THEO3001 - Contemporary Issues in Doctrine and Practice

Course Outline

Course Co-ordinator: Roland Boer
Room: MC108
Ph: 0422 742 465 or Messages via School Office 4921 5213
Fax: 
Email: roland.boer@newcastle.edu.au
Consultation hours: Wednesdays, 9am-2pm; otherwise by appointment

Semester Semester 1 - 2009
Unit Weighting 10
Teaching Methods Lecture Seminar

Brief Course Description
This course introduces the main current growth points of Christian theology in the West, as the textual and doctrinal tradition integrated into the worldview of enlightenment modernity is now challenged by a variety of post-modern currents. The course begins with an overview of modernity and its characteristic theological manifestations and then explores the post-modern turn, clarifying the range of challenges to the modern Western vision that it entails. Particular attention is given to critical theories of political liberation and the theological responses that have emerged in the last third of the twentieth century-in particular liberation, feminist and post-colonial theologies-as well as the range of theologies responding to philosophical non-foundationalism and cultural/religious pluralism-chiefly non-realist, post-liberal and radical orthodox theologies-along with the fundamentalist uptake of non-foundationalism. Today's resurgence of Trinitarianism, also the new theory of René Girard accounting for human culture and religion on the basis of mimesis and violence, are introduced. Case studies examine resurgent fundamentalism against newer theologies of science and world religions (which have been heavily transformed by their encounter with post-modernity), and queer theology, representing a new theological departure.

Given its title, the exact content of the course may vary. Potential subjects include:

- Western Modernity and its impact on theology

Course Outline Issued and Correct as at: Week 1, Semester 1 - 2009
CTS Download Date: 17 February, 2009
- Post-modernity or late-modernity: discourse and deconstruction
- Postmodernity, critical theory and the contextualisation of theology
- theologies of liberation
- feminist theologies
- post-colonialism and theology

- Postmodernity and philosophical non-foundationalism
- non-realism in theology (Christian atheism)
- non-foundational epistemologies and fundamentalism
- Post-liberal theologies
- Radical Orthodoxy

- Trinity and Relationality
- Culture, Religion and Violence: René Girard_s theory and its theological interpreters

- Case studies in contemporary theology
- theology of science and human origins
- theology of religions and religious pluralism
- the homosexuality debate and 'Queer theology'

Contact Hours
Seminar for 1 Hour per Week for the Full Term
Lecture for 2 Hours per Week for the Full Term

Learning Materials/Texts

Course Objectives
The aim of the course is to enable students to:

- Contribute relevant theological insights and knowledge to topical debates, honestly and effectively;
- Explicate contemporary theological voices in light of their culture and context;
- Engage critically with Christian tradition in light of the contemporary situation;
- Formulate answers to fresh debates and issues which may arise;
- Engage critically with post-modernity and the particular issues which it raises.

Course Content
Lectures

Students will be required to attend two one hour lectures each week. Some time will be allowed for discussing relevant issues with colleagues in ministry at different churches.

Seminars

Students will be required to attend a one hour seminar each week. Depending on the size of the cohort it is expected that faculty will lead the first 7 workshops and the remaining sessions will be led by students as a part of the assessment regime of the course.

Assessment Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essays / Written Assignments</th>
<th>x 3 (2 at 20%; 1 at 40%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other: (please specify)</td>
<td>Seminar leadership and participation (20%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assumed Knowledge
20 units THEO courses at 2000 level

Callaghan Campus Timetable
THEO3001
CONTEMP ISSUES IN DOCTRINE
Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science
Semester 1 - 2009
Lecture Wednesday 10:00 - 12:00 [MCLG16B]
and Seminar Wednesday 12:00 - 13:00 [MCLG16B]

IMPORTANT UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity, honesty, and a respect for knowledge, truth and ethical practices are fundamental to the business of the University. These principles are at the core of all academic endeavour in teaching, learning and research. Dishonest practices contravene academic values, compromise the integrity of research and devalue the quality of learning. To preserve the quality of learning for the individual and others, the University may impose severe sanctions on activities that undermine academic integrity. There are two major categories of academic dishonesty:

Academic fraud is a form of academic dishonesty that involves making a false representation to gain an unjust advantage. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it can include:

a) falsification of data;

b) using a substitute person to undertake, in full or part, an examination or other assessment item;

c) reusing one's own work, or part thereof, that has been submitted previously and counted towards another course (without permission);

d) making contact or colluding with another person, contrary to instructions, during an examination or other assessment item;

e) bringing material or device(s) into an examination or other assessment item other than such as may be specified for that assessment item; and

f) making use of computer software or other material and device(s) during an examination or other assessment item other than such as may be specified for that assessment item.

g) contract cheating or having another writer compete for tender to produce an essay or assignment and then submitting the work as one's own.

Plagiarism is the presentation of the thoughts or works of another as one's own. University policy prohibits students plagiarising any material under any circumstances. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it may include:

a) copying or paraphrasing material from any source without due acknowledgment;

b) using another person's ideas without due acknowledgment;

c) collusion or working with others without permission, and presenting the resulting work as though it were completed independently.

Turnitin is an electronic text matching system. During assessing any assessment item the University may -
· Reproduce this assessment item and provide a copy to another member of the University; and/or

· Communicate a copy of this assessment item to a text matching service (which may then retain a copy of the item on its database for the purpose of future checking).

· Submit the assessment item to other forms of plagiarism checking

RE-MARKS AND MODERATIONS
Students can access the University’s policy at:

MARKS AND GRADES RELEASED DURING TERM
All marks and grades released during term are indicative only until formally approved by the Head of School.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AFFECTING ASSESSMENT ITEMS

Extension of Time for Assessment Items, Deferred Assessment and Special Consideration for Assessment Items or Formal Written Examinations items must be submitted by the due date in the Course Outline unless the Course Coordinator approves an extension. Unapproved late submissions will be penalised in line with the University policy specified in Late Penalty above.

Requests for Extensions of Time must be lodged no later than the due date of the item. This applies to students:

· applying for an extension of time for submission of an assessment item on the basis of medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment; or

· whose attendance at or performance in an assessment item or formal written examination has been or will be affected by medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment.

Students must report the circumstances, with supporting documentation, as outlined in the Special Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items Procedure at:

Note: different procedures apply for minor and major assessment tasks.

Students should be aware of the following important deadlines:

· Special Consideration Requests must be lodged no later than 3 working days after the due date of submission or examination.

· Rescheduling Exam requests must be received no later than 10 working days prior the first date of the examination period.

Late applications may not be accepted. Students who cannot meet the above deadlines due to extenuating circumstances should speak firstly to their Program Officer or their Program Executive if studying in Singapore.

STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR CHRONIC ILLNESS

University is committed to providing a range of support services for students with a disability or chronic illness. If you have a disability or chronic illness which you feel may impact on your studies please feel free to discuss your support needs with your lecturer or course coordinator.

Disability Support may also be provided by the Student Support Service (Disability). Students must be registered to receive this type of support. To register contact the Disability Liaison Officer on 02
4921 5766, email at: student-disability@newcastle.edu.au. As some forms of support can take a few weeks to implement it is extremely important that you discuss your needs with your lecturer, course coordinator or Student Support Service staff at the beginning of each semester. For more information on confidentiality and documentation visit the Student Support Service (Disability) website: www.newcastle.edu.au/services/disability.

**CHANGING YOUR ENROLMENT**

Students enrolled after the census dates listed below are liable for the full cost of their student contribution or fees for that term.

For Semester 1 courses: 31 March 2009
For Semester 2 courses: 31 August 2009
For Trimester 1 courses: 18 February 2009
For Trimester 2 courses: 9 June 2009
For Trimester 2 courses: 9 June 2009
For Trimester 3 courses: 22 September 2009

**Singapore Census Dates**
For Trimester 1 Singapore courses: 27 January 2009
For Trimester 2 Singapore courses: 26 May 2009
For Trimester 3 Singapore courses: 22 September 2009

**Block Census Dates**
Block 1: 16 January 2009
Block 2: 13 March 2009
Block 3: 15 May 2009
Block 4: 10 July 2009
Block 5: 11 September 2009
Block 6: 16 November 2009

Students may withdraw from a course without academic penalty on or before the last day of term. Any withdrawal from a course after the last day of term will result in a fail grade. **Students cannot enrol in a new course after the second week of term**, except under exceptional circumstances. Any application to add a course after the second week of term must be on the appropriate form, and should be discussed with staff in the Student Hubs or with your Program Executive at PSB if you are a Singapore student. **To check or change your enrolment online go to myHub:** [https://myhub.newcastle.edu.au](https://myhub.newcastle.edu.au)

**STUDENT INFORMATION & CONTACTS**

Various services are offered by the Student Support Unit: [www.newcastle.edu.au/service/studentsupport/](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/studentsupport/)

**The Student Hubs** are a one-stop shop for the delivery of student related services and are the first point of contact for students studying in Australia. Student Hubs are located at:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Callaghan Campus</th>
<th>Port Macquarie students</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shortland Hub: Level 3, Shortland Building</td>
<td>contact your program officer or <a href="mailto:EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au">EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter Hub: Level 2, Student Services Centre</td>
<td>Phone 4921 5000</td>
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<tr>
<th>City Precinct</th>
<th>Singapore students</th>
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<tr>
<td>City Hub &amp; Information Common, University House</td>
<td>contact your PSB Program Executive</td>
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<tr>
<th>Central Coast Campus (Ourimbah)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Hub: Opposite the Main Cafeteria</td>
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School of Humanities and Social Science
### OTHER CONTACT INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Websites</th>
<th>General enquiries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/business-law/">www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/business-law/</a></td>
<td>Callaghan, City and Port Macquarie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/education-arts/">www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/education-arts/</a></td>
<td>Phone: 02 4921 5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/engineering/">www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/engineering/</a></td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au">EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/health/">www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/health/</a></td>
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<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/science-it/">www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/science-it/</a></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rules Governing Undergraduate Academic Awards</td>
<td>Ourimbah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000311.html">www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000311.html</a></td>
<td>Phone: 02 4348 4030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules Governing Postgraduate Academic Awards</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au">EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules Governing Professional Doctorate Awards</td>
<td>The Dean of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000580.html">www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000580.html</a></td>
<td>Resolution Precinct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phone: 02 4921 5806;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fax: 02 4921 7151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au">resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au</a></td>
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</table>

| | Deputy Dean of Students (Ourimbah) |
| | Phone:02 4348 4123; |
| | Fax: 02 4348 4145 |
| | Email: resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au |

This course outline will not be altered after the second week of the term except under extenuating circumstances with Head of School approval. Students will be notified in advance of the change.

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**End of CTS Entry** ---

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### Studentmail and Blackboard: Refer - [www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/](http://www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/)

This course uses Blackboard and studentmail to contact students, so you are advised to keep your email accounts within the quota to ensure you receive essential messages. To receive an expedited response to queries, post questions on the Blackboard discussion forum if there is one, or if emailing staff directly use the course code in the subject line of your email. Students are advised to check their studentmail and the course Blackboard site on a weekly basis.

### Important Additional Information

Details about the following topics are available on your course Blackboard site (where relevant). Refer - [www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/](http://www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/)

- Written Assignment Presentation and Submission Details
- Online copy submission to Turnitin
- Penalties for Late Assignments
- Special Circumstances
- No Assignment Re-submission
- Re-marks & Moderations
- Return of Assignments
- Preferred Referencing Style
- Student Representatives
- Student Communication
- Essential Online Information for Students
Course Overview

This course addresses matters of contemporary concern in both theological doctrine and practice. It asks questions like: does Islam have a theology? Why are our politicians starting to make theological speeches? Why do people believe in intelligent design? What is postmodernism and what does it do to you? Can theology become queer? It is suitable for those completing a full theology degree and for people interested in these current topics of debate.

The course weaves in two strands: on **Doctrine** we consider the main currents of contemporary theology such as postmodernism, postcolonialism and feminism. For this strand students will be expected to read carefully a set text or two (not too long, since you will need to read carefully and thoughtfully), prepare notes and questions for class and be prepared to enter into discussion. As for **Practice** (indicated by an asterisk below), we will have a series of visiting lecturers who will deal with topics of ongoing public debate. After the presentation, the session will be given over to discussion and debate.

Assessment

**Seminar leadership and class participation (20%)**

This mark is based on evidence of preparatory reading set for weekly topics (informed reflection) and participation in class discussion. It relates to the ‘doctrine’ strand of the course.

Each student will lead one 40 minute seminar session, based on one of the class’s set readings. The lecturer in consultation with the class will assign you a date for this presentation. The 40 minutes is to be divided into two 20 minute parts. The first half is an oral presentation by the student leader; the second half is a group discussion, led by the same presenter.

The following criteria are part of the student assessment process:

1/ A clear presentation of the major issues.
2/ Several critical questions and evaluations leading into a participatory discussion (second half).
3/ Skills in leading the forty minute process will contribute to the grade achieved.

Method of presentation is important, but content is significant – the student can use Powerpoint but it should be as an adjunct not an all-consuming distraction. You can also use the white board, or alternatively a single A4 uncluttered typed sheet with basic directions and maybe some questions for consideration (one copy to be given to each class participant).

Each student is also required to **participate** in the seminars, and this will also be assessed in terms of preparation. This effort should take no more than one hour of work per week (compared with the preparation needed by the student leading the seminar - who will need to study the set reading more closely and think about how best to promote, focus and summarise the group discussion).

**Short Written tasks (40% in total)**

Two mock newspaper or magazine articles of no more than 1000 words relevant to the course topics. The purpose of this exercise is to develop skills needed to communicate with a public wider than the lecturer or yourself. You will need to think about who your imaginary audience is, how to write in a way that grabs your reader and how to express your opinion in a clear manner. You are encouraged to submit a draft for comment, no later than 10 days before it is due.

**Due dates:** Wed 25 March (week 4), and Wed. 29 April (week 8). Submit hard copy in class, but also keep a electronic copy of each task.

**Major Essay (40%)** 2000-2500 words on a topic agreed upon in consultation with the lecturer. Details of the required preparation and actual essay format and style will be given in class. You are
encouraged to submit a draft for comment up to one month before the essay is due. Word count for the essay does not include your References list, which should include at least six sources. These references should be academic secondary sources, not popularist or non-academic texts.

**Due date**  Wed. 27 May (week 12). Submit hard copy in class and e-copy via Turnitin.

Late submissions without Special Consideration appeal will attract mark penalties under university policy (see *Important Additional Information* section on course Blackboard).

**Reading Topics (by week)**

The suggested readings below provide the bare necessity for students in the course. As a third year course, students are encouraged to pursue further reading by identifying relevant works on their own initiative and reading them as they wish.

**Week 1: 4 March 2009**

Introduction: What is Postmodernism and what does it do to you?

Reading:


**Week 2: 11 March 2009**

Practice: How to write for a wider audience.

Reading:


Other columns by Barney Zwartz may be found via google search.


**Week 3: 18 March 2009**

Doctrine: Liberation Theology.

Reading:


Week 5: 1 April 2009
Doctrine: Postcolonial Theology

Reading:


*Week 6: 8 April 2009
Practice: Does Islam have a theology? Guest lecturer: Terry Lovat (10am – 12pm)

*Week 7: 22 April 2009
Practice: Ecotheology. Guest Lecturer: Geoff Rigby

Week 8: 29 April 2009
Doctrine: Feminist Theology

Reading:


Week 9: 6 May 2009
Doctrine: Radical Orthodoxy

Reading:

   http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=3119

Students pursue directed, independent studies, including exploration in detail of the main website
http://www.theologyphilosophycentre.co.uk/

Week 10: 13 May 2009
Doctrine: Is theology queer?

Reading:


*Week 11: 20 May 2009
Practice: Are human beings inherently religious? (Or: is it possibly to mix business with ... theological ethics?)
Guest Lecturer: Rev. David Battrick (Ministry Development Officer, Newcastle Anglican Diocese)

*Week 12: 27 May 2009
Practice: Is the Universe a testimony to ‘intelligent’ or ‘unintelligent’ design?
Guest Lecturer: David Wilson (UNSW)

*Week 13: 3 June 2009
Practice: How do we relate theology to everyday life? Panel discussion:
  - Indicates guest speaker or panel and seminar style session.

Bibliography
A relevant bibliography will be developed by students during the course as part of their weekly tutorials.

Semester Weeks, Dates, Lecture Topics & Assignments for THEO3001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>DATE (of class)</th>
<th>COURSE EVENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 March</td>
<td>What is Post-modernism, and what does it do to you? Introduction to course, assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11 March</td>
<td>Writing for a wider audience</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>18 March</td>
<td>Liberation Theology</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>25 March</td>
<td>No lecture. Independent learning. Submit Written Task in class on 25 March (20%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 April</td>
<td>Post-colonial Theology</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>8 April</td>
<td>Does Islam have a theology?</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>22 April</td>
<td>Eco-theology</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>29 April</td>
<td>Feminist Theology Submit Written Task in class on 29 April (20%)</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>6 May</td>
<td>Radical Orthodoxy</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>13 May</td>
<td>Is Theology queer?</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>20 May</td>
<td>Are human beings inherently religious?</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>27 May</td>
<td>Is the universe the result of intelligent or unintelligent design? Submit Essay in class and via Blackboard on 27 May (40%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>3 June</td>
<td>Special guest lecturer; feedback on assignments. Course evaluation and wrap-up</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Seminar Leadership /Group Participation</td>
<td>(20%) Dates to be decided by consultation</td>
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GF/RB 25feb09