CH/TH656 The Life and Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer  
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte  
Dr. Richard Burnett - Fall 2015

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Schedule: The assignments for this course will extend throughout the fall semester, from Sep. 8 through Dec. 19. The actual class meetings will be held on Tuesday afternoons, 1:00 – 4:00 PM, Sep. 8 – Nov. 17 [No class on Oct. 6]

Office Hours: I will be available before and after class, and by email or phone or at other times by appointment.

Catalog Course Description: As a pastor and member of the German resistance to Hitler, Bonhoeffer distinguished himself as one of the twentieth century’s most important theologians. This course presents his life, writings, and theology through lecture and class presentations.

Relation to Curriculum: This course can be a CT elective for M.Div. or MACT students, or a general elective for other students.

Course Purpose: The purpose of this course is to analyze the theological contribution of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. It focuses on his: 1) theology, biography, and context; 2) concepts of discipleship, vocation, and ministry; 3) understanding of communal life, pastoral care, leadership, and the nature of suffering, and 4) understanding of the task of preaching, the relationship of justification and sanctification, church and state, peace and war.

Course Objectives: In light of the articles of Gordon-Conwell’s mission statement, the course aims to do the following:

1. By analyzing Bonhoeffer’s understanding of the task of preaching, this course aims to make students more faithful servants of God’s Word and more “competent in its interpretation, proclamation and application in the contemporary world” (article 1 of the mission statement).

2. By studying Bonhoeffer’s theology, this course aims “to maintain academic excellence in the highest tradition of Christian scholarship in the teaching of the biblical, historical and theological disciplines” (article 2).

3. By examining Bonhoeffer’s understanding of communal life, pastoral care, leadership, and the nature of suffering, this course aims to assist students in becoming more “skilled in ministry” (article 3).
4. By assessing Bonhoeffer’s concepts of discipleship, vocation, and ministry, this course seeks to challenge students’ understanding of the Christian life and, specifically, “their character, outlook, conduct, relationships and involvement in society” (article 4).

5. By investigating Bonhoeffer’s efforts to resist evil and bear witness in a context of severe opposition, this course aims to “provide leadership and educational resources for shaping an effective evangelical presence in Church and society” (article 5).

6. By evaluating Bonhoeffer’s legacy and witness, this course aims “to develop in students a vision for God’s redemptive work throughout the world and to formulate the strategies that will lead to effective missions, evangelism and discipleship” (article 6).

**Course Requirements:** Achievement of the course objectives will be measured through a variety of assignments. The successful completion of these assignments will require each student to spend at least 135 hours devoted to coursework, both in class and outside of class. The following chart indicates how these hours are distributed across the various course assignments. More specific descriptions of the assignments are given later in this syllabus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Assignments</th>
<th>Expected Time Commitment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading the assignment materials</td>
<td>70 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures and class participation</td>
<td>30 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three evaluative papers</td>
<td>35 hours</td>
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**Required Texts:**


**Course Assignments:**
1. **Reading and classroom participation (25 points):** You must complete approximately 2000 pages of reading according to the schedule at the end of this syllabus. Discussion of this reading will be the major learning activity in this course, and thus it is crucial you complete each reading assignment prior to each class meeting when it will be discussed and be prepared to ask and answer questions related to it.

By Tuesday, Dec. 8, you must upload a reading report to the Sakai site, indicating how much of this required reading you have completed.

2. **Evaluative Paper 1 (25 points) due Oct. 6:** In light of the assigned readings up to Sept. 29, this paper (6-8 pages in length) will address various questions related to Bonhoeffer’s cultural, political, theological, and ecclesial context and will compare and contrast it with the American cultural, political, theological, and ecclesial context both then and now. A guidesheet for this paper will be available on the Sakai site.

3. **Evaluative Paper 2 (25 points) due Nov. 3:** In light of the assigned readings up to Oct. 27, this paper (6-8 pages in length) will address various questions related to Bonhoeffer’s understanding of the task of preaching or his understanding of pastoral care. The student may choose either one. A guidesheet for either paper (on preaching or pastoral care) will be available on the Sakai site.

4. **Evaluative Paper 3 (25 points) due Dec. 8:** In light of the assigned readings up to Nov. 17, this paper (6-8 pages in length) will address various questions related to Bonhoeffer’s legacy. A guidesheet for this paper will be available on the Sakai site.

**Grading:** The point values listed above mean that the total number of points available for the course is 100. Final letter grades will be applied with cutoffs as follows: A 95, A- 90, B+ 87, B 83, B- 80, C+ 77, C 73, C- 70, D+ 67, D 63, D- 60, F below 60. A grade of A+ will be given very rarely, when the student’s work is truly exceptional. (At Gordon-Conwell, a grade of A+ and a grade of A are both counted the same way in calculating the student’s GPA. Thus, a GPA above 4.0 is not possible.)

**Late work:** All late work will be penalized the equivalent of one letter grade per week beyond the due date, unless arrangements are made ahead of time. Extenuating circumstances will be considered as appropriate. Work turned in later than Saturday, Dec. 19 (the end of the fall semester) will normally require that an extension be approved by the Registrar’s Office. If you anticipate a problem, contact me as soon as possible.

**Attendance Policy:** Class attendance and participation are a central part of this course. If you must miss a class period, you should notify me in advance to justify your absence. If you have more than one unexcused absence from class, you will receive a penalty of three points per additional unexcused absence on your final grade.

**Document Formatting Requirements:** All written assignments should be submitted in
either MS-Word or PDF format. (If you use a different word processor than MS-Word, please convert the file to PDF before submitting it.) Assignments should be double spaced with 1” margins on all sides of each page, and should be printed in Times New Roman 12 point type or another font of similar size and appearance. Assignments should be submitted electronically by posting on the Sakai site.

**Syllabus Addendum:** For other Seminary policies, refer to the attached Syllabus Addendum.

**Class Schedule:**

**Sept. 8, Session 1**  
*Bonhoeffer’s Background: Family, Education, and Context*

1. Read and be prepared to discuss Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*, 1-118

2. Read and be prepared to discuss Bonhoeffer’s lectures “The First American Tour” and “Protestantism Without Reformation” in *No Rusty Swords*, trans. Edwin H. Robertson and John Bowden (London: Collins, 1965), 76-118 (Handout)

For Further Reading:


**Sept. 15, Session 2**  
*Bonhoeffer and the Seduction, Capitulation, and Nazification of the Church*

1. Read and be prepared to discuss Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*, 119-182


For Further Reading:


Sept. 22, Session 3
Bonhoeffer and the Rise of the Confessing Church

1. Read and be prepared to discuss Eric Metaxas, Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy, 182-320

2. Read and be prepared to discuss “German Faith” (1934), in The Third Reich and the Christian Churches, ed. Peter Matheson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981), 52-54 (Handout)

3. Read and be prepared to discuss selected texts from A Church Undone: Documents from the German Christian Faith Movement, 1932-1940, translated
and edited by Mary M. Solberg (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), TBA (Handout)

For Further Reading:


**Sept. 29 Session 4**

*Bonhoeffer’s The Cost of Discipleship*

1. Read and be prepared to discuss Bonhoeffer’s *The Cost of Discipleship*, 1-304

For Further Reading:


**First Evaluative Paper Due: Oct.6 (Upload on Sakai site by 12 noon)**

**Oct. 13, Session 5**

*Bonhoeffer’s Life Together*

1. Read and be prepared to discuss Bonhoeffer’s *Life Together*, 17-122

2. Read Bonhoeffer’s *Letters & Papers from Prison*, 21-84, 347-348

For Further Reading:

Oct. 20, Session 6
Bonhoeffer on Pastoral Care

1. Read and be prepared to discuss Bonhoeffer’s *Spiritual Care*, 7-89

2. Read and be prepared to discuss Bonhoeffer’s *Letters & Papers from Prison*, 343-347


For Further Reading:


Oct. 27, Session 7
Bonhoeffer and the Task of Preaching

1. Read and be prepared to discuss Bonhoeffer’s “Lectures on Preaching” in Clyde E. Fant, *Bonhoeffer: Wordly Preaching* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1975), 115-180 (Handout)

2. Read and be prepared to discuss selected sermons from *The Collected Sermons of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), TBA

For Further Reading:


Second Evaluative Paper Due: Nov. 3 (Upload on Sakai site by 12 noon)

Nov. 3, Session 8
Bonhoeffer on Church and State

1. Read and be prepared to discuss Bonhoeffer’s chapter on “State and Church” in his book, *Ethics*, 297-317 (Handout)
2. Read and be prepared to discuss Bonhoeffer’s *Letters & Papers from Prison*, 3-17 and 87-268

For Further Reading:


**Nov. 10, Session 9**

*Bonhoeffer on Resistance and the Ethics of Tyrannicide*

1. Read and be prepared to discuss Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*, 321-431

2. Read and be prepared to discuss Larry Rasmussen’s chapter on “The Measuring of Tyrannicide” in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Reality and Resistance*, 127-148

3. Read and be prepared to discuss Bonhoeffer’s *Letters & Papers from Prison*, 271-343 and 348-375

**Nov. 17, Session 10**

*Bonhoeffer’s Legacy and Witness*

1. Read and be prepared to discuss Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*, 432-542

2. Read and be prepared to discuss Bonhoeffer’s *Letters & Papers from Prison*, 375-404

For Further Reading:


Victoria Barnett, review of Metaxas’s *Bonhoeffer* in *Association of Contemporary Church Historians Newsletter* 16, 3 (September 2010), at http://journal.ambrose.edu/ojs/index.php/acchquarterly/article/view/46/92.


**Third Evaluative Paper Due: Dec. 8 (Upload on Sakai site by 12 noon)**
Syllabus Addendum

Academic Standards
Cheating and plagiarism are considered serious breaches of personal and academic integrity. Cheating involves, but is not necessarily limited to, the use of unauthorized sources of information during an examination or the submission of the same (or substantially same) work for credit in two or more courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructors. Plagiarism involves the use of another person’s distinctive ideas or words, whether published or unpublished, and representing them as one’s own instead of giving proper credit to the source. Plagiarism can also involve over dependence on other source material for the scope and substance of one’s writing. Such breaches in academic standards often result in a failing grade as well as other corrective measures. For more information, please consult the Student Handbook.

ADA Policy
The seminary complies with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. A student with a qualifying and authenticated disability who is in need of accommodations, should petition the seminary in accordance with the stated guidelines in the Student Handbook.

Cancellation of Class
In the event the seminary has to cancel a class meeting (impending storm, professor illness, etc.), the Registration Office will send out an email (via the GCTS email account) notification to all students registered in the respective course. If the cancelation occurs the day of the scheduled meeting, the Registration Office will also attempt to contact students via their primary phone contact on record. The professor will contact the students (via GCTS account) regarding make-up. If a weekend class is cancelled, the class will be made up during the scheduled Make-Up weekend (see the academic calendar for the designated dates). For more info, consult your Student Handbook.

Extension Policy
Arrangements for submission of late work at a date on or before the end date for the semester are made between the student and professor. Formal petition to the Registration Office is not required at this time. This includes arrangements for the rescheduling of final exams.

However, course work (reading and written) to be submitted after the end date for the semester must be approved by the Registration Office. An extension form, available online, must be submitted to the Registration Office prior to the “last day to submit written work.” Requests received after this date will either be denied or incur additional penalty. For a full discussion of this policy, please consult the Student Handbook.

Grades
Faculty have six weeks from the course work due date to submit a final grade. Grades are posted on-line within twenty-four hours of receipt from the professor. Students are expected to check their CAMS student portal in order to access posted grades (unless
instructed otherwise). Those individuals who need an official grade report issued to a third party should put their request in writing to the Registration Office.

**Virtual Writing Center**
Free assistance in writing papers is available to students through the Virtual Writing Center at Gordon Conwell. The Virtual Writing Center is staffed by Gordon Conwell graduates, or writing tutors with specialized knowledge in writing and/or ESL. Generally, this service is available to students who have completed or are currently enrolled in one of the following classes:

- CT500 (Introduction to Theological Research)
- CO501 (Introduction to Counseling Research)
- IS502 (Theological Research and Writing Seminar)

If you enrolled in GCTS before Fall 2008, you were not required to take one of the three pre-requisites above, and you may request access to the Virtual Writing Center. Also, ESL writing tutors are available to ESL students even if they are not currently enrolled in a degree program. If you do not meet one of these qualifications, but feel you would benefit from using the Virtual Writing Center, contact us and we will evaluate your status. Email writingcenter@gordonconwell.edu for more information.