

**Latin American Liberation Theology
Study, Reflection, Praxis**

Spring, 2014

Fridays, 1:10 – 3:25; PPHAC, 301

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Office Hours, T/TR, 11 am to 1 pm; please also feel free to email me about additional times I'm available in my office, and do make time to speak with me.

Course Description: What is “liberation theology?” To quote Gustavo Gutierrez, one of the founders of liberation theology: “Liberation theology is closely bound up with this new presence of those who in the past were always absent from our history. They have gradually been turning into active agents of their own destiny and beginning a resolute process that is changing the condition of the poor and oppressed of this world” (*A Theology of Liberation*, xxi). Our focus for this course is sustained theological exploration in connection with liberation theology, and with particular focus on the border region between Arizona and Mexico. Our aim will be broad and profound reading, thinking, questioning, and conversation. Our class will be held in “seminar style,” meaning that a great deal of time will be devoted to group conversation, deliberation and learning from one another. Our sustained study will be augmented by our spring break trip to Tuscon and Nogales with Borderlinks to learn more and experience directly some of the realities of this borderland and its connections to liberation theology, Empire and post-colonialism.

Course Objectives:

1. We will work towards an embodied as well as intellectual understanding of the main themes, questions, and purpose of liberation theology in Christian context.
2. Our exposure to the contextual setting of immigration in Tuscon/Nogales will challenge our assumptions, lead us to new questions, disturb, bother and inspire us. Not only will we be learning about a new context; this context will also pose questions to us about our own lives. We will see ourselves and the world differently following this experience.
3. We also will consider and develop class goals regarding how, if and in what way we want to bring our experiences from Tuscon/Nogales back to Moravian College.

Required Course Documents:

Simple Borderlands Reader (supplied to us by Borderlinks.org), available in Blackboard Course Documents

Miguel A. De La Torre, *Trials of Hope and Terror: Testimonies on Immigration* (Orbis, 2009).

Joseph Nevins, *Dying to Live: A Story of U.S. Immigration in an Age of Global Apartheid* (San Francisco,

CA: Open Media, 2008); available in the bookstore

required films:

<http://www.borderlinks.org/education/partnerships/hepac>

The Other Side of Immigration, Roy Germano, 2009

And additional articles and chapters that will be posted on Blackboard or otherwise made available

Course Requirements:

1. It goes without saying that the success of a seminar such as this one is determined by the intellectual engagement and energy of its participants. You'll be reading approximately 100 pages or more a week of stimulating, provocative *and* challenging material – **you'll need to allot at least six hours per week for adequate preparation for each Friday's seminar.** I recommend that you read this material in small chunks, maybe 30-40 pages at a time. Write extensive notes and questions in your margins; come to each seminar with a good idea of the thread of argument in your reading *and* with at least three or four substantive questions or themes you wish to raise and discuss in class

Important Note! You are required to bring with you to class whatever readings we are focusing on for that day. If you wish to bring these digitally, that is fine. Hard copy works too. Don't neglect this, as we will be referring to and deeply exploring the readings in our seminar!

In addition to reading, you will also write a weekly journal about what you are learning. This will be on online journal through our Blackboard site; more instructions about how to go about this task will be given each week on BB. You will continue journaling throughout our travel seminar. This is meant to be an exercise that engages you intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, an as deeply an embodied way as possible.

2. **There are no excused absences allowed for this seminar.** If you are seriously ill or have a family emergency or need for religious observance, you will not be excused unless you clear it with me *in advance* of the class you need to miss, and unless I judge this to be a truly necessary absence. Do your very best to take care of your health so that you don't get ill! 😊
3. At the conclusion of our study of different resources, and before our travel seminar, we will have a take home mid-term exam. This exam will be open book and open note – the purpose is for you to demonstrate your intellectual engagement with our material. I'll give out more information about this exam as it draws closer.
4. Your online journal will become the basis for a hard copy journal/portfolio that you will share with others in the class and submit at the end of the semester. Use some sort of writing book you already have or purchase on for this semester's work. You'll start by copying and pasting in your journal entries that you submit early in the semester, before our travel; then, you'll take this material in hardcopy with you on our trip. This will be especially key for you during our travel

seminar. Your journal will help you to reflect and track this semester's process you experience intellectually, emotionally, spiritually with this material. Especially during our travel you will collect various artifacts, articles and other bits and pieces of material, and you should think about how you wish to paste into your journal other elements, articles you find on your own, elements from our trip, photographs, etc. Use your imagination and creativity to make this something worth keeping, not just something to hand in for a grade. Take seriously this part of our course which involves you searching out quiet time for deep reflection, introspection, silence, writing, inner searching. Find a comfortable and quiet place and time to do your journal work each week. *I will review and grade your online journal weekly to monitor your progress with reading, thinking through and understanding the material with care and intellectual depth. However the more reflective aspect of your journal, involving your own searching, introspection and reactions to what you experience, will only be graded in terms of having been thoughtfully and deeply engaged.*

5. Breakdown of grading for this course
 - a. Engaged, active, prepared and thoughtful participation in the seminar, including your work in class, the quality of your discussion, leadership in presenting material, etc. This also will include any efforts undertaken by the class in community service: 20%
 - b. First Writing take-home Exam: 15%
 - c. Journal: 35%
 - d. Final Take Home Exam : 30%

Students also should get in the habit (if you aren't already) of scanning a reputable daily newspaper, such as the NY Times (the Morning Call is a regional paper and not sufficient for the purposes of this course). Look for and pay special attention to articles about immigration and about Latinos and religion. Every student should ask for time at least once during the semester to call our attention to something you find. If you have an on-line news source that you find to be particularly helpful, bring it to our attention in class. Use your journal to help you keep track of pertinent things you find/experience over the semester that are connected to our class.

Required Extra-Class Events

All students will attend and write about the Martin Luther King speaker at Moravian College, on Jan. 25. See more info in our course schedule below.

We may jointly decide to organize some sort of college event after our travel seminar to share our experience with the broader college. More details to come.

Additional Notes: Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

Students are advised to review the Academic Honesty Policy (available in the Student Handbook posted on the Moravian College Website) and are required to follow the guidelines therein.

Our syllabus and various course documents will be posted in Blackboard, and updated periodically with any changes we find we need to make as we progress throughout the semester. You also may find your grades posted on the Blackboard gradebook. Please consult this throughout the semester to view and monitor your progress.

Schedule of Classes/Assignments

Week One:

Deadline: Final Deposit for Travel Seminar Due to Bursar by Jan. 17. Passports should be in hand, or almost so.

Jan. 17

Introduction to our Course

Discussion about our Borderlinks Travel Seminar

<http://www.borderlinks.org/education/partnerships/hepac>

Viewing a film about the Border:

Crossing Arizona, Joseph Mathew, Dan DeVivo, Rainlake, 2006

or

The Other Side of Immigration, Roy Germano, 2009

Headlines:

<https://www.commondreams.org/headline/2013/10/09-2>

<https://www.commondreams.org/view/2013/11/04-5>

<https://www.commondreams.org/view/2013/06/08-1>

<https://www.commondreams.org/headline/2013/06/25-3>

<https://www.commondreams.org/view/2013/12/22-1>

<https://www.commondreams.org/view/2013/11/19-7>

Week Two:

Jan. 24

Readings: Joseph Nevins, *Dying to Live*, pp 1-71

Miguel A. De La Torre, *Trails of hope and Terror*, pp ix - 36.

U.S. Theologies of Liberation, pp 141 -- 153 (BB documents)

Journal Assignment:

What hopes, anxieties, interests, excitement are you experiencing in advance of our trip? (1/2 page)

Write about at least 3 elements from Nevins that stand out to you as most significant. What would you like to know more about? What do you think you need to learn, and why? (1 page)

What stood out from learning about "the creation of the border and its consequences" in De La Torre? (1 page)

What are 3 substantive questions you would like to raise for our discussion today?

Your Journal assignment is due for submission by Jan. 23, 10 pm in the BB journal drop box.

Required Extra-Class Experience! Please put this date into your calendars now!

Nationally recognized author and activist, **Tim Wise**, will be our keynote speaker for Black History Month on **Tuesday, February 25th at 7pm in Prosser Auditorium**. Mr. Wise is a regular contributor to discussions about race on CNN, and was featured on ABC's 20/20. Wise is the author of six books, including the highly acclaimed memoir, *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son*. Tim's presentations range from the Civil Rights Movement, Multiculturalism, Racism, and White Privilege. He is most recently known for his workshop debunking the notion we live in a "Post-Racial Era" since the election of President Obama. He will speak to our community about the responsibility we all have in celebrating and honoring black history.

Week Three:

Jan. 31

Readings: Simple Borderlands Reader (read it all)

Nevins, pp 71 -- 121

Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, "Theology in a Suffering World" Orbis. (In BB docs)

U.S. Handbook of Liberation Theology, pp 204 -- 215 (BB documents)

Journal Assignment: What do the leaders of Borderlinks think you need to learn and understand in advance of our trip? Why is this material important for prospective travel seminar participants, do you think? What did you learn about "white privilege" in our attendance at the MLK lecture this past week, and why is this important learning with respect to the goals of our course? (2-3 pages) Create a timeline of the history of the U.S./Mexico border, drawing on Nevins' history. Your timeline should include about 20 bullets at least. Then write 2 solid reflective paragraphs about the meaning of learning this history in connection with our course. (2 pages)

What questions for our discussion in class emerge from your writing and thinking about this material?

Your Journal Assignment is due for submission by Jan. 30, 10 pm, in the digital drop box.

Week Four:

Feb. 7

Readings: Nevins, pp 125 - 199

Petrella, *The Future of Liberation Theology*, "Liberation Theology Today: The Missing Historical Project" (in Blackboard documents)

Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, "The Crucified Peoples" Orbis (In BB docs)

Journal Assignment: In 2-3 pages, summarize the reading from Nevins. Include salient points of detail, narrative, history. What most stands out for you in this reading and why? (3 pages) What do you learn about liberation Theology from Petrella, its history and its challenge today? How and why has liberation theology "changed"? What three responses to change are outlined by Petrella, and what do you make of these responses? What is the relationship between liberation theology's concept of "liberation" and "historical projects"? How does Sobrino's analysis of theology, suffering, and "the crucified peoples" add to everything else you have studied this week? How does this material help to outline the narrative from Nevins? (2 pages)

Be ready to share your summary and perspective on Nevins in class; what initial questions about liberation theology do you wish to pose?

your Journal entry is due by Feb. 6, 10 pm. in the digital drop box.

Week Five:

Feb. 14

Readings: De La Torre, pp 37 - 108

Petrella, *The Future of Liberation Theology*, "Liberation Theology, Capitalism and Historical Projects" (BB Documents)

Elsa Tamez, "The Challenge to Live as Resurrected: Reflections on Romans Six and Eight". *Spiritus* 3 (2003): 86-95. (In BB Docs)

Journal Assignment: In your journal for this week, first outline the argument made by Petrella in the chapter you read. What are the key points in his argument regarding the connections and challenges of liberation theology, the realities of capitalism and historical projects? Second, apply Petrella's argument to your reading in De La Torre and Tamez. What connections can you make? What questions does all this raise for you? (about 5 pages total).

Your journal entry is due by Feb. 13, 10 pm in the digital drop box.

Week Six:

Feb. 21

Readings: De La Torre, pp 109 - 202

Journal Assignment: Make up your own journal assignment that in some way connects what you anticipate experiencing on our trip with the completion of your reading of De La Torre (4 pages). Your journal entry first should summarize the main learnings from this second half of De La Torre's work. The second half of your journal should incorporate your own reflection about everything that you have learned thus far, and your hopes and hesitations regarding our upcoming travel seminar.

Be prepared to share by reading aloud from your journal in class.

Your journal entry is due by Feb. 20, 10 pm in the digital drop box.

Week Seven:

Take Home Midterm: Submission due date: Feb. 26

Feb. 28 – Mar 4. Our Trip!!

Week Eight:

Spring Break

Week Nine:

Mar. 14

Debriefing our Travel Seminar over lunch together; planning for the remainder of our semester together. Questions we will ask and discuss include: What do we now need to learn, following everything we've experienced during the travel seminar? What, if anything, do we

want to do with what we have learned? How best can we use the time remaining in this course during the rest of this semester?

Week Ten:

Mar. 21

Readings: Mary Romero, sociologist of the border region and immigration

Students in pairs or individually will be assigned a reading by Mary Romero, and will prepare short presentations for class this week. Readings to be posted on BB.

Week Eleven:

Mar. 28

Week Twelve:

April 4

Week Thirteen:

April 11

Last class?? Handout of Take-home Final

Week Fourteen:

April 22

No class: Religious Observance for Good Friday

Week Fifteen: No class

April 29