SYLLABUS

SE735 BIBLICAL GLOBAL JUSTICE
GCTS, Fall, 2008
Wednesday, 6-9pm, ???

Prof. Dean Borgman
dborgman@gcts.edu
978-546-5146

Course Description

Biblical Global Justice attempts to illustrate the second petition of the Lord’s Prayer: “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” This course should be seen as an advanced seminar following SE632, “Christianity and the Problem of Racism.” Though students may take this course without having been in SE632, they should consider taking the latter, if possible, either before or afterwards. The themes of this seminar (SE735) are Biblical justice, global injustice, global reconciliation, reform and development. The course entails rigorous reading, viewing disturbing and challenging videos, small group discussions, and personal soul searching.

Course Objectives

1. The student will demonstrate a strong Biblical understanding of justice as expressed in Gordon-Conwell’s Mission Statement (articles 1-2), from course readings, lectures and class participation, become more committed to living justly and prepared to preach and teach social concern.
2. The student will demonstrate a broad understanding of three case studies with reference to Gordon-Conwell’s Mission Statement (articles 4-6); course readings, class videos, lectures and discussions. Students will consider these elements of the course as examples of resources in future ministries.
3. The student will demonstrate an ability to apply a Biblical worldview and lessons learned from the case studies to a contemporary example of injustice or efforts of a local church through attention to Gordon-Conwell’s Mission Statement (articles 3 & 6) and writing of a final paper.
4. The student will be able to “agree to disagree” with others, to voice uncomfortable doubts and positions, to face inner wounds that affect relationships and ministry, and to work for personal and inter-personal healing and growth (articles 3 & 4).

Course Emphases

1. This course will consider various cultural views of justice along with its primary study of the Scripture’s concepts of justice.
2. Included in this course are considerations of the slave trade, the Holocaust, and the assassination of Archbishop Romero who championed the poor. It will also consider how churches can be faithful to evangelism and justice.
3. Biblical Global Justice will encourage students to make an active, personal investment in seeking justice for a contemporary problem.
Required Texts
(in the order in which they should be read)


Eric Metaxis (2007) *Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery*, HarperOne, 304pp. This is our main case study of political reform from an Evangelical perspective. It describes one person’s persistent stand, one strategy for social change, one long struggle that helped change our world.


Highly Recommended Reading


Miroslav Volf (1996) *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 336pp. A deep and penetrating analysis “us/then,” how we human beings exclude and how we must be able to embrace the other. Extra credit will be given for reading and reflecting (4-6 pp.) on this profound book.
Course Format and Assignments

This class will consist of lectures and class discussions about Biblical/secular conceptions of justice and case studies (the assassination Archbishop Oscar Romero and the Holocaust). From here the class considers Reconciliation, Relief and Development as implications of social justice.

A Personal Journal (in 3 parts) and Critical Reflection Papers will primarily evaluate student comprehension and growth. Class meetings will assume careful interaction with the assigned texts (according to schedule in this Syllabus) and your in-class participation will be factored into the final grade.

**Personal Journal.** This log will contain internal debates, conflicts and possible blessings you receive from this course. It’s to be written before your Lord for my eyes only. I will respond to you as a pastor and frank counselor. There is no page specification here; your work will be judged on its authenticity and holistic quality. Each chapter may be a couple of pages or longer.

*Chapter One* will contain your reasons for taking the course, your first impressions, particularly any difficulties you experienced (perhaps because of who you are and where you came from, your home), and further comments on reading, class discussions and anything we watched. As a final part of this first journal, summarize and respond to Nardoni’s, *Rise Up, O Judge* in 2-4 pages

*Chapter Two* will continue along the same lines as Ch. 1. How are you feeling about this course and its issues? How have you been affected by the videos shown? How are you reacting to classmates and professor? What new insights about yourself are you gaining? Have you become aware of any need for inner healing? How do you see yourself growing? What are you main questions or comments about the contents of this course? How are you thinking about Justice and Gospel?

*Chapter Three* asks for an evaluation of this course in terms of your own personal, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual growth. How will you integrate this course into your future personal, married/family, and secular life? How will it affect your ministry in the church?

**Critical Reflection Papers.** [Note: Don’t think this course is intended to pressure you in any particular theological, ethical or political direction—although understandably the professor has his own positions, which he is willing to explain. Please speak up if you feel any undue pressure; this class should express divergent opinions and approaches, and be able to agree and to disagree about important issues. It *is* intended to push you to consider justice issues as important, but how you work this out theologically and politically is among you, the Lord and your community.

As to these papers themselves: you are asked to summarize the central theme and main points of each book; you are encouraged to criticize or disagree with any points; you are again asked to be personal and subjective as to the effect of the reading on your theology, world view and politics; and finally to assess how you might use or forget this text in the future.]
Critical Reflection Paper #1: Read J. Barndt’s parable of The Happiness Machine (from Liberating the White Ghetto) and Chs. 23 and 25 of Brian McLaren’s Everything Must Change). You may critique what you’ve read from these two writers in any way you wish, writing from genuine conviction and informed thinking. Feel free to dissent or offer reservations, but express your feelings and analysis genuinely in 1-2 pages. (suggested 2-3 pp., Due)

Critical Reflection Paper #2: Describe your reading of Nardoni’s Rise Up O Judge. This is difficult scholarly reading. Give a concise sense of what it covers, the author’s approach, and points in the various chapters you considered important. You may point out how you disagree with his approach or conclusions, but highlight how this book was helpful to your understanding of biblical justice. (4-6 pp, Due)

Critical Reflection Paper #3. Who is Donald Shriver? What two books of his are referenced here in this Syllabus and what is each about? Note specifically how his Ethic for Enemies contributes to this course and to you personally. (3-5 pages; Due)

Critical Reflection Paper #4. Tell why, in your opinion, this book of Professor Mott’s might or might not be the central text of this course. If so, why in terms of what it covers, and what is needed by way of other texts to complement its reading. If not, how does what it covers leave you dissatisfied and what kind of a central text would you be wanting. (3-5 pp. Due)

Critical Reflection Paper #5. Why is Amazing Grace important to read at this point in the course? What does it demonstrate and to what degree does it suggest strategies for social change? What was its personal impact on you? Spend one page imagining a future scenario in which you might be called upon to be a faithful instrument for social change. (4-5 pp. Due with final work)

Critical Reflection Paper 6. Should your final text, Walking with the Poor, be required reading for all those heading out for missions in poor or underdeveloped countries? How important is it for this course? What misconceptions about the Gospel to all the world, about the poor, and about relief and development does it displace with sound principles from biblical texts and social science? With what do you disagree? What questions about this book do you have? What effect has it had upon you and how might you use or refer to it in the future? (4-7pp. Due with final work)

Extra Paper: A reflection paper on Miroslav Volf’s Exclusion and Embrace is optional, for extra credit. Summarize some thoughts, in a 2-4 page paper.

Your grade will be determined by four (4) elements: (1) your class attendance and participation (10%), (2) Personal Journals (30%), Critical Reflection Papers (60%).
TENTATIVE CLASS OUTLINE

Sep10  Introductions, Syllabus, Mechanics, Assignments
   Introductory PP  Idea of Justice: What is Justice, how do we know and deal with it?
   Structural and Distributive, Punitive and Restorative Justice
   Justice and Peace
   Theology, Philosophy, Social Science, Ethics
   Issues and Responses; Various Opinions
   Assignments: Begin Personal Journal, Ch. 1; Complete Critical Reflection #1.

Sep17  Hand in Critical Reflection Paper, #1
   Discussion of Barndt’s Happiness Machine and McLaren’s Prosperity System
   Equity, Distributive Justice and Politics
   Justice: Creation, Incarnation, Eschaton
   Assignments: Continue or finish Journal, Ch.1.
   Study as much as you can of Nardoni. Begin Critical Reflection Paper #2

Sep24  Review Syllabus and Assignments
   Justice & Salvation  PP
   Justice in the ancient Near East
   Justice in the Torah, Historical Books and Monarchy, Prophets, and Wisdom Books
   Assignments: (Reading Week ahead) Complete and be ready to turn in Ch. 1 of Journal
   including your response to Nardoni.

Oct1   Hand in Journal 1 and Critical Reflection Paper #2
   Justice in the Gospels, NT writers, and the Early Church
   Justice and Jesus
   [Jesus and Justice (holistic) Individual and Corporate Liberation]
   [Mark’s, Matthew’s, and Luke’s emphases]
   Justice in Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah and Revelation (the Apocalypse)
   Justice in the Early Church and the Epistles
   [Acts (2,4), Epistles, Apocalypse, Early Fathers, Augustine and Aquinas]
   Assignment: Read Shriver and prepare Critical Reflection Paper #3
   Google & Wiki: El Salvadore & U.S. Latin American support of dictators

Oct8   Hand in Critical Reflection Paper #3
   Discussion of Shriver
   Introduction to International Justice: Imperialism, Oppression, Pacifism and Revolt
   Viewing and discussion of film “Romero”
   Justice and Reconciliation [The Lord’s Prayer and 2 Corinthians 5:18]
   Assignment: Read Steven Mott and write up Critical Reflection #4
   Begin reading Metaxis’s Amazing Grace
   Review facts of the Holocaust. How would you teach it in SS or YM?

Oct 13-17  READING WEEK  (Use it well; including time with Journal Ch. 2)
Oct22  Hand in Critical Reflection Paper #4
Discussion of Biblical Ethics and Social Change
Restorative Justice, Forgiveness and Reconciliation
Volf’s Exclusion and Embrace
Viewing and Discussing “Forgiving Dr. Mengele”
Assignment: Complete Metaxis’s Amazing Grace and Critical Reflection #5
    Reflect on Isaiah 58 and Jeremiah 29

Oct29  Hand in Critical Reflection #5
Processing and evaluating course so far
Justice and Evangelism
Viewing and Discussing clip from “Middle Passage”
Global Church Acting Globally: the Abolition of Slave Trade
Discussing Amazing Grace, Wilberforce and the Clapham Circle
Assignment: Begin studying Walking with the Poor
    Finish Ch. 2 of your Journal.

Nov5   Hand in your Journal, Ch. 2
Discussion of poverty and the Church
When is help helpful? When are good intentions counter-productive?
Presentation and discussion of Myers’ Walking with the Poor

Nov 10-14  READING WEEK  (to catch up and go ahead)

Nov19 Hand in any delinquent work
Review of Course and its Readings
Where we’ve come, what questions do we have? (Small & Large Group)
What kind of strategies are we seeking?
Counterproductive Help: good intentions that led to bad results

Nov26 Working Out Justice with the Poor
The Church and Poverty
Poor preaching and unfortunate ‘missional’ efforts
Justice and Poverty: Relief and Development
Secular efforts to end Poverty
The U.N.’s Millenium Development Goals (MDG)
Local, Systemic and Collaborative Strategies

Church-secular partnerships  (WCC’s “Decade to Overcome Violence” DOV)
Assignment: Work on Final Paper, Personal Journal Ch. 3.
    and Myers’ Walking with the Poor, Critical Reflection #6

Dec5   Hand in all work
What remains to be done / How can we become involved?
Video: Church, the Spirit, and the Kingdom
Termination and Evaluation
Further Bibliography


Shane Claiborne (2006) *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical*, Zondervan, 368pp. This book has created buzz and a little controversy, but it is an important challenge.


Shane Claiborne (2006) *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical*, Zondervan, 368pp. It should be obvious how important this book is for this course. Its born out of a growing spirit among your generation that gave rise to this class. It is contemporary prophecy and suggested life style (The Simple Way), run parallel to the student initiative that created Biblical, Global Justice here at GCTS. Our challenge may be more complicated than this message (see ironies, inconsistencies and extremes noted in Amazon reviews), but our motivation must be based on placing our culture under the scrutiny of biblical justice.

Chap Clark & Kara Powell (2008) *Deep Justice in a Broken World: Your Kids: Helping Your Kids Serve Others and Right the Wrongs Around Them*, Zondervan/Youth Specialties, 244pp. Where are we to really dig in if not with the rising generation? Here are some basic and practical ideas for all Christians.


Charles Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, “Revivals are hindered when ministers and churches take wrong ground in regard to any question involving human rights.”


Mark Hatfield, *Not So Simple* and *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, Reflections from a Christian politician, the long-time, former Senator from Oregon.


Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon (1989) *Resident Aliens: A provocative Christian assessment of culture and ministry for people who know something is wrong*, Abingdon Press, 175pp. Rather than an Activist Church, more concerned about building a better society than reforming the church or a Conversionist Church, forgetting social structures to work only for inward change, the Confessing Church is a radical alternative whose main task is worshiping Christ in a way that counters and challenges culture.


Joseph Marryat (1816) *Thoughts on the Abolition of the Slave Trade, and the Civilization of Africa with Remarks on the African Institution, and the Examination of the Report of... Slaves in the British West Indies Islands*, Cornell University Library, 242pp. This book should be of great interest in showing how ideas of that time regarding slavery and Africa were so different from our contemporary perspectives.
H. Richard Niebuhr (1951) *Christ and Culture*, Harper&Row, 259pp. A classic historic sketch and diagram of five Christian approaches to secular (or pagan) society. Critically important for considering the Christian, justice and social change. For a quick summary of the book, see Ch. 4 of my *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough*.

Henri Nouwen (1998, 2008) *Compassion*, Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd. 160pp. As Stephen Mott and others have demonstrated the basis of justice in love, Nouwen sees compassion as the antidote for competition in a world dominated by principles of egocentric power and destructive control.


Stephen Sizer *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armegeddon?* Has Evangelical justice for Israelis led to injustice for Palestinians?


**Organizational Resources**

World Vision (helped establish this course, [www.worldvision.org](http://www.worldvision.org)) One of the best known and respected global relief and development organization—turn to this site for articles, podcasts, blog, and Email updates (use at least one of these Email services for this course). Center for Public Justice (CPJ, [www.cpjustice.org](http://www.cpjustice.org)) An independent organization for policy research and civic education whose mission is to equip citizens, develop leaders, and shape policy. Sojourners faith, politics, culture ([www.sojo.net](http://www.sojo.net)) Mission: to articulate the biblical call to social justice, inspiring hope and building a movement to transform individuals, communities, the church and the world. Christianity Today ([www.christianitytoday.com](http://www.christianitytoday.com)) free Email of relevant articles and more. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC, [www.mcc.org](http://www.mcc.org)) Seeks to demonstrate God’s love by working among people suffering from poverty, conflict, oppression and natural disasters… addresses peace and justice issues.

International Social Justice Commission of the Salvation Army (Google its name or find under www.salvationarmy.org) Mission: to advocate and advise on social, economic and political issues giving rise to the perpetuation of social injustice in the world.

Christian Community Development Association (CCDA, www.ccda.org) Mission: to inspire and train Christians who seek to bear witness to the Kingdom of God by reclaiming and restoring under-resourced communities.

Boston Faith & Justice Network (www.bostonfaithjustice.org) Rachel Anderson (617-359-6910)