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DO 670 United Methodist Theology

Robert G. Tuttle

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DO670
United Methodist Theology (2 hours)
DO671 (1 hour)¹

Tuesdays 9:00-11:40
Spring, 2008

Robert G. Tuttle, Jr., Ph.D.

e-mail Address: robert_tuttle@asburyseminary.edu
Office Phone: 407 482 7658
Office Hours: TBA

I. PURPOSE:

At Asbury Theological Seminary, there are four classes designed to meet the denominational requirements of The United Methodist Church for ordained ministry. They are DO 690 – John Wesley’s Theology Today; CH 600 – History of Methodism; PM 604 - United Methodist Polity; and this class DO 670 - United Methodist Theology. The purpose of this class is (1) to examine what constitutes United Methodist doctrine as well as its standards and norms, (2) to survey Methodist theology after John Wesley to the present with a special focus upon its American developments, (3) and to study a variety of theological perspectives existing presently within the denomination.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES:

As a result of this course, our class both individually and corporately should be equipped to do the following:

- (1) We should be able to appreciate, articulate and explain United Methodist doctrinal standards.
- (2) We should be acquainted with some of the representative theological trends, movements, and theologians within United Methodism.
- (3) We should be acquainted with some of the representative theological trends, movements, and theologians outside the United Methodist tradition that are impacting the United Methodist Church.

¹ For those taking the one-hour DO671 as well, note the addendum at the end of the syllabus.

- (4) We should be able critically to assess past and present theological trends in light of United Methodist doctrinal standards.
- (5) We should be able to recognize the relationship of United Methodist Theology to all spheres of parish and denominational life and make applications.
- (6) We should be prepared to address the doctrinal questions, stated in The Discipline of the United Methodist Church, which are a part of the Church's ordination requirements.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The success of our class is dependent on the timely completion of all assignments, in active participation in class discussion, and in building relationships with one another. During the semester you will be required to do the following for individual grades:

- (1) **Assigned Readings:** You will be responsible for all reading assignments specified for each class. It would serve you well to have read at least one of the texts before the class begins. 10% of final grade.
- (2) **Research Paper:** You will select a topic from those covered during the semester and write a 10-12 page research paper (typed, doubled spaced) on that topic. The research paper will be **May 8**. On questions of style with regard to paper organization and references, see Carole Slade, *Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports, Theses* (10th ed., Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997). 30% of final grade.
- (3) **Reflective Essays:** You will be given one reflective question for each class to help you critically process course materials and connect them to the local church. Over the course of the semester each student will **choose three** of those questions and write an essay (200-300 words **max**) and bring that to class for discussion. A sign up sheet will be provided during the first class. 30% of final grade.
- (4) **Class Participation:** You will actively and thoughtfully participate as a member of a learning community. We will be interacting with and learning from one another. Expectations will be spelled out on the first day of class. 30 % of final grade.

During the semester you are also asked and encouraged to do the following:

- (1) **Pray Daily for All Participants in Our Course:** I encourage you to pray for everyone in our class and for our seminary. Please feel free to share prayer requests throughout the semester. Know that I will pray daily for you individually and as a group.
- (2) **Enjoy and Go Deeper:** God has given us the awesome ability to know each other and to know Him. This semester in our work, in our discussions, in our readings, and in our chats we will have an opportunity to deepen our connection to Christ and to deepen our relationship with each other.

IV. ASSIGNED TEXTS:

These textbooks may be obtained from the Asbury Theological Seminary Cokesbury Bookstore.

Required Texts:

1. The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2004.
2. Abraham, William J. Waking from Doctrinal Amnesia: The Healing of Doctrine in The United Methodist Church. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.
3. Campbell, Dennis. United Methodism and American Culture, Vol. III, Doctrines and Disciplines. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.
4. Chiles, Robert E. Theological Transitions in American Methodism: 1790-1935, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984.
5. Langford, Thomas, ed. Practical Divinity: Readings in Wesleyan Theology, Vol. 2, revised text 1999. Abingdon Press.
6. Tuttle, Robert G., Jr. Sanctity without Starch: A Layperson's Guide to a Wesleyan Theology of Grace, Bristol House, 1992.

Collateral Texts:

1. Keller, Rosemary, Spirituality and Social Responsibility: Vision of Women in the United Methodist Tradition, Abingdon Press, 1993.
2. Norwood, Frederick A., The Story of American Methodism, Abingdon Press, 1974.
3. Tuttle, Robert G. Jr. On Giant Shoulders: The History, Role and Influence of the Evangelist in the Movement Called Methodism, a printout book available through the ATS bookstore.

V. COURSE OUTLINE:

The following is a broad outline of the classes for the course.

Feb. 14: Introduction and Overview.

Assigned Reading:

Sanctity without Starch, entire book.

Reflective question for the Feb. 13 discussion.

If John Wesley's theology of grace focused upon the work of the Holy Spirit, how is that significant for your own ministry in the local church?

Feb. 21: A United Methodist Theology of Grace.

Assigned Reading:

The Book of Discipline, 2000, pp. 41-86.

Reflective question for the Feb. 20 discussion.

Comment on the so-called Wesleyan Quadrilateral. How would you describe this to a layperson?

Feb. 28: United Methodism moves toward ordination.

Assigned Reading:

Doctrines and Disciplines, United Methodism and American Culture, pp. 1-95.

Reflective question for the Feb. 27 discussion.

In "Doctrines and Discipline" Greg Jones asks the question in his article, "What Makes 'United Methodist Theology' Methodist?" How would you rewrite this article if you were asked to respond to the same question?

Mar. 6: The Theological Task, I.

Assigned Reading:

Doctrines and Disciplines, pp. 97-212.

Reflective question for the Mar. 6 discussion.

In "Doctrines and Discipline" Greg Schneider's chapter raises the question as to whether or not culture is a friend to be embraced as a gift from God or our enemy to be rejected as dangerous to the life of holiness.

Mar. 13: The Theological Task, II.

Assigned Reading:

Theological Transitions in American Methodism, pp. 13-114.

Reflective question for the Mar. 13 discussion.

In Theological Transitions in American Methodism, let's talk about the transitions from reason to faith and then faith to reason.

Mar. 20: Theological Developments in American Methodism from 1790 to 1935, I.

Assigned Reading:

Theological Transitions in American Methodism, pp. 115-213.

Reflective question for the Mar. 20 discussion.

In Theological Transitions, talk about the transition from law to grace.

Mar. 27: Theological Developments in American Methodism from 1790 to 1935, II.

Assigned Reading:

Practical Divinity: Readings in Wesleyan Theology, Vol. 2, pp. 55-112.

Reflective questions for Mar. 27.

In "Practical Divinity" (vol. 2) which of the personalities presented in the assignment for today speaks most to you at this point in your ministry and why?

Spring Reading Week (Mar. 31-Apr. 4).

Apr. 10: Those Who Have Shaped Us, Part I.

Assigned Reading

Practical Divinity: Readings in Wesleyan Theology, Vol. 2, pp. 113-182.

Reflective question for Apr. 10.

Georgia Harkness was not only the first woman Methodist professor to teach in a School of Theology, she was one of the first theologians in the 20th century to speak of the work of the Holy Spirit. How do you understand her significance to Methodist theology?

Apr. 17: Those Who Have Shaped Us, Part II.

Assigned Reading:

Practical Divinity: Readings in Wesleyan Theology, pp. 183-223.

Reflective question for the Apr. 17 discussion.

Albert Outler did as much to preserve some of the grand old Methodist doctrines as anyone on the contemporary scene. What was his catalyst and how did he manage to pull it off?

Apr. 24: Those Who Are Still Shaping Us, Part I.

Assigned Reading:
Practical Divinity, pp. 253-324.

Reflective question for the Apr. 24 discussion.

During the last 25 years most UM seminaries have capitulated to a Whiteheadian philosophical approach to theology called Process Theology. Ogden (and John Cobb to follow) contributed to this scene. How would you critique this theology?

May 1: Those Who Are Still Shaping Us, Part II.

Assigned Reading:
Practical Divinity, pp. 225-252.

Reflective question for the May 1 discussion.

Jose Miguez Bonino has been called the grandfather of Liberation Theology. Can you describe the Latin American contribution to this and his influence on Cone's Black Theology?

May 7: Those Who Are Still Shaping Us, Part III.

Assigned reading:
Waking from Doctrinal Amnesia, entire book.

Reflective question for the May 8 discussion.

One of the reasons I like Abraham's book is that he is good at providing specific suggestions. In the last chapter he gives 8 responses to the question, "What Then Shall We Do?" Of the 8 which do you think is most important and why?

May 15: Men and Women in Ministry—the Future.

Just a thought--From the collateral reading, On Giant Shoulders, Part 1. Chapters two and three speak of lay beginnings and ordination. If lay leadership is, according to Wesley, our peculiar genius then what is the significance of ordination?

Term paper due May 7!

May 19-23: Exam week (No Final Exam).

VI. GRADING:

Asbury Theological Seminary uses the 4.00-point system for grading and evaluation. The grading system is:

A

4.00

Exceptional work: outstanding achievement of course objectives

A-

3.70

B+

3.30

Good work: substantial achievement of course objectives

B

3.00

B-

2.70

C+

2.30

Acceptable work: essential achievement of course objectives

C

2.00

C-

1.70

D+

1.30

Marginal work: minimal or inadequate achievement of course objectives

D

1.00

D-

0.70

F

0.00

Unacceptable work: failure of course objectives

VII: LEARN AND ENJOY:

I fully expect you to enjoy this learning experience. It would help if you would enlist people to pray for our week together. I want you better prepared for life as well as ministry. Let God arise. Hos. 6:3.

“Readings in Methodist Theology”: for those who would like to extend the course to 3 hours by adding DO671, this requires an additional 400 pages of reading and extends your research paper to 12-15 pages. Note: lectures for all students will have the 3-hour, instead of the 2-hour format.

DO670 UM Theology

Sign up sheets for the reflective questions for in class discussion: A copy of this will be circulated on the first day of class.

Students will sign up for **three** reflective questions during the course of the semester and bring to class an essay (200-300 **max**) for critical reflection and process.

Reflective question for the **Feb. 14** discussion.

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Reflective question for the **Feb. 21** discussion.

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