

# HUMT 3020 01: Perspectives on the Person II

**Seattle University**  
**Winter Quarter, 2016**

MWF, 9:20-10:45am  
GARR 111

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## **A. Course Description**

This version of Theological Perspectives on the Person considers a question central to human existence: What prevents human beings from flourishing? The course, which serves to introduce students to the discipline of theology, explores the question by way of three thematic clusters: authors who focus on *anxiety* as the root problem; authors who focus on the consequences of such anxiety for victims of *oppression*; and authors who analyze the objectification of the root problem in human culture/*social structures*. How do these views compare? What is at stake for each author, and how might their analyses be relevant in view of the problem(s) people confront today? In light of the views surveyed students will have the opportunity to develop their own critical response to the question of what blocks people from the fullness of life and what might be done to address it.

## **B. Course Objectives**

Upon *successful* completion of the course, you will have:

- Understood key theological foundations of the Christian, Catholic, and Jesuit traditions
- Examined your own beliefs and learned effectively to engage with the beliefs of others in a civil and disciplined way
- Understood, at an introductory level, the academic study of theology, and the key issues, questions, and approaches of the discipline.
- Become more effective in writing, including writing of high quality academic prose.
- Learned to identify and think carefully about issues of value and justice.
- Demonstrated the difference between *arguments* versus mere *opinions* and shown why good arguments matter
- Demonstrated an understanding of—and sensitivity toward—multiple perspectives, especially when they challenge your own (agreement with any or all of the authors surveyed is not required)

### C. Required Texts

- Course Reader available at SuperCopy.
- Selected writings accessible online and through Canvas.
- Ted Peters. *Sin: Radical Evil in Soul and Society*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994.
- Peter Rollins. *The Idolatry of God*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012.
- Paul Tillich. *The Courage to Be*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952 (reprint, 2000).

### D. Methods of Evaluation for Determining Grades

- Participation – 10%: Students are required to participate regularly in class discussions (not as experts but as learners) in an effort to understand the material. While the instructor will occasionally solicit personal points of view to begin discussion, full credit will be given only for active, informed participation concerning directly the text under review. Students who do not participate in larger class discussion must participate in smaller group work to receive a passing grade (C-) for participation.
- Exam – 15%: There will be an exam at the end of the first third of the course to monitor student progress.
- Reading Quizzes – 10%: At least four pop-quizzes will be given randomly over the term to ensure reading comprehension.
- Papers – 40% (2 X 20%): A brief response (2-3 pages, double-spaced) to the course question will be required at the beginning and in the last third of the term. The second paper must sufficiently engage at least two of the authors surveyed. A draft of the first paper will be required.
- Creative Project – 10%: Depict artistically what blocks human flourishing. Additional guidelines will be provided.
- Final Exam – 15%: A final examination will be given at the end of the quarter.

### E. Class Policies

- Attendance: A student will lose half a letter grade with each absence after three unexcused absences. An absence includes missing the equivalent time to one absence or three late arrivals to class. Generally, legitimate excuses for an absence are 1) serious illness (with note from doctor) or 2) a death in the family. Please note: unless it is urgent, you would like your absence excused, or you wish to ask me a question specifically about the class you missed, there is no need to notify me/explain your absence.
- Late Assignments will decrease by half of a letter grade each day they are late. This includes the required draft of the first reflection paper.
- Plagiarism: Any use of another person's work (printed or online) as one's own is strictly prohibited. This includes quoting verbatim or closely paraphrasing a written or online source without citation as well as work done for another class. The penalty for plagiarism at minimum is an "F" for the paper or the assignment. For more information about plagiarism, review the university's academic policies at <http://www.seattleu.edu/registrar/> or ask the instructor. Please note as well that unintended plagiarism is still plagiarism. When in doubt *cite your sources!*

- **Written Work:** All written work must be submitted as typewritten hardcopy and stapled. Unstapled work will not be accepted. When submitting work as hardcopy, do not use paper clips, a binder, or a folder. The papers will require a title page and page numbers. The title page should not be numbered. Please do not put your name anywhere else in the document after the title page (especially as a header). The type must be in 12-point font with 1" margins and double-spaced. Email attachments will not be accepted for any written work except drafts/outlines *after* the first required draft.
- **Professional Conduct:** 1) please turn off cell phone ringers before class; 2) laptops may not be used in class except for a documented disability; 3) do not speak in class when others are talking (I may deduct five points from your participation grade each time this occurs); 4) texting in class is not permissible and may result in a five-point participation grade reduction; 5) arrive on time and wait until the end of class before preparing to leave.
- **Preparation:** Since this is a discussion-oriented class, all students should print, read and bring to class the assigned reading. Readings are to be completed by the beginning of class on the days listed in the class schedule. Failure to bring any of the assigned readings to class (including those available online which you must print) will result in a five-point deduction from your participation grade.
- **Discussion:** In keeping with the educational mission of Seattle University, all students are encouraged to make the most of their opportunity to learn by openly and actively participating in classroom dialogue without fear of undue censure on the part of other students or the professor. Personal opinions or faith will be honored; however, **no personal opinion or statement of personal faith will be considered a substitute for scholarly inquiry about the course texts and their content.** The instructor will accordingly redirect class discussion to the academic consideration of the course material as appropriate. **Our task is first to understand texts and then, if possible, to evaluate them.**

#### **Additional Information to Note:**

1. **Special Accommodations:** If you have, or think you may have, a disability (including an "invisible disability" such as a learning disability, a chronic health problem, or a mental health condition) that interferes with your performance as a student in this class, you are encouraged to arrange support services and/or accommodations through Disabilities Services staff in the Learning Center, Loyola 100, (206) 296-5740. Disability-based adjustments to course expectations can be arranged only through this process.
2. **Course Schedule Changes:** Any alteration of the course schedule will be announced in class. If a student is absent from class, it is his or her responsibility to contact the instructor or another student in the class regarding such changes as well as missed handouts, revised assignments, etc. The instructor may modify the syllabus/course schedule at his discretion.

## F. Student Performance Requirements

- “A” – work is excellent. An “A” paper is focused with an explicit thesis statement. It exhibits a clear, effective and organized line of thought as well as a thorough understanding of the material. It has few or no English usage problems, anticipates possible objections (if helpful) to its point of view and/or supporting arguments, and frequently provides pertinent citations/evidence to make its case. The writer’s “voice” is confident and clear.
- “B” – work is good. A “B” paper directly states and addresses the driving question or thesis and provides supporting citations. The writing may show some English usage problems, but the punctuation, grammar and spelling are generally better than average insofar as they do not prevent the reader from comprehending the point(s) the writer is making. The material is well-organized but transitions may be abrupt and information may be too “thin” or too general (i.e., lacking evidence/support).
- “C” – work is adequate. A “C” paper demonstrates that the student basically follows the directions for the assignment. The driving question or thesis has been articulated and argued, but may have been vaguely or imprecisely formulated. The analysis contains some organizational problems. Paragraphs lack unity. Citations are superficial and/or infrequent. Transitions are absent. The writing may be awkward, unclear or contain English usage problems.
- “D” – work is below adequate. A “D” paper may be late or written without regard for the assignment’s instructions. It lacks a thesis statement or driving question. It is careless, poorly organized, often unclear, and the information is not under the control of the writer.
- “F” – work is inadequate.

## G. Course Schedule

### Unit I: Anxiety and Aggression

- M 1/4 Course introduction. What prevents human beings from flourishing? What solution (if any) exists to resolve the problem?
- W 1/6 Existential Anxiety. Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 32-63. Consult reading guidelines available on Canvas.
- F 1/8 Pathological Anxiety. Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 64-85.
- M 1/11 Courage and Transcendence. Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 155-190. **Paper #1 draft due in class.**
- W 1/13 Courage and Faith. Peters, *Sin*, 65-85.
- F 1/15 The Problem of Pride. Schlesinger, “Forgetting Reinhold Niebuhr,” available at [http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/18/books/review/forgetting-reinhold-niebuhr.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/18/books/review/forgetting-reinhold-niebuhr.html?_r=0)

- M 1/18 Martin Luther King holiday. No class
- W 1/20 Niebuhr, "Grace and Sin," 136-150, 152-156, 159-163 (the unassigned pages of the Niebuhr reading are optional), course reader. **Paper #1 due in class.**
- F 1/22 The Problem of Death. Becker, *Escape from Evil*, 1-5, course reader; Solomon et al, *The Worm at the Core*, 127-149, course reader. **Guest speaker.**
- M 1/25 Confronting Death. Kesebir, "A Quiet Ego Quiets Death Anxiety," 610-623, access online through SU library psychology database. Consult reading guidelines available on Canvas.
- W 1/27 Review of Tillich, Peters, Niebuhr, and Becker
- F 1/29 **Exam**

### **Unit II: Oppression and Self-Negation**

- M 2/1 The Other Side of Pride. Saiving, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1200194> (click "Download PDF").
- W 2/3 Saiving, "The Human Situation," continued.
- F 2/5 The Experience of Self-Hate. Kyung, *Struggle to Be the Sun Again*, 36-52, course reader.
- M 2/8 Binary Thinking and the Subordination of Women. Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 50-78, 82-94, course reader.
- W 2/10 Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 109-144, course reader.
- F 2/12 Sin as a Subject Position. Lowe, "Sin from a Queer, Lutheran Perspective," *Transformative Lutheran Theologies* (ed. Streufert), 71-86, course reader. Consult reading guidelines available on Canvas.
- M 2/15 Presidents' Day. No class.
- W 2/17 Review of Saiving, Kyung, Gebara, and Lowe. **Creative Project Proposal due in class.**

### **Unit III: Idolatry and Injustice**

- F 2/19 Rahner and the Problem of Guilt. Modras, *Ignatian Humanism*, 203-241 (you may skim or skip "Vatican II," pp. 230-236), course reader.
- M 2/22 Modras, *Ignatian Humanism*, continued.

- W 2/24 Rahner, "Man as a Being Threatened Radically by Guilt" in *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, 90-115, course reader.
- F 2/26 Original Guilt Objectified. Arrupe, "Men and Women for Others," available at <http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/men-for-others.html>. **Creative Project Due in class.**
- M 2/29 Sin, Idolatry, and Consumerism. Rollins, *The Idolatry of God*, 9-43, 48-49.
- W 3/2 Rollins, 75-100; Tillich, "The Lost Dimension in Religion," 41-48, course reader.
- F 3/4 Scapegoating Others. Peters, *Sin*, 161-192.
- M 3/7 Review of Rahner, Arrupe, Rollins, and Peters

#### **Unit IV: Course Review**

- W 3/9 Writing Workshop. **Guest speaker.**
- F 3/11 Course Review/Evaluation. **Paper #2 due, Matteo Ricci College, 4:30pm.**
- M 3/14 No class.
- TH 3/17 **Final Exam, 10:00-11:50am.**

**Please note addendum on the next page**

## Syllabus Addendum

### Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What if I don't have a background in religion? Can I still do well?** *In this class we will be engaging in the scholarly study of (primarily) theological texts. This means that you will be evaluated on your academic work alone (i.e., your engagement with the texts by way of asking questions and your informed participation). Whether you have experience of a religious tradition makes no difference; whether you can understand/evaluate texts critically makes all the difference.*
2. **How should I address or communicate with the instructor?** *As a professional courtesy, I simply ask that you refer to me as **Professor Peterson** or **Dr. Peterson**. In all email correspondence with me, sign your name at the end of the email, use proper grammar, and begin your email with "Hello Professor Peterson" or "Professor Peterson" (followed by a comma in each case). If you do not address me, if you address me improperly, if you do not sign your name, or if you do not follow the rules of standard written English to the best of your ability, you will be asked to rewrite your email appropriately before I respond.*
3. **How often does the instructor check his emails?** *Generally speaking, I check my email Monday-Friday and respond during this time as quickly as possible. If you have a question that needs answering in a timely manner, please ask it during the week. Since this is an intersession course, I will also do my best to check email over the weekend, but the best way to get a quick response would be to email me during the week.*
4. **Will the instructor ever offer his own point of view?** *On occasion I may offer—but not impose—my perspective where I have expertise. That said, I always invite respectful, informed, constructive criticism of any point of view—including my own.*
5. **I need to get a good grade. Is the instructor a tough grader?** *It is important to remember that you do not "get" a grade—you earn a grade. I want you to do well and I will help you in any way that I can; ultimately, however, you are responsible for your learning. Along the way it may be tempting when you feel frustrated or challenged in this course to blame the texts, your schedule or the instructor. However, if you assume full responsibility for making sense of the material and try your best then the likelihood of your success is far greater.*
6. **Is there anything else I should know?** *Students are my number-one priority at Seattle University. If you feel confused or find yourself struggling with the material, please let me know. I would be glad to meet with you either during office hours or by appointment.*