

**TENTATIVE SYLLABUS**  
**RGT 3712/6712HF: THEOLOGY AS BIOGRAPHY**  
**WINTER SEMESTER, 2008**  
**Monday and Thursday: 11 am to 1pm**  
**John D. Dadosky, Ph.D., S.T.D.**

Office Hours (by appointment)  
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**Description**

This course will investigate the relationship between (auto) biography and theological reflection by looking at the living examples of several significant thinkers. The course begins by summarizing the foundations for such a presupposition as rooted in Lonergan's claim that "objectivity (truth) is the fruit of authentic subjectivity." Secondly, the course looks at some paradigmatic examples from Christian history such as St. Augustine. Third, a large portion of the course will emphasize the life and thought of Thomas Merton, but will also include other examples some of which he admired such as Simone Weil, Catherine de Heuck Doherty, and Dorothy Day.

Required: Photocopied handouts. Course Reader of readings available at Tru Copy, 1033 Bay Street, Unit 13-15 (just north of St. Joseph St.) Call before you go: 416.928.1146.

Course Requirements: Assignment #1 (5 %), 2 Three page reflection papers (20%), 1 biography presentation (20%), and final paper (40 %), class participation (15%)

*Attendance and Extensions:* Students are encouraged to be on time for class and return promptly after each ten minute break. If you are going to miss a class please send me an email and let me know. Extensions are granted on a case by case basis at Professor's discretion, SDF's are given in exceptional circumstances. Late papers are subject to 10% per week deduction.

**Class Preparation:**

Readings will be assigned each week as obligatory preparation for class discussion. Written assignments will also act as a basis for class discussion.

Please note that Regis College offers critical reading and writing seminars and writing tutors each year for Regis students. Please make use of this excellent service.

Please, papers should be type-written, doubled spaced, left-justified, and one inch margins on all sides and no more than 12 characters per inch (i.e., standard font size 11-12 is acceptable). Do not exceed page limit. Extensions for assignments are to be negotiated with the professor prior to the due-date. All sources must be documented in accord with accepted academic practices such as that described in Turabian, Kate. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Chicago:

University of Chicago Press, 1987. For additional assistance, consult <http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/>

**Assignment Due at Beginning of class, January 18th:****(1 page reflection paper): Dunne's "Passing Over"**

Write a one page reflection paper critically engaging what John Dunne means by "passing over." How do you understand what he means? Does this resonate with your own experience? Any intellectual or affective response?

**Assignment Due at Beginning of class, February 8th:****(3 page reflection paper): Augustine's *Confessions***

Write a three page reflective paper about your engagement with St. Augustine's *Confessions*. How does the text help you name your own experience? How does your experience open up or challenge the meaning of the text? Pay attention to the three dimensions of your affective response, intellectual understanding and sense of mystery. How is your engagement spiritual, theological and methodological?

**Assignment due beginning of class, March 1 (3 page reflection paper)**

Write a three page reflective paper about your engagement with ONE of Merton's writings (*Seven Storey Mountain*, *Sign of Jonas*, or *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*). How does the text help you name your own experience? How does your experience open up or challenge the meaning of the text? Pay attention to the three dimensions of your affective response, intellectual understanding and sense of mystery. How is your engagement spiritual, theological and methodological?

**NOTE ON REFLECTION PAPERS:** I will use the following criteria to organize my feedback on ALL reflection papers. The categories are not weighed equally nor are they applied mechanically to calculate a grade.

- Introduction, clear statement of theme, approach, outcome
- Conclusion, clear summation of learning
- Use of one of the assigned texts to inform experience
- Use of relevant experience to inform the text, makes explicit reference to text
- Integrates references to affective and intellectual response
- Opens up a creative approach to mystery
- Avoids anecdotal writing
- Synthetic interrelation of analytic insights
- Reflective awareness of spiritual, theological, methodological engagement
- Organization/coherence of ideas
- Analysis/critical thinking
- Clarity/style of presentation
- Mechanics (spelling, footnotes, bibliography)

## Guidelines for Biography Project

### Theology as Biography

**Presentation:** The ideal presentation will contain the following:

- a.) Brief overview of life mentioning some of their significant accomplishments, literary works.
- b.) Introduction and overview to the principle work (e.g. *Confessions*, *Seven Storey Mountain*, etc.).
- c.) Application of some of the categories from Dunne, Leigh, McClendon, Lonergan, etc.

Note: One week before the presentation, provide the class with copies of **25 to 30** page select reading of your chosen source. Please have mercy on your classmates and the trees and stick to this page limit.

**Paper:** Essentially, you are building upon and developing the work that you have already prepared in your presentations. 12-15 pages (length).

The major portion of the paper should include the following (a.,b.,c.)

- a.) Brief overview of life mentioning some of their significant accomplishments, literary works.
- b.) Introduction and overview to the principle work (e.g. *Confessions*, *Seven Storey Mountain*, etc.).
- c.) Application of some of the categories from Dunne, Leigh, McClendon, Lonergan, etc.

The Concluding section of the paper should contain the following:

- d.) Personal reflections from material in the course, things you found insightful.

Please make sure your work is fully and properly documented. Kate Turabian (also known as the Chicago Manual Style) is the standard reference manual for citations in theology.

I will use the following criteria to organize my feedback to your paper. The categories are not weighed equally nor are they applied mechanically to calculate a grade.

- Introduction, clear statement of theme, approach, outcome
- Conclusion, clear summation of learning
- Use of primary references (from chosen person's autobiographical and reflective writings).
- Use of secondary biographical sources to support arguments.
- Integrates knowledge from the first three weeks of the course (the categories).
- Opens up a creative approach to mystery
- Avoids anecdotal writing
- Synthetic interrelation of analytic insights
- Reflective awareness of spiritual, theological, methodological engagement
- Organization/coherence of ideas
- Analysis/critical thinking
- Clarity/style of presentation
- Mechanics (spelling, footnotes, bibliography)