

Jesus Saves? Salvation Metaphors in Christian Thought

Spring, 2016; Rel 131; Monday/Wednesday 1:10 – 2:20; Comenius, 105

Instructor: Dr. Kelly Denton-Borhaug, kdenton@moravian.edu, Office: Comenius 109

Phone: 610-625-7104, Office Hours: M/W 2:30 -- 3:30 PM; T 10:30 -- 12:30

Course Description: “Jesus Saves.” What does this phrase mean, beyond the bumpersticker? Is there more than one way to understand it? Christian understandings of “soteriology” (the study of salvation in Christianity) have a fascinating, plural and complex history. This introductory course offers a window into Christian thought through focus on some of the variety of understandings of “atonement,” i.e., the ways Christians understand “redemption” or “salvation.” We will dig into this same variety, gain exposure to colorful and differently conceived images of salvation, explore theological expositions of these images, and along the way also investigate cultural assumptions that are embedded in this aspect of Christian thought, as well as the ways in which Christian understandings have impacted culture and societies. We will focus on New Testament materials, some classic Christian theological texts and diverse examples from contemporary writing on the theme of “atonement.” Utilizing examples from visual art and film which borrow from this religious language and imagery, we will reflect on the continuing cultural impact of atonement theories.

Objectives:

- 1) Students will gain an introduction to Christianity through focus on a seminal theological locus, i.e., soteriology, and through this locus better understand Christianity’s development, change and response to changing historical, social and political contexts.
- 2) Students will deepen their ability to read and understand complex and challenging texts.
- 3) Students will gain a deeper appreciation for the ways religious images and rituals depend upon and express atonement metaphors; and will arrive also at a deeper understanding of how these same elements “work” in the real lives of people, including their own lives!
- 4) Students’ critical thinking, reading, analytical, speaking and writing skills all will be enhanced.

Course Texts:

The New Testament (the Revised Standard Version is preferred, but you may use any version you wish or own)

James Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Orbis, 2013).

Other required resources available through our Blackboard Shell, on reserve, via handouts, and/or through library web-based resources. **Important Note! You are required to bring these to class on the days they are assigned reading! In addition, your resources should indicate your careful reading and annotation that you have completed as a core element of your study BEFORE we discuss them in class. You may bring your annotated versions either in hard copy or digital. Note that if you use digital resources, you must demonstrate that you have also digitally annotated your work.**

Required Extra-class Experience:

Tuesday, April 12, 6:30 pm, Prosser Auditorium: *We will gather to hear the keynote address of the Moravian College 9th Peace and Justice Scholar in Residence, Claude AnShin Thomas, Vietnam Veteran, Buddhist Monk and Peace Activist* All Students are required to attend this lecture; please make plans with your work and/or sports teams early in the semester; if you have a conflict with another class, I ask that you respectfully request from your professor permission to attend this event.

Course Requirements:

1) Attendance and preparation for alert, intelligent participation in class. Students are expected to read with a **pencil/pen (Not a highlighter!)** in hand, making notes in the margins of the texts we read so that you don't lose your own questions/ideas as you read. *If you work digitally, you must be able to show that you have utilized the app, "Notability," or some other annotation app for use in your study.* Work hard as you read to identify the main points and thread of the text's argument, identify those same main elements in your text's margins, and go back over your reading to make sure you have understood. You should plan on dedicating two to three hours of reading time in preparation for each class, and additional time in order to complete various assignments. Your reading assignments often will be accompanied by writing assignments that you are to complete thoughtfully and bring with you to class. These have been developed with the purpose of helping you to read and comprehend more deeply and fully.

Bring whatever text we are reading with you to class, and a hard copy of the day's writing assignment that you have completed! Your overall grade will depend upon your prompt, active, engaged and regular attendance (the only excused absences are for family emergency, serious illness or religious observance, AND must be approved by professor BEFORE the given class; after 1 unexcused absence, further absences will result each in a .25 deduction in your overall course grade). You should take notes during lectures and discussions, actively participate in discussions (plan on speaking up at least twice every class session), and demonstrate leadership in small group work. Please refrain from eating meals or snacks since this will impact our ability to concentrate our thought! (Beverages are o.k.) ***Special Note:*** *Active liberal arts learners stretch themselves to build their skills for intelligent, thoughtful, inquisitive, critical and empathetic listening AND public speaking in the classroom – I expect every member of our class to be working at the building of these skills in every class session. If this presents any worry to you, please come see me in my office early in the semester. I can help!* **10% of your total grade includes your attendance, work in reading/annotation, class participation, and short writing assignments you submit to BB..**

2) Short Papers: you will complete two short 5-page papers, each worth **20% of your overall grade**, as we complete certain units of the course. More details will be given about these papers early in the semester. Every student should plan on taking a draft of their papers to the Writing Center before polishing for a final draft to hand in.

3) Midterm and Final: each of these exams will be worth **20% of your total grade**. More details to follow!

4) Class Presentation: Students are assigned to a group to present and lead class discussion of the material in the Ruether OR Cone book. More about this in class. *This will require you to work with others outside of class.* Your presentation is worth **10% or your grade.**

Students are advised to review the Academic Honesty Policy in the Student Handbook (available online) and required to follow the guidelines therein.

Students who require class and learning accommodations are advised to contact Learning Services asap and follow the procedures they outline. Our office is extremely helpful to many students.

Accommodations cannot be provided to students outside of this process.

Important Note: Various assignments and many course resources will be posted on Blackboard. Students are advised to become familiar with this Moravian online course resource. Let me know if you need assistance. This syllabus will be posted on Blackboard, and updated with any changes we find we need to make as we progress through the semester. Please also note that your grades will be regularly posted on your Blackboard site, and you may consult them at any time during the semester if you wish to see your overall grade.

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact the Academic Support Center, located in the lower level of Monocacy Hall, or by calling [610-861-1401](tel:610-861-1401). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

Schedule of Classes:

Unit One: Introduction to Salvation Theology/Metaphors

1/18 Course Introduction: Jesus Saves? Class exercise, review of syllabus, and discussion about the kind of study skills/work this class will help you to develop

1/20 Read: The Gospel of Mark, beginning with Chapter 1 through Chapter 13

Writing Assignment: What does this narrative tell you about Christian “salvation”? Be specific! Note passages and themes as you think about the point, the meaning the writer wishes to draw about this story? Bring your hard copy to class: 250 words. **Submit by attaching your word doc to the to BB assignment link by 1/19 midnight. Please DO NOT cut and paste your assignment, but use the attachment link instead. This will make grading more efficient for me.**

1/25 Read: The Gospel of Mark, Chapters 14 to the end; and read from the Gospel of John, Chapters 17 - 21. Please use the Oxford Annotated Revised Standard Version, and read the footnotes too!

Writing Assignment: Compare and contrast Mark and John with respect to these chapters. How do each of these narratives further depict “Christian salvation”? Again, be specific: point to passages and themes. How do Mark and John portray differently the events that they describe? Again, bring your copy to class, and submit to BB by 1/24 midnight.

1/27 3rd **Assignment:** Go to Reeve’s library and in the reference area, find a theological dictionary/encyclopedia. Look up “soteriology.” **Make sure that you cite the source you have used in your assignment.** Make your own copy of the entry (and bring it also to class) What

words are associated with “soteriology”? What do they mean? What do you make of this definition? Bring your double-spaced, 1 page responses to class printed out in hard copy; submit to BB assignment link by 1/26 midnight. 250 words

In class: introduction to systematic theology, theological symbolism

2/1 Read: Selection from Joel Green, *Salvation*

Assignment: Be on the lookout for definitions of “salvation” and “sin” in this selection. Create a list of bullets for every different definition you see, for each of these two terms, and include the page # where you found each definition. **Bring to class and submit to BB by 1/31 midnight**

2/3 Read: from the NT: John 12:20-36; John 20:1-18; Luke 24:13-43; Romans 3:21-26; Romans 6:1-11; 1 Corinthians 15:1-28; Philippians 2:1-11

Assignment: 1) Return to the bullet lists of salvation and sin you outlined from Green. Can you connect those images to the NT passages above? Make a list. 2) Free writing exercise: Write without stopping for 5 minutes: What do you make of these images? What stands out for you and why? Bring your list and your free writing to class; **submit to BB assignment link by 2/2 midnight.**

2/8 **In class:** Issues in soteriology: Question of sin, Subjective/Objective Poles, etc.

For your homework for today watch **the first hour** of *Frontline: The First Christians*
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/>

--as you watch, take detailed notes on what you learn about Jesus’ world, the culture and diverse groups that inhabited it, the tensions and conflicts that were a part of it, and the development of what would become “Christianity” --attach a copy of your notes into the BB Writing Assignment Link by 2/7 midnight. You should have at least 2 full pages of bullet lists, notes, etc.

2/10 **In class:** Review/lecture: images and issues in understanding soteriology

For your homework for today, watch **the second two hours** of *Frontline: The First Christians* --as you watch, take detailed notes on what you learn about Jesus’ world, the culture and diverse groups that inhabited it, the tensions and conflicts that were a part of it, and the development of what would become “Christianity” --attach a copy of your notes into the BB Writing Assignment Link by 2/9 midnight. You should have at least 2-3 full pages of bullet lists, notes, etc.

Note: I have not asked you to view the last hour of this 4-hour series, but if you wish to watch it to the end, that is great and will help you in this course!

2/15 Read: “The Gardner,” by Rudyard Kipling (handout);

Assignment: Reflect on this story from Kipling so that you are able to write in one or two sentences what its central “point” is. In other words, what is the meaning of the end of the story? What does the story have to do with our study in this course? (Key: in order to figure this out, you will need to know the allusion on which this story is based. In other words, what is the significance of “the gardner”?) Bring with you to class your one paragraph that describes both

the central allusion and “the point” of Kipling’s story; submit to BB Writing Assignments by 2/14 midnight.

2/17 **Midterm Review**

2/22 **In class Midterm**

2/24 Introduction to Anselm

2/29: Guest teacher: Dr. Rae Erin Dachille-Hay

"Bringing a Work of Art to Life: Art and Ritual in Himalayan Buddhism"

Unit Two: Anselm: Why Did God Become Human?

3/2 Read: Anselm, *Why God Became Man*, Book I, Preface through Chapter XVIII [available in Blackboard Course Documents]

Complete the requisite Anselm worksheet (found in BB), and bring it with you to class; make sure that you also have a virtual copy of this you are saving on your computer, so that you can turn it in to the Writing Assignment on the requisite date.

Spring Break! March 5 – 11: No class!

3/14 Read: Anselm, *Why God Became Man*, Book I, Chapter XIX –Book II, Chapter XIII [Blackboard Course Documents]

Complete the requisite Anselm worksheet I, and bring it with you to class (found in BB). Submit to BB assignment link by midnight, 3/13.

3/16

Anselm, *Why God Became Man*, Book II Chapter XIV to the end [Blackboard Course Documents]

3/21 Continuation: Anselm, *Why God Became Man*, Book II Chapter XIV to the end [Blackboard Course Documents]

Submit your worksheet II to BB assignment link by midnight, 3/20.

3/23 **In Class:** Workshop on First Paper/ Contemporary examples of satisfaction

Read: Stephen Prothero, “The Manly Redeemer,” *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (BB docs)

3/27, midnight: **Due in Assignment Drop Box: Paper #1:** Anselm’s vision of salvation (paper guidelines in BB)

Unit Three: Comparison of Moral Exemplarists

3/28 Introduction to Rauschenbusch and Exemplary Theory

Begin Reading: Excerpt from *Theology for the Social Gospel*, Walter Rauschenbusch [available in Blackboard Course Documents]

3/30: Rauschenbusch continued (Finish your reading of Rauschenbusch_

4/4 Read: “Suffering and Faith,” “An Experiment in Love,” in *A Testament of Hope*, Martin Luther King, Jr. (BB documents)

4/6 In class: Comparison of Satisfaction and Exemplarist Metaphors/Models of Salvation: Beginning your work on Paper #2

4/10, Sunday, midnight: **Submit to BB Assignment Paper #2:** Comparison and contrast of King and Rauschenbusch (see paper guidelines in BB Assignment)

Unit Four: The Lynching Tree

In this final unit of study, students will be divided into groups, with each group taking leadership to present one chapter and lead discussion. Each leadership group will begin class with a “fishbowl”, in which they form a circle of discussion among themselves, to address the questions listed in the BB assignment link (and below), while the rest of the class observes in a larger outer circle. When the time is right, they will invite the outer circle to respond to the questions they have raised and join the discussion.

In your deliberation within your group, as you prepare for your presentation/fishbowl, make sure you understand the following:

--present the central thesis and/or questions with respect to Christian salvation that are manifest in your chapter. What is the particular concern or question with respect to Christian understandings of salvation, and why has this arisen?

--outline the argument the author is making. You will need to carefully read and think through your chapter with your partners in order to do this thoroughly and well.

--what the cultural themes, struggles or issues help to inform this part of history? What is the social world that has both given rise to these particular themes/questions/understandings of salvation, and how does the particular image or images respond to these needs?

--How do you respond to this reading? What about it do you find compelling and why? Do you wish to disagree or debate with the author in some way? Feel free to develop your own argument either in agreement or disagreement with the author.

A “B” level presentation will:

-involve all partners equally; demonstrate that your group has painstakingly studied and thought through the argument that is being made; cover the main elements of the chapter through your leadership in class; be clear about the cultural connections and questions, and raise some key questions about all this. Groups who wish to strive for an “A” level presentations ==will need to demonstrate engagement, creativity and critical thinking and speaking beyond these expectations.

4/11 Introduction to Last Unit of Study: For today, Read: Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* , Introduction and Chapter One, “Nobody Knows de Trouble I see: The Cross and the Lynching Tree in Black Experience”; Time for class teams to work on their leadership.

Tuesday, April 12, 6:30 pm, Prosser Auditorium: The Moravian College 9th Peace and Justice Scholar in Residence Keynote Address: Claude Anshin Thomas, Vietnam Veteran, Buddhist Monk and Peace Activist

All students are required to attend this event; please make appropriate plans with your workplace and/or sports team now. If you have a conflict with another class, please respectfully request that your professor give you permission to attend this event.

4/13: Today we will be visited by the Moravian College 9th Peace and Justice Scholar in Residence, Claude AnShin Thomas, Vietnam Veteran and Buddhist Monk.

4/18 Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, Chapter Three, "Bearing the Cross and Staring Down the Lynching Tree: Martin Luther King Jr.'s Struggle to Redeem the Soul of America"

4/20 Cone, Chapter 4. "The Recrucified Christ in Black Literary Imagination"

4/25 Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, Chapter Five, "Oh Mary, Don't you Weep" and Conclusion.

4/27 Last Class: Wrap up on Cone, Final Take Home Exam, Course Evals
Take Home Exam: Due in BB submission Link by 5/1 Midnight