MA Independent Study Proposal

How Tradition and Doctrine Formed and Informed Early Christians and Anabaptists/Radical Pietists

Scott Holland, Professor

This Independent study is designed to help me research subjects related to my thesis which need further investigation and understanding. It is my expectation that I will also write a paper which will be the foundation of section two as laid out in my thesis proposal:

Section two will concentrate on suffering, sacrifice and atonement. It will include historic Anabaptist/Radical Pietist perspectives as well as broader traditional and alternative perspectives on suffering, sacrifice and atonement. (p.5)

Primarily this Independent Study will entail lots of reading followed by writing and reflecting with my professor. I also will be attending Annual Conference in Pittsburg and the conference “Peace Among the Peoples” at AMBS where Rita Nakashima Brock—one of the primary theologian I will be referencing in my thesis—will be speaking. It is my hope that I will be able to have a one on one conversation with her. At both conferences, but especially at Annual Conference I will be listening for—and reflecting upon—the embedded theologies of community, discipleship, service and suffering which might be present.

Goals and Objectives:

--explore early Anabaptist/Radical Pietist theologies of community and discipleship—including the roles and responsibilities of the community and of the individual.

--explore early Christian theologies of community, discipleship and their understanding of Jesus’ message for their lives.

--explore the role of the suffering servant in these theologies

--consider ways the above topics intersect and inform each other.
Reading List:

Bender, Harold S. “The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision.” First printed in *Church History*, (March 1944)


Course Outline and Requirements:

--read the books on the reading list as well as other articles/books that may surface as I follow threads from the above mentioned readings (including suggestions from my professor as we reflect upon and process the material).

--attend Annual Conference and “Peace Among the Peoples” at AMBS

--keep a journal of my thoughts, feelings and reflections about the reading. (I will also journal similarly about my experiences at the two conferences I attend.)

-- write a foundational paper for section two of my thesis.
--meet face to face with professor at least three times during the summer to discuss my work and reflect on where it may be leading me.

--communicate with professor via e-mail on a weekly basis.

--share cliff notes from journal once a month with my professor

Assessment:

--professor will assess my work based on our conversations, e-mails, and my journal entries as a way of helping me stay focused and on task. The final project, however, will be the largest portion of how he will assess my work.
Independent Reading Course on Theories of the Atonement

Purpose

The purpose of this course is to gain a strong understanding of the history and development of the classic atonement theories (Satisfaction, Moral Influence, Christus Victor, and Penal Substitution) and their defining characteristics, as well as exploring critiques of the classic theories and contemporary and emerging understandings of how Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection affect the relationship between God and humanity.

Course Description

This course will be an independent reading course focusing on classic theories of the atonement and critiques and alternatives to those theories. I will be reading approximately 1500 pages worth of material total. In the summer I will be reading material from each theologian who is commonly considered to be the author of or the one who most popularized each theory (see reading list below), and in the fall I will be reading material from feminist, womanist, liberation, process, and reform theologians, as well as other theologians with writings that seek to at least critique the violence of classic atonement theory, if not create a more nonviolent understanding of the atonement.

Goals and Objectives

1. Obtain a strong understanding of the classic atonement theories as they were formed historically: Satisfaction (Anselm), Moral Influence (Peter Abelard), Christus Victor (Aulen), and Penal Substitution (Luther and Calvin).
2. Obtain a strong understanding of how classic atonement theories developed and changed as they have been interpreted by “secondary” sources.
3. Gain a knowledge and understanding of contemporary critiques of classic atonement theories on the grounds that they are violent coming from minor theologies.
4. Understand how Process theology’s understanding of Christology and soteriology could affect atonement theory.

Written Work Involved

In addition to reading schedule outlined below, I will be meeting with Scott Holland once every two weeks for 25-45 minutes to discuss what I am reading and learning, and how it could be applied to my thesis. We will be meeting in person when possible, and will be meeting by phone or skype when in person meetings are not possible. We will also have email correspondence as necessary.

I will be writing detailed notes on my reading, and I will incorporate the findings from my reading and research directly into my thesis. The material read in the summer session will be incorporated into the first section of my thesis, which focuses on defining and describing the classic atonement theories. The material from the fall session will be incorporated into the second and third sections of my thesis. The second section will focus on critiques of classic atonement theories, and the third section will focus on alternative theories and understandings of the atonement. I will write approximately eighteen pages for each section.
Assessment

Dr. Holland will be evaluating my written work, which I will send to him every two to three weeks. We will be especially attentive to where my research will fit into my thesis, and he will be helping me determine how my research fits with specific chapters of my thesis.

Reading List

Note: I will not necessarily read all books from cover to cover, but will read all material relevant to understanding relevant theories of atonement and critiques and alternatives to the theories.

Summer – June 1 – July 16


Fall – August 26 – October 7


Teaching Hebrew:
A Practical Experience in Teaching as Ministry

Planning on continuing in academia, I have been looking for a chance to experience the classroom from the other side of the podium. Teaching a course is a distinctly different experience from taking a course. Thus, I am proposing to act as a teaching assistant to Dr. Steve Schweitzer in his fall course of Hebrew I, and I will plan to continue for the spring course of Hebrew II (which is included in this proposal). I will observe the class, provide assistance correcting assignments and exams, lead review sessions before major exams, be available outside of class for student assistance, and teach the course on occasion. What I hope to gain from this experience include:

- Methods for textbook selection
- Skills and techniques for course planning and syllabus construction
- Tools and practice for evaluating and correcting student work
- Exploration of methods used in pedagogy in general and language pedagogy specifically
- Approaches to teaching language, by incorporating the study of Ugaritic alongside the teaching of Hebrew, as a point of comparison and reinforcement of how Semitic languages work

Work for this class will include:

- Correcting student work and exams, providing support for the Moodle environment and its content, each semester
- Teaching a minimum of 2 class sessions, each semester
- Leading a minimum of 2 review sessions, each semester
- A minimum of 6 meetings with Steve, each semester
- A short paper on a linguistic issue within the Hebrew language (7-8 pages)
- A short paper reflecting on pedagogy in general and the pedagogy of biblical study and biblical languages in particular (7-8 pages)
- A brief reflection of my “teaching philosophy” (2-3 pages)
- Reading a range of texts on pedagogy and an academic career, including:
  - Foster, Charles, et al. *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral*

- All required student texts for the Hebrew I/II (BS 111/BS 112) courses.
- Selections from the following books on Ugaritic:
- Selections from a variety of Hebrew grammars, exploring strengths, weaknesses, and value for different contexts

Assessment for this course will be based upon:

- Participation in class sessions
- Evaluation of class sessions taught
- Research papers on Hebrew linguistic topic and on pedagogy
- Statement of “teaching philosophy”
- Student response and evaluation
Greco-Roman Goddesses
Independent Study, 2.0 Credits

Course Description and Objectives
As a significant component in my Thesis on Sophia and Mary, this study will provide a helpful exposure to and analysis of the variety of Greco-Roman goddesses in the ancient world, especially as they relate to the concept and images of Sophia [Wisdom]. The scope will include information on Ancient Near East Goddesses as well as the methodology of history of religions. The method will include reading and conversation as well as research and written work.

As a result of this study, I will:
☐ Be able to identify similarities and differences among Greco-Roman goddesses, and connect these to the goddess Sophia.
☐ Be aware of the cultural context (Hellenism and religion) in which claims about Sophia (and echoes of these in the NT) are being made.
☐ Be able to articulate a method for approaching this type of analysis, and prepare to utilize such a method in future work on my thesis.
☐ Be aware of some of the benefits and criticisms of a “history of religions” approach to reading biblical texts and constructing theology.
☐ Be able to catalog and connect this research, as it relates to my Thesis.

Course Requirements and Assessment
☐ One Research Paper (7-8 pages, double-spaced) on the discoveries from this analysis of Greco-Roman goddesses, and especially in how this relates to the figure of Sophia.
☐ Three brief essays (3-4 pages, double-spaced) on major goddesses (to be chosen by the student) which will serve as guiding materials for the relevant chapter in the Thesis.
☐ One essay (4-5 pages double-spaced) on the history of religions approach: its method, assumptions, criticism, and usefulness. This will connect to the methodology section of the Thesis.
☐ 4 Conversations with Steve

Required Reading


Clarysse, Willy, Antoon Schoors, and Harco Willems, eds. Egyptian Religion: The Last Thousand Years: Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Jan Quaegebeur. Louvain: Peeters, 1998. [selections]


Scott, David C. "How Historical is the History of Religions?" Religion and Society 53, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 21-47.

