

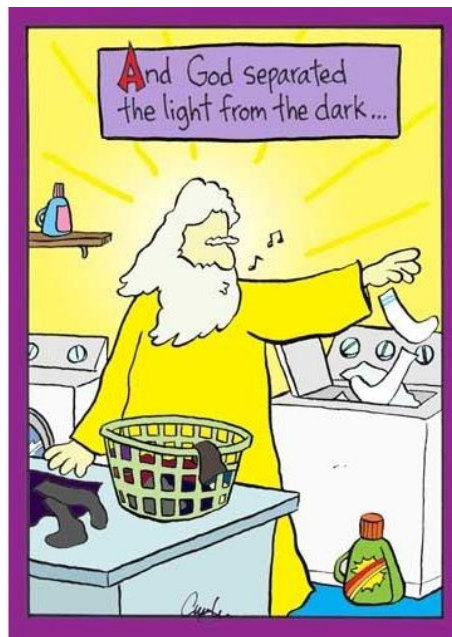
RSFT-1120: Methods and Hermeneutics I
RSFT-1121: Methods and Hermeneutics II
Spring 2022

Mondays, 9:40 am – 12:30 pm
Liberacion

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Course Description

This course is a general introduction to the study of methods and hermeneutics, especially those central to the study of theology and preparation for leadership in Christian communities. Its main goal is to explore different approaches and methodologies for interpreting religious, theological, and biblical texts. The course is designed to serve as an introduction to theological methods, providing the necessary background for understanding the developments of theological reflection, especially as they have manifested in the 20th and 21st centuries, with a focus on linking such developments to the study of authoritative texts in the Christian tradition.



Required Resources on Moodle

- Anderson, Cheryl. "Reading the Bible at the Margins: Strategies for Inclusive Biblical Interpretation." Posted by The Reformation Project, 02/08/2019.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLW9vaWnTZA>
- Bal, Mieke. "First Memories and Second Thoughts" in *Literature and the Bible: A Reader*. Edited by Carruthers, et. al. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Brookfield, Stephen D. "Exploring the Meaning of Critical Theory for Adult Learning" in *The Power of Critical Thinking*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2005.
- Caputo, John D. "A Matter of Interpretation: A Primer on Postmodern Hermeneutics" in *Hermeneutics: Facts and Interpretation in the Age of Information*. United Kingdom: Penguin Random House, 2018.
- _____. "What Is Postmodern Hermeneutics in a Nutshell" in *Hermeneutics: Facts and Interpretation in the Age of Information*. United Kingdom: Penguin Random House, 2018.
- _____. "A God Even Nietzsche Could Love" in *Hermeneutics: Facts and Interpretation in the Age of Information*. United Kingdom: Penguin Random House, 2018.
- Cone, James. "The Cross & The Lynching Tree," an address given to the Reconciling Ministries Network on April 29, 2012. <https://youtu.be/-lhPNP3GIyY>
- Foreman, Kelsey. "What is Queer Theory?" Posted 07/30/2018.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7p1c2ofLIU>
- Gibbons, Anika. "Journey to Liberation: The Legacy of Womanist Theology." Posted by Union Theological Seminary, 03/26/2014.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PjhtUGqFCWg>
- Guardian, The. "Pain and terror: America remembers its past." Posted on April 26, 2018. <https://youtu.be/Zg1HvexuNKM>
- "Intersectionality in Theological Education," in *Religious Studies*. April 2015.
- Jagpal, Anisha. "What Is Critical Theory?" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGwzThzfSnc>
- Lightsey, Pamela. "A Womanist Queer Theology." Posted by Wipf and Stock Publishers 02/17/2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4k8yZ6iBds>
- May, Vivian M. "Intersectionality" in *Rethinking Women's and Gender Studies*. Edited by Catherine M. Orr et al. New York: Routledge, 2012.

_____. "Historicizing Intersectionality as a Critical Lens: Returning to the Work of Anna Julia Cooper" in *Interconnections: Gender and Race in American History*. Edited by Carol Faulkner and Alison M. Parker. Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2012.

Moe-Lobeda, Cynthia. "Structural Violence as Structural Evil" in *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013.

Nicholas, Tom. "Postcolonialism: WTF? An Intro to Postcolonial Theory." Posted 10/24/2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbLyd0mQwIk&t=400s>

Nixon, Rob. "Slow Violence" in *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Vol. 57, Issue 40: 07/01/2011.

Patel, Eboo. "The 'Inter' in Interfaith" in *Interfaith Leadership: A Primer*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2016.

_____. "The 'Faith' in Interfaith" in *Interfaith Leadership: A Primer*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2016.

Zimmerman, Jens. "Hermeneutics: A Very Short Introduction" Posted on 02/12/2016 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wPTV5hyB0Y>

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Course Learning Objectives

Assessment/Evaluation Methods

Explore different approaches, methodologies, and optics for interpreting religious, theological, and biblical texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly resources/engaged study prompts • Theological Method Presentation
Articulate one's own histories, experiences, perspectives and social locations and how these inform one's study of theology and the practices of ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intersectional Biography
Recognize the fundamental indeterminacy and intersectionality of theological methods and hermeneutics in the 21 st century.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly resources/engaged study prompts • Theological Method Presentation

PLTS Program Learning Objectives

This course advances many of the program learning objectives designated by Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary:

1. **LIFE-GIVING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD:** All graduates of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary learn how to celebrate, nourish and deepen not only their own life-giving relationship with God; but also how to empower individuals and communities of faith to deepen and nourish their own such relationships.
2. **INTELLECTUAL ENGAGEMENT WITH SCRIPTURE, FAITH TRADITIONS AND THE WORLD:** All graduates of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary have engaged Scriptures, faith traditions and contexts with intellectual rigor and curiosity, utilizing a triple hermeneutic – critical, appreciative and constructive – in both the classroom and in contextualized ministry experiences and settings.
3. **PRACTICES OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AND LIBERATION:** All graduates of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary have explored and learned to employ theologies of liberation and advocacy in their present and future ministries, including collaboration with ecumenical, interfaith and secular partners in the work of congregational, ecclesial and social transformation.
4. **RACE-CLASS-GENDER-EARTH NEXUS:** All graduates of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary have learned to seek out and recognize the race-class-gender-Earth nexus as they engage the work of contextual analyses and in their critique, retrieval and reconstruction of Christian beliefs and practices.
5. **SPIRITUALITY AND VOCATION:** In addition, graduates with a Master of Divinity degree are capable of articulating their experience and understanding of who God is; of facilitating faithful conversations among people with varied perspectives; of

appreciating a variety of ways to engage God’s presence; and of using biblical and theological tools for building vibrant faith communities.

6. **HERMENEUTICS AND INTERPRETATION:** In addition, graduates with a Master of Divinity degree can make normative use of critical, intersectional and constructive theological theories; recognizing and utilizing hermeneutical approaches other than those of one’s own cultural/social group. They can demonstrate how these tools of interpretation ground their preaching, teaching, worship leadership and pastoral care.
7. **CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS:** In addition, graduates with a Master of Divinity degree have learned to identify privilege and oppressions; to articulate the root causes of systemic inequity and environmental degradation in their specific ministry context; to teach and preach from various biblical and theological bases for the work of social transformation toward restorative justice. They can lead worship that integrates each Christian’s baptismal call to “seek justice and peace in all the Earth” with core strategies to engage self and communities in the work of dismantling “isms.”
8. **PASTORAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS:** In addition, graduates with a Master of Divinity degree have developed skills in teaching, preaching, pastoral care, worship leadership and planning, outreach, conflict resolution and congregational fiscal responsibility. They understand how denominational identity [Lutheran and others] informs one’s understanding of God and celebrate how multicultural, ecumenical and interfaith perspectives deepen, challenge and animate each spiritual journey.

ASSESSMENTS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Form of Assessment	PLTS Learning Objectives							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Class Participation		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Engaged Study Prompts		X	X	X		X	X	
Intersectional Biography	X		X				X	
Contemporary Theological Methods Presentation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Some Practices for Developing a Theological *Habitus*

- Add a theologian or theological text to your daily reading, even if it’s only a few sentences each day. Pick a theologian or text you’ve been hoping to read, and begin or end your day by reading a few sentences, paragraphs or pages.

- Identify your own interpretive tendencies. Are you a reader/thinker that more naturally gravitates toward synthesizing, toward deconstructing or toward some other way of making sense of the Bible? How about theological texts – are you more easily drawn toward the “big picture” in the text or toward the constitutive elements in an argument?
- Become more aware of the connections that exist between your personal history and experiences on the one hand and your theological perspectives on the other. We are all drawn to certain theological positions in part because of our histories, our wounds and our joys. Knowing how your experiences and your theological points of view intersect will help you express your own theological voice in authentic ways.
- Practice *Ubuntu*,¹ recognizing that your theological ideas and denominational perspectives come from and exist in a web of other theological ideas and denominational perspectives. Theologians who are conversant in and appreciative of more than one tradition can practice genuine hospitality in theological conversations.
- Don't be afraid to come to theological conclusions and give them voice. Just remember to hold your theological convictions with humility, recognizing they are not universal truths by any means.

Course Pedagogy

The process of teaching and learning in our course follows a three-step inductive process:

- **Before Class** – thoughtful reading/viewing of assigned materials and preparation of your engaged study prompts. Come to class ready to help lead and participate in discussions.
- **Class Sessions** – expanding the concepts and discussing questions/insights that have arisen. This will be accomplished through a variety of teaching and learning activities: lecture, small and large group discussion. The last few minutes of each class session will provide orientation to the next class session's readings and topic areas.
- **Written Work** – engaging the work of this course integrating your own voice and keeping your particular context(s) with course materials.

¹ A Bantu word, *Ubuntu* is explained by Desmond Tutu in *No Future Without Forgiveness* in this way: "My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours." We belong in a bundle of life. We say, "A person is a person through other persons."

Student Workload

Activity	Instructor-Led		Independent		Remarks
	Weekl y	Course	Weekl y	Course	
In-class time	3	39			Three hours/week
Course Materials			6	78	Averages 6 hours/week.
Essays and Projects	.5	6.5	1.5	20	One to One instructor feedback and student
TOTAL		45.5		98	

Grading and Assessment

- **Weekly class attendance and preparation of engaged study prompts - 30% of final grade.**
- **Your Intersectional Biography – 30% of final grade.**
- **Group Presentations on Theological Method – 40% of final grade.**

For details on these assignments, see the full descriptions below in the section entitled "Assignment Descriptions and Due Dates."

All assignments must be completed in a timely manner in order to receive a passing grade in the course. Please don't hesitate to ask the instructor in advance for a brief extension of a due date should the need arise. Your class participation and written work will be assessed using the following criteria:

A/A- Fulfills the assignment, addressing assigned content with clarity, insight, and thoroughness. An organized reflection, where points flow from one to another. Free of grammatical and spelling errors.

B+/B Fulfills the assignment, however some assigned content is not thoroughly addressed. An organized reflection, where points flow from one to another. A few grammatical and spelling errors present.

B-/C+ Fulfills the assignment, but some assigned content remains unaddressed and comments lack a discernable focus or structure. Multiple grammatical and spelling errors.

C/C- Barely fulfills the assignment, with little or no attention to addressing assigned content. Lacks focus or structure. Multiple grammatical and spelling errors.

Grading Rubrics:

Exceeds Expectations A/A-	Meets Expectations B+/B	Progressing B-/C+	Not There Yet C/C-
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1. Class Participation (30%)

Collaboration and Participation in Class Discussions	Actively listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the class.	Listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the class.	Makes an effort to listen to, share with, and support the efforts of others in the class.	Rarely listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the class.
Engaged Study Prompts Readiness	Motivated, high quality constructive engagement with the materials and peers, with exemplary initiative and preparedness with the readings.	Focused engagement with the materials and peers, following directions with initiative, and prepared with readings.	Evidence of some effort to engage with the materials and peers and to follow directions.	Lack of effort and engagement with materials or peers. Not following directions. Unexcused absences.

2. Written Work (70%)

Fluent writing style, free of spelling, grammar and punctuation errors	Meeting with excellence the expectations for the assignment, student demonstrates strong grasp of correct spelling, grammar and punctuation and the conventions	Meeting the expectations for the assignment and with evidence of effort, student demonstrates only few errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation, and with the conventions of academic	Minimally meeting the expectations for the assignment, student shows little effort, and struggles with spelling, grammar, punctuation, and the conventions of academic writing.	Not meeting the basic expectations, student shows no effort and fails to write with correct spelling, grammar and punctuation. Student is in need of writing tutoring and learning of the conventions of academic writing.
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Engagement With and Presentation of Concepts, Analyses and Insights	In an exemplary way, key concepts are understood with nuance and presented eloquently with supporting resources and arguments. Insights are effectively	Key concepts are understood and presented with supporting resources or arguments. Effort is made to state insights clearly.	Not yet fully understanding or presenting correctly all the related concepts. Insights stated vaguely and with no supporting sources or arguments.	Failed to understand and present even the basic concepts, or misrepresented several major concepts. No insights stated, and no supporting arguments or use of sources.
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Assignment Descriptions and Due Dates

1. **Engaged Study Prompts** — Engaging assigned materials carefully each week, with enough time to ponder them, constitutes a crucial commitment to the work of this

course. This requires **at least 2-3 hours each week. Always bring the resources we engage to class**, so we can use them for discussion, referring to specific passages.

While you are reading/watching assigned materials, you should make note of **at least two things you want to remember, refute and/or discuss further**. These need not be written down to turn in; however, the instructor reserves the right to require them in writing if it seems you are not coming to class prepared for discussion of assigned materials. **Be prepared to use your prompts during class discussion, small group work, etc.**

2. **Your Intersectional Biography – Due in class on March 14th.** An essay of 5-7 pages, double-spaced, typed, in which you address the following²:
 - What is your social location?
 - Where do your gender, race/ethnicity, sexual identity, social class, ability, age, nation of origin, and religion intersect and situate you within structures of social, political, economic and religious power?
 - How does your social location affect the ways you do theology?
 - How can this awareness help you be attentive to the theologies of people who are differently located and allow those theologies to be in dialogue with your own beliefs?

3. **Contemporary Theological Methods Presentation – Selection of Method and Presentation Date in class on February 28. Draft due in class on April 25, May 2 or May 9.** Using Panopto, plus other resources such as PowerPoint, prepare a presentation of at least 20 minutes in which you explicate and explore the theological method you have chosen to study. You should address subjects like:
 - In what ways is this theological method contextualized – historically, politically, socially, religiously, communally?
 - How does critical theory inform this theological method?
 - How are both individual and communal life experiences important to this theological method?
 - What biblical sources and perspectives, if any, are valued and/or emphasized in this theological method?
 - What are some key theological ideas and perspectives constitutive of this theological method?
 - Who would you say are important theologians engaging this theological method today?

In addition, at the end of your presentation, please be prepared to:

- answer any questions that arise from your presentation
- facilitate a brief class discussion concerning the intersectionalities between your chosen theological method and those presented by others.

² Kim and Shaw, *Intersectional Theology*, 18.

Final presentation due on May 20 by 5:00 pm Pacific time

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Class Schedule

- January 31** **Introductions and Course Overview**
- Introductions
 - Covenant for Life Together
 - Personal Pronouns
 - Syllabus Overview

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- February 7** **A Matter of Interpretation**
- Read:** 1. Caputo, Introduction
View: "Hermeneutics: A Very Short Introduction"

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- February 14** **The Importance of Critical Theories**
- Read:** 1. "The Ultimate Cheatsheet for Critical Thinking"
2. Brookfield, "Exploring the Meaning of Critical Theory For Adult Learning"
- View:** "What Is Critical Theory?"
"What Is Queer Theory?"

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February 21 Presidents Day – no class

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February 28 Postmodern Hermeneutics

Read: 1. Caputo, chapter 11 & “A Conclusion Without Conclusion”

View: “Postcolonialism: WTF? An Intro to Postcolonial Theory”

In-class: Presentation Topic/Date Selection – come to class prepared to identify which particular contemporary theological method you will research and present for your final project. You should choose one theological method from among the following:

- black theologies
- feminist theologies
- womanist theologies
- *mujerista* theologies
- *minjung* theologies
- eco-feminist theologies
- queer theologies
- process theologies
- narrative theologies
- interfaith theologies
- postcolonial theologies

Be sure to bring your calendar with you to class so you can select a date for your presentation as well.

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March 7 Understanding Theological Intersectionality

Read: 1. May, “Historicizing Intersectionality”

2. May, “Intersectionality”

View: “Journey to Liberation: The Legacy of Womanist Theology”

In-class: You will be given 30 minutes of class time to begin work on your intersectional biography. **Please come to class prepared to work individually.**

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March 14 **Biography as Intersectional Theology**

Read: 1. Bal, “First Memories and Second Thoughts”

View: 1. Cone, “The Cross and the Lynching Tree”

2. *The Guardian*, “Pain and terror: America remembers its past”

Assignment Due: Your Intersectional Autobiography due

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March 21 **Spring Break – no class**

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March 28 **Intersectionality as Theological Method**

Read: 1. “Intersectionality in Theological Education”

2. Moe-Lobeda, “Structural Violence Theory”

3. Nixon, “Slow Violence”

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April 4 **Applying Intersectionality to Theology and the Bible**

View: 1. “Reading the Bible at the Margins: Strategies for Inclusive Biblical Interpretation”

2. Lightsey, “A Womanist Queer Theology”

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April 11 **Practicing Theological Intersectionality**

Read: 1. Patel, “The ‘Inter’ in Interfaith”

2. Patel, “The ‘Faith’ in Interfaith

View: “Standing Rock – Dr. Cornel West Speaking”

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April 18 Easter Monday – Theological Method presentation prep week

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April 25 Theological Methods Presentations I

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May 2 Theological Methods Presentations II

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May 9 Theological Methods Presentations III

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May 20 Final Presentations submitted by 5:00 pm, Pacific time

There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.

Audre Lorde



Academic Honesty and Accountability³:

Referencing your sources accurately when you depend on them for insight is a matter of scholarly integrity and accountability in the Western academic tradition. It is crucial that you honor your sources; disclose the origin of claims you make and acknowledge the debt that we all, as learners, owe to previous learners and ancestors in faith and doubt.

Referencing your sources increases the quality of your work in this course. You should think of it as an exercise in ‘humble access,’ **a practice of spiritual discipline as you become more aware of how you come to know, claim and express theological ideas and concepts.**

The educational programs of California Lutheran University are designed and dedicated to achieve academic excellence, honesty and integrity at every level of student life. Part of CLU’s dedication to academic excellence is our commitment to academic honesty. Students, faculty, staff and administration share the responsibility for maintaining high levels of scholarship on campus. Any behavior or act which might be defined as “deceitful” or “dishonest” will meet with appropriate disciplinary sanctions, including dismissal from the University, suspension, grade F in a course or various forms of academic probation. Policies and procedures regarding academic honesty are contained in the faculty and student handbooks.

Plagiarism, cheating, unethical computer use and facilitation of academic dishonesty are examples of behavior which will result in disciplinary sanctions. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:

- Word for word copying without using quotation marks or presenting the work as yours
- Using the ideas or work of others without acknowledgement
- Not citing quoted material. Students must cite sources for any information that is not either the result of original research or common knowledge.

Standards of Student Conduct Statements:

- [Student Life Handbook](#)
- [Academic Honesty Statement](#)

Communication and Academic Discourse

All class communication will be grounded in mutual respect. Both the students and the professor must be open to participating in academic forms of discourse, which can include challenges to and critiques of one’s own ideas. This is different from personal attacks [“bullying”], which will not be tolerated.

Accommodations

³ Adapted from Professor Marion Grau’s syllabus for ST 2188/8218: Theology I, Fall 2014.

Students whose first language is other than English and who need accommodations with regard to completing class assignments should communicate their needs to the professor or teaching associate. All students, especially those with documented learning disabilities, should communicate any limitations and challenges they face in class participation and completion of assignments to the professor should the need arise.

Research and Writing Supports

PLTS students have access to research and writing supports from the GTU Library [Reference Desk](#). PLTS students also have access to writing supports through the [Cal Lutheran Writing Center](#). Students can make an [appointment](#) with the Writing Center through the website. More information about the Writing Center is available from Dr. Scott Chiu, Director of the Writing Center and Assistant Professor of English, at chchiu@callutheran.edu.

Inclusive Language

In keeping with PLTS and GTU inclusive language policies, please use inclusive language for human beings in class discussion and in your written work.

Sexual Misconduct

Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and California Lutheran University do not tolerate any degree of sexual misconduct on or off-campus. We encourage you to report if you know of, or have been the victim of, sexual harassment, misconduct, and/or assault. If you report this to a faculty member, she or he must notify Cal Lutheran's Title IX Coordinator about the basic facts of the incident. More information about your options for reporting can be found at: <http://www.callutheran.edu/title-ix/>.

Disclaimer

This syllabus may change from time to time to accommodate changing circumstances. Every effort will be made to alert students to changes that occur in a timely manner.