

IPS 531-001
Christian Doctrine and Its History
Grace, Christ, and the Spirit
Fall Semester 2008 – On-Line

Instructor: Robert Ludwig, Ph.D., Lewis Towers #630,

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Class Meets: On-Line August 25 through December 3

- “Live” Interaction with Instructor on **Tuesdays, 7:00-8:30 PM Central Time**

Required Texts: *Available through Amazon.com and elsewhere*

- **Mark F. Fischer**, *The Foundations of Karl Rahner* (Crossroad, 2006—ISBN 0-824-24-2342-3)
- **Hans Kung**, *Great Christian Thinkers* (Continuum, 1996—ISBN 0-8264-0848-6)
- **Robert Ludwig**, *Instructor’s Essays* (available thru IPS Office: sozuk@luc.edu)
- **Fergus Kerr**, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians* (Blackwell, 2007—ISBN978-1-4051-2084-5)

Course Description: Today many Christians have little or no understanding of how the New Testament experience became translated into Christian doctrine; many have little or no insight into how Christian theology today understands the dynamics of sin and grace, the notion of salvation, the role of Jesus Christ as understood by Christian faith. This course is an overview of fundamental Christian theology—from the New Testament, to Augustine, to Aquinas, to Karl Rahner—focused on the core doctrines of grace, Christ, and Trinity. In this course, students will pursue an understanding of the Catholic core: how God has been wedded to humanity and creation in Jesus Christ and how we are called to participate in this divine-human communion in and through incarnation and grace. We will explore the experiential foundations of Christian doctrine and see the evolution of interpretation from early centuries to the present. Much of the course will explore contemporary, pastoral understandings of Christian doctrine: How might we understand and explain the Catholic core in our ministries on the ground today? We will move between experience and doctrine and back to experience, helping students gain insight into both as they come to understand the dynamic process that leads from experience to doctrine—and, in theology, back again to experience and to ministry. What theologians refer to as “soteriology”—theology of salvation—is the heart of this course, which will involve significant reading and writing assignments as well as in-class discussions. This is a basic theology course for anyone involved in Christian ministry.

Instructor's Expectations/Course Requirements/Grading Standards:

- **On-Line Class Participation:** It is very important that students connect with the course on a regular basis by engaging in the discussion boards and posting items on a timely basis as well as by participating in the weekly “live” class discussion. Not participating in the course in this way will create problems for students wanting to complete the course successfully. If you need to absent yourself due serious illness or other very important reasons, you need to call the instructor’s voice-mail (312/915-7467) and provide him with an explanation. Students need to do the weekly reading early in the week (prior to the Tuesday evening “lives” class discussion) and complete their initial postings by Thursday morning. Response postings are accomplished by Sunday noon. On-line class participation contributes **30 points** of your final grade. Lack of participation in class discussions can seriously affect your final grade.
- **EXAM #1:** Students will write essay responses to questions. This will be a take-home exam or paper with several extended essays. Questions will be provided to students well in advance of the exam’s due date. These essays will be worth **20 points** of the final grade. [**Due September 25th**]
- **IN-DEPTH NEWS ARTICLE ON VATICAN II:** Condensing the centuries between Trent and Vatican II to two months, students will write a front-page news article describing the theological shifts of Vatican II. This is an in-depth article (approximately 4-5 pages). Post your article—and respond to someone else’s. This exercise is worth **10 points** of the final grade.
- **FINAL EXAM/PAPER:** At the conclusion of the course, there will be a final exam/paper that includes essay responses to several questions. This final paper is worth **40 points** of the final grade. [**Due December 3rd**]

How to Write Essays for EXAMS: There will be several questions posed. Students must respond to these questions with thoughtful essays. Sometimes students can choose between and among questions to answer. Students are expected to write thoughtful, focused, and well-organized essays in response to each question.

The process includes:

- 1) Read the question carefully—then review readings and class notes with this question in mind.
- 2) Reflect and think (take a walk)—find your own voice: what is the main thing you want to say in response to this question?
- 3) Create a brief outline to develop your focused response.
- 4) Write your paper, utilizing the outline.
- 5) Review and edit. Check for writing errors.
- 6) Move to the next question and repeat this process.

Each essay should have its own title, imaginatively and succinctly stating the essay’s focus. Use Arial 11 point type face. When referring to the required texts, simply do so parenthetically (author, page numbers)—no lengthy quotes from the texts. If you are utilizing additional resources, be sure to clearly cite the sources in endnotes. No

bibliography is needed. Papers will be sent electronically as Word attachments through Blackboard.

Grading Grid: Above 92 points – A
89 – 92 -- B+
85 – 88 -- B
81 – 84 -- C+
76 – 80 -- C
Under 75 – F

Plagiarism, Cheating, Academic Dishonesty: Students are hereby advised of the strong sanctions against plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism will result in an automatic "F" in the course and possible expulsion from IPS. *If you have any questions about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials, you should consult the instructor.* Proper citation procedures are provided in all standard writing manuals. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please contact the instructor: rludwig@luc.edu or 312/915-7467.

Course Schedule

Week of August 25th

Read: Kung, chapter 1 and Ludwig Essay on "Pauline Theology"

Written Postings: By Thursday 10 PM: Develop a 2-page essay in response to these readings—tease out the important *theological* elements in Paul;

By Sunday 5 PM: Post a thoughtful and meaty one-page response to someone else's essay—where is this essay on-target, and where does it seem to miss important insights?

Week of September 2nd

Read: Ludwig Essay on "Experience and Doctrine: Earliest Fundamental Theology, and Kung, chapter 2

Written Postings: By Friday 10PM: Write a thoughtful 2-page essay: "How do you evaluate how fundamental Christian understandings are changing in these first centuries?"

By Sunday 5 PM: Post a one-page critique of another's paper.

Week of September 8th

Read: Kung chapters 3-4, and Ludwig Essay “From Augustine to Aquinas”

Written Postings: *By Sunday 5 PM:* Write a 3-page essay comparing and contrasting the understanding of grace and salvation in Augustine and Aquinas.

Week of September 15th

Read: Kung chapter 5, Ludwig Essay “The Reformation and Trent,” and Decrees “On Original Sin” and “On Justification” From the Council of Trent [LUC Library Pegasus Electronic Reserves]

Written Postings: *Discussion Board on Trent: Post your reactions to Trent’s understanding of Original Sin and Justification; respond to others.*

Week of September 22nd

Exam #1: Essays on Fundamental Theology from the NT to Trent (Submit on-line through Blackboard by **Thursday, September 25, 10 PM**)

Week of September 29th

Read Giuseppe Alberigo, “From the Council of Trent to Tridentinism;” Joseph Komonchak, “The Council of Trent at the Second Vatican Council;” and John O’Malley, “Trent and Vatican II: Two Styles of Church,” *From Trent to Vatican II* [LUC Library Pegasus Electronic Reserves]

Written Postings: *Discussion Board Contrasting Trent with Vatican II. Post your comments; respond to others’.*

Week of October 6th – Fall Break—No Class

Week of October 13th

Read: Kerr, chapter one (“Before Vatican II”) and Ludwig Essay on “Vatican II and Fundamental Theology Today” (See Appendix in Kerr: “The Anti-Modernist Oath”)

Written Postings: *By Thursday 10 PM:* Post your news article on Vatican II. *By Sunday 5 PM:* Respond thoughtfully to someone else’s article.

Week of October 20th

Read: Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians*, chapters 5-7 [LUC Library Pegasus Electronic Reserves]

Written Postings: *Discussion Board: Compare and contrast the three theologians in these chapters—how are they alike, how different? Post your thoughts and respond to others’.*

Week of October 27th

Read: Fischer, chapters I-III and Ludwig Essay on “Rahner’s Philosophical Foundations”

Written Postings: *By Sunday 5 PM:* Develop and post a 3-page essay on Rahner’s view of the human person, **discussing his views in terms of your own experience.**

Week of November 3rd

Read: Fischer, chapters IV-V and Ludwig Essay on “God for Us”

Written Postings: By Thursday 10 PM: Develop and post your thoughts on how Rahner is changing the Tridentine notion of grace. By Sunday 5 PM: Respond briefly but thoughtfully to two other postings.

Week of November 10th

Read: Fischer, chapter VI, and Ludwig Essays on “Rahner’s Theology of Christ and Trinity” and “Contemporary Christologies”

Written Postings: By Thursday 10 PM: Post your reactions to how Rahner is re-thinking how we think about Christ? By Sunday 5 PM: Post a 2-page essay after you’ve read the other reactions: How does Rahner revise Christology for today?

Week of November 17th

Read: Fischer, chapters VII-IX and Kerr chapters 10-12

Postings: *Discussion Boards on the implications of Rahner’s theology for the Christian life and on the thought of Popes John-Paul II and Benedict XVI. Post your comments in thoughtful paragraphs, and respond similarly to others’.*

Week of November 24th – Thanksgiving Week—Relax

Week of December 1st

Final Exam: Submit on-line through Blackboard by Wednesday, **December 3rd**