

PUBLIC THEOLOGY 2: THE SOCIAL AND SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE

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Course Description:

An important task of public theology is to engage with the overarching systems that structure the public sphere. And yet human beings relate to those systems and are affected by them in intensely personal ways. Therefore, if concrete life is to be enhanced in practical and immediate ways, we also need to investigate the way theological resources can be used to shape the personal intersection between individual lives and social systems. In this course we will examine the tasks of public theology within the social and scientific discourses, and especially examine their impact on the detriment or enhancing of individual lives.

Not all theological actors have used theological resources to affect positive changes in the various social or scientific discourses. This is seen most dramatically in the debates on homosexuality and in the anti-scientific movements against environmental protection. Yet the justice-seeking and truth-seeking dimensions of Christian faith traditions can also provide rich and textured resources that can be used to enhance life and to promote collaboration with the natural sciences.

This course will (1) introduce students to the core principles and methodology of an engaged public theology, and examine concrete case studies of theology in the public sphere related to (2) issues of sexuality and gender, (3) human rights, and (4) the science and theology discourse. These concrete case studies will allow students to examine negative appropriations of faith traditions that harm life, as well as positive instances where theological resources work to enhance life. Furthermore, while the written and spoken word dominates the public theology endeavor, it is not the only medium available. Therefore, this course (5) will also introduce students to non-verbal ways of bringing theological resources into the public sphere. Students will then have opportunities to develop their own concrete and practical research projects that work toward the enhancement of life in their own contexts.

Note: This course may be taken without first taking “Public Theology 1: Political and Economic Crises”.

Assessment:

2 Newspaper/Blog/Facebook posts (20%)

1 Book Review (40%)

1 Research Paper (40%)

Readings:

In addition to excerpts from the following texts, students will also make use of contemporary materials/reports.

Arrigo, L.G., and L. Miles (eds.), *A Borrowed Voice: Taiwan Human Rights through International Networks, 1960–1980* (Taipei: Social Empowerment Alliance, 2008).

Niebuhr, R., *The Nature and Destiny of Man 1* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996).
[Chinese Edition]

Chen T.-L. et al. (eds.), *The Inside Story of the Battles Among Legal Professionals in Taiwan: Democracy, the Rule of Law and Human Rights, III* (Taipei: Passgale, 2014).

- Cheng, T.-J., D.A. Brown (eds.), *Religious Organizations and Democratization* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006).
- Conradie, E., (ed.), *Collected Essays in Public Theology – Dirk Smit* (Stellenbosch, S.A.: Sun Press; 2007).
- de Gruchy, J.W., *Christianity and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
- Dekkers, M., *Dearest Pet. On Bestiality* (London: Verso, 2000).
- Diamond, L., M. F. Plattner, P. J. Costopolous (eds.), *World Religions and Democracy* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005).
- Eddington, A., *The Nature of the Physical World* (London: Dent, 1964).
- Hansen, L., (ed.), *Christians in Public: Aims, Methodologies and Issues in Public Theology* (Beyers Naudé Centre Series on Public Theology, vol. 3. Stellenbosch, S.A.: Sun Press, 2008).
- Harries, R., S. Platten (eds.), *Reinhold Niebuhr and Contemporary Politics: God and Power* (Oxford: OUP, 2010).
- Kuo, C.-T., *Religion and Democracy in Taiwan* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008).
- Moltmann, J., *Ethics of Hope* (London: SCM, 2012).
- Moltmann, J., *God for a Secular Society: The Public Relevance of Theology* (London: SCM, 1999). [Chinese Edition]
- Newlands, G., *Christ and Human Rights* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).
- Nurser, J.S., *For All Peoples and All Nations: The Ecumenical Church and Human Rights* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005).
- Peters, T. (ed.), *Genetics* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1998).
- Peters, T. (ed.), *Science and Theology: The new consonance* (Boulder: Westview, 1998).
- Polkinghorne, J., *The Faith of a Physicist* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).
- Polkinghorne, J., *Belief in God in an Age of Science* (New Haven: Yale Nota Bene, 2003).
- Smit, D., *Essays in Public Theology. Collected Essays 1* (Stellenbosch: Sun, 2007).
- Smit, D., 'Reformed Faith, Justice and the Struggle Against Apartheid,' *Reformed World* 55/4 (2005): 355–368.
- Stroik, D. G., *The Church Building as a Sacred Place: Beauty, Transcendence, and the Eternal* (Chicago: Hillenbrand, 2012).
- Torgerson, M. A., *An Architecture of Immanence: Architecture for Worship and Ministry Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).
- Villa-Vicencio, C., *A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation Building and Human Rights* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992).
- Welker, M. and J. Lam (eds.), *Political and Public: Western and Chinese Theological Discourse* (Hong Kong: Logos and Pneuma Press, 2014). [Chinese Edition]
- Whitehead, A. N., *Science and the Modern World* (London: Pelican, 1938).
- Witte, Jr., J., *The Reformation of Rights: Law, Religion, and Human Rights in Early Modern Calvinism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007).

Course Outline:

Note: The content of the course may be adjusted during semester to meet student needs.

Session	Content
1	<u>Part I: Introduction</u> Guiding Principles and Methodology for Public Theology
2	<u>Part II: Sexuality and Gender</u> 1. Christian Patriarchy and the Feminist Response

Session	Content
3	2. Christianity and Human Sexuality
4	3. Prostitution and Law Reform in Taiwan
5	4. The Homosexuality Debate in the Taiwanese Presbyterian Church
6	5. Analysis: The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan “Pastoral Letter” on Homosexuality
7	<u>Practical Training: Enhancing Life Programmes</u> How to prepare a practical research project
8	<u>Part III: Human Rights</u> 1. The Reformation and Christian Resources for Human Rights
9	2. “Christian Punishment” and the Death Penalty
10	3. War Crimes and Compensation: The Value of Human Life
11	<u>Part IV: Theology and Science in Public Dialogue</u> 1. Science and Theology: Restoring Discourse
12 & 13	2. Human Stem-Cell Research and Genetic Therapy: Theological and Social Challenges
14	3. Human Dominion and Theological Influence in the Environmental Crisis
15	<u>Part V: Performative Public Theology</u> Religious Practice, Witness, and Architecture in Public Spaces