

CH/TH 656 The Life and Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer
Fall Semester Thursdays 1:30-4:30 PM 2010 AC 151
(Tentative Syllabus)

Dr. Gordon L. Isaac, Instructor

Introduction:

Dietrich Bonhoeffer became a martyr at the age of 39 at the hands of the Nazi regime. He distinguished himself in the effort to energize the German Church against the oppressive political tactics and propagandists who were seeking to manipulate the Church in a bid to further the National Socialist aims. Although his life was short, he has left a considerable theological legacy. Instead of his writings becoming less important, they are becoming more widely read. Referring to Bonhoeffer, Dorothee Soelle has said he is, “. . . The one German theologian who will lead us into the third millennium.” Whether or not one agrees with this statement it is clear that Bonhoeffer’s life and legacy are worth careful consideration by evangelicals. Not only are his writings varied in genre, style, and content, but his life --- lived as it was in the context of conflict and courage --- causes us to reassess our own circumstances not only to believe but to act as Christians in the world.

Course Objectives:

The course is designed around three basic objectives:

- 1) The student will gain broad introduction to the historical circumstances and theological responses of the Confessing Church in wartime Germany.
- 2) The student will gain an introduction to the life, writings and theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer through primary readings, lectures and class presentations.
- 3) The student will begin to integrate and initiate an evangelical assessment of Dietrich Bonhoeffer through directed class discussions and written assignments.

Course Assignments:

The student is required to complete the following assignments:

- 1) Carefully complete the reading of assigned texts with report.
- 2) Produce two 5 page response papers to one of the Bonhoeffer texts or one aspect of a Bonhoeffer text, or the Eric Metaxas biography.

Reading assignment and notes: Take some notes on the reading. The form I will leave up to you. The point here is to record significant ideas or quotes and to respond briefly. This will help record the fact that you have completed the reading but will also deepen your interaction with the texts.

Response Papers: Choose one of the texts and respond. With brief introductory comments introduce the issue at hand. Develop that with agreement and disagreement

using good evidence. Conclude with some comments that show its significance and relevance. Clearly, selecting some aspect of Bonhoeffer's thinking in an area may be preferred to covering an entire book in this response. Five double-spaced pages.

Final Paper: Out of our/your study of Bonhoeffer this semester something of interest will have struck you. This is the time to explore that idea, measuring it against other voices. When possible identify the source of the concept in Bonhoeffer's thought and development. When possible allow your work to lead you to an evangelical assessment of his work. Ten to twelve double-spaced pages.

Grading Guidelines:

The student's grade will be determined by the following percentages:

Reading Report	10%
Response Paper I	45%
Response Paper II	45%

Grading Scale:

The grading scale as outlined in the current catalogue is the standard for the granting of letter grades in this course.

Required Textbooks:

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Discipleship*. Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 4. General Editor Wayne Whitson Floyd, Jr. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003. 318 pages.

_____. *Ethics*. Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 6. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009. 479 pages.

_____. *Life Together and Prayerbook of the Bible*. Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 5. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005. 184 pages.

_____. *Spiritual Care*. Translated with an introduction by Jay C. Rochelle. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985. 89 pages.

Kelly, Geoffrey B. and F. Burton Nelson. *A Testament to Freedom: The Essential Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. New York: HarperCollins, 1990. 579 pages.

Class Schedule: (subject to change)

Sept. 16 Introduction and Review of Syllabus
The Trajectory of the Bonhoeffer Legacy. Kelly/Nelson 1-44.
Setting the Stage: Theology at the Turn of the Century.

- 23 Barcelona and Berlin: His First Writings. Kelly/Nelson 47-104.
The Communion of Saints, Act and Being, The American Sojourn.
The Question of Christology: Kelly/Nelson 105-48.
Creation and Fall, Christ the Center.
- 30 The Rise of Nazism and the Church Struggle:
German Christians, The Bethel Confession, The Aryan Clause and The
Brown Synod. Kelly/Nelson 149-71;387-420.
London 1933-35: Fano, Ecumenical Connections, and The Barmen
Declaration. Kelly/Nelson 175-252.
- Oct. 7 The Preachers' Seminary:
Bonhoeffer as Preacher, The Finkenwalde Lectures Kelly/Nelson 252-99.
Discipleship Part I – context and audience. 1-198.
Bonhoeffer and the Sermon on the Mount

Reading Week 11-15

- 21 Preacher's Seminary:
Discipleship Part II – Its place and evaluation. 199-314.
Bonhoeffer, Church, and the Formation of the Image of Christ
- 28 Life Together – Meditation, Confession and Community. LT 1-140.
Spiritual Care – Mission, Law and Gospel, What it means to be a pastor.
SC 1-89.
- Nov. 4 The Shape of Bonhoeffer's Theology:
Luther and Barth. Biblical Hermeneutics. Revelation and Religion.
The Conspiracy and in Custody of the State. Kelly/Nelson 421 -526.
Bonhoeffer's Ethics:
Christ, Reality and Good
Ethics as Formation
Ultimate and Penultimate Things Ethics 1-170

Reading Week 8-12

- 18 Ethics continued: Ethics 171-298
The Natural
History and Good.
- 25 Thanksgiving
- Dec. 2 Ethics continued: Ethics 299-387.
God's Love and the Disintegration of the World
Church and World

9 Ethics continued: Ethics 388-449
The Concrete Commandment and the Divine Mandates.
Gathering Together the Strands: Themes of Bonhoeffer's Theology.
Toward an Evangelical Assessment of Bonhoeffer.

Bonhoeffer and the Confessing Church: A Selected Bibliography

- Barnett, Victoria. *For the Soul of the People: Protestant Protest Against Hitler*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Barth, Karl. *The German Church Conflict*. Ecumenical Studies in History, No. 1. Richmond: John Knox Press, 1967.
- Bergen, Doris I. *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- Bethge, Eberhard. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Man of Vision, Man of Courage*. New York: Harper & Row, 1999. 912 pages.
- _____. *Friendship and Resistance: Essays on Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Bethge, Eberhard, Renate Bethge and Christian Gremmels, eds. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Life in Pictures*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.
- Cochrane, Arthur. *The Church's Confession Under Hitler*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962.
- Conway, John S. *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933-1945*. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1968.
- Craig, Gordon. *Germany; 1866-1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Day, Thomas I. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Christian Community & Common Sense*. Toronto Studies in Theology Vol. 11. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellon Press, 1983.
- De Gruchy, John ed. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Witness to Jesus Christ*. Makers of Modern Theology Series. Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1991.
- Ericksen, Robert. *Hitler's Theologians*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985.
- Feige, Franz G. M. *The Varieties of Protestantism in Nazi Germany: Five Theopolitical Positions*. Toronto Studies in theology Vol. 50. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellon Press, 1990.
- Floyd, Wayne Whiston Jr. and Clifford J. Green. *The Bonhoeffer Bibliography*. Evanston, Ill: American Theological Library Association, 1992.
- Floyd, Wayne W. & Charles Marsh eds. *Theology and the Practice of Responsibility: Essays on Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. Philadelphia: TPI, 1994.
- Helmreich, Ernst Christian. *The German Churches Under Hitler: Background, Struggle and Epilogue*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979.

Huntemann, Georg. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: An Evangelical Reassessment*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996.

Kelly, Geoffrey B. and F. Burton Nelson, eds. *A Testament to Freedom: The Essential Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. (revised edition) New York: Harper-Collins, 1995.

Klemperer, Klemens von. *German Resistance Against Hitler, 1938-1945*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.

_____. *Germany's New Conservatism: Its History and Dilemma in the 20th Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.

Littell, Franklin H. and Hubert G. Locke eds. *The German Church Struggle and the Holocaust*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970.

Marsh, Charles. *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer: The Promise of His Theology*. 1994.

Marty, Martin E. ed. *The Place of Bonhoeffer: Problems and Possibilities in His Thought*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981.

Matheson, Peter ed. *The Third Reich and the Christian Churches: A Documentary Account of Christian Resistance and Complicity During the Nazi Era*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1981.

Metaxas, Eric. *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy: A Righteous Gentile vs. The Third Reich*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010.

Morris, Kenneth E. *Bonhoeffer's Ethic of Discipleship: A Study in Social Psychology, Political Thought, and Religion*. Pittsburgh: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986.

Peck, William J. ed. *New Studies in Bonhoeffer's Society*. Toronto Studies in Theology Vol. 30. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellon Press, 1987.

Rasmussen, Larry L. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989.

Wentzel, Fred D. ed. *Day is Dawning: The Story of Bishop Otto Dibelius based on His Proclamations and Authentic Documents*. Philadelphia: the Christian Education Press, 1956.

Zabel, James A. *Nazism and the Pastors*. Dissertation Series 14. Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1976.

Zimmermann, Wolf-Dietrich and Ronald Gregor Smith eds. *I Knew Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Reminiscences by his Friends*. New York: Harper & Row, 1964.

Internet Resources:

The Dietrich Bonhoeffer Homepage www.cyberword.com/bonhoefer

This site has links to a number of other sites which will give you resource to research Bonhoeffer on the net.

Bonhoeffer's Cell – Darren Sumner's new collection of Bonhoeffer internet resources
www.thesumners.com/bonhoeffer

The Bonhoeffer/Tillich Discussion Group www.lightlink.com/xine/lcm/dbpt-l.html