiding all forms of plagiarism and cheating in scholarly work. TWU has a strict policy on plagiarism (see Academic Calendar 2000-10, pp. 39-40). Learning what constitutes plagiarism and avoiding it is the student's responsibility. An excellent resource describing plagiarism and how to avoid it has been prepared by TWU Librarian William Badke and is freely available for download (PPT file) or used as flash (self running) tutorials of varying lengths from:

<http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/plagiarism.ppt>

<http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/Plagiarism.swf> (14 minute flash tutorial)

http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/Plagiarism_Short.swf (8 minute flash tutorial)

CAMPUS CLOSURE AND CLASS CANCELLATION POLICY

In the event of deteriorating weather conditions or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to the following radio stations CKNW (980 AM), CKWX (1130 AM), STAR FM (107.1 FM), PRAISE (106.5 FM) and KARI (550 AM). As well, an announcement will be placed on the University's campus closure notification message box (604.513.2147) and on the front page of the University's website (<http://www.twu.ca> – also see <http://www.twu.ca/conditions> for more details).

An initial announcement regarding the status of the campus and cancellation of classes is made at 6:00 AM and covers all classes beginning before 1:00PM. A second announcement is made at 11:00AM that covers all classes which begin between 1:00PM and 5:00PM. A third announcement is made at 3:00PM and covers those classes which begin after 5:00PM.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

"Students with a disability who need assistance are encouraged to contact the Equity of Access Office upon admission to TWU...All disabilities must be recently documented by an appropriately certified professional...Within the first two weeks of the semester, students must meet with their professors to agree on accommodations appropriate to each class. Students should follow the steps detailed by the Equity of Access Office outlined in the Student Life section of [the 2009-10 Academic] Calendar." *P.40, 2009-10 Academic Calendar*