

## **DLS Foundational 2 (LSHV 602 01), Spring 2020, T 6:30-9pm, ICC 207B (DRAFT)**

**Description:** A number of issues today can be called society's critical issues—from mass incarceration to workplace burnout, to say nothing of climate destruction, drug addiction, unprecedented migration, and growing socio-economic inequality. This course brings a theological lens to reflection on critical issues. How does thinking theologically align with and even enhance other kinds of thinking on civil society and human prosperity? We first consider what we mean by theology. Is it even religious, strictly speaking? We then proceed by considering a set of themes through the lens of class readings, some of which are overtly religious, others ostensibly scientific (in the broad sense of credible knowledge), and all are meant to help us think more expansively and more creatively about problem-solving today.

**Instructor:** Paul Heck, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, [plh2@georgetown.edu](mailto:plh2@georgetown.edu)

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:00am-10am; or by appointment.

**Class Format:** We will devote the first half of each session to discussion of the assigned reading, the second half to consideration of their relevance (theologically speaking) to a critical issue.

**Note:** I will be away January 28. February 18 the university is on a Monday schedule. And please recall that Tuesday, March 11, falls during the university's spring break. Assuming we meet February 18 at the normal hour (we may need to find another room), we'll still be one session (or 2.5 hours class time) short. We'll thus need to discuss how we want to make up this time.

**Readings:** All readings will be posted on canvas. You need to check canvas for the assignments.

**Etiquette:** Tardiness is unacceptable. Late arrivals are disruptive. Be kind to your classmates. Absences will negatively impact your grade. If you don't think you can attend all sessions, this is not the class for you. Please find one that suits your schedule. Participation is expected—beginning with your careful reading of weekly texts and ending with your fruitful engagement of classmates. Respect: Do you hear your classmates especially when they disagree with you?

No technology (iphone, laptop, ipad, etc.) to be used or out on desk during class. Only pen and paper.

You are to complete readings in advance, taking notes and preparing questions and discussion points.

**Email Sabbath!** I don't have email at home and only answer emails when on campus (T/W/TH).

### **Required work:**

1. Class Participation (including group-work & presentations) = 20%
2. Mid-Term Paper (due February 5) = 30%
3. Final Paper (due May 5) = 50%

**Presentations** consist of short analyses in which you connect the readings to a critical issue as assigned to you. Frequency of presentations will depend on number of students in the class.

**SCHEDULE and TOPICS** (subject to change):

January 14: We'll discuss what theology is. We'll even seek to experience it.

January 21 and February 4: We consider **pleasure seeking** through the eyes of an 11<sup>th</sup>-century mystical jester and a 16<sup>th</sup>-century humanist. How does theological reflection on the dynamics and purposefulness of pleasure speak to, for example, today's monetization of attention?

February 11: We consider **work** through a post-colonial novel and a papal encyclical. How does theological reflection on the dynamics and purpose of work speak to workplace burnout?

February 18: We consider **suffering** through a 12<sup>th</sup>-century mystical epic poem. How does theological reflection on the dynamics and purpose of suffering speak to drug addiction?

February 25 and March 4: We consider **friendship** through a 1<sup>st</sup>-century (BCE) biography and a 12<sup>th</sup>-century monastic colloquy. How do friendship's dynamics/purpose speak to migration?

March 18 and March 25: We consider the success of religious **conversion** through the work of a sociologist. How do the dynamics/purpose of conversion speak to the crisis of incarceration?

April 7 and April 14: We consider **sacrifice** through the lens of evolutionary biology. In what ways does religious language around sacrifice align with the evolutionary value of sacrifice?

April 21: We consider **nature** through the eyes of a 13<sup>th</sup>-century mendicant and a 19<sup>th</sup>-century Jewish philosopher. How does theological reflection on the dynamics & (moral) purposefulness of nature speak to a range of crises, including climate destruction and sexual harassment?

April 28: We consider **emotional conditions** (anger, disgust, zeal) in relation to human rights. How do the dynamics/purpose of these emotions speak to controversy over blasphemy laws?

May 5: Conclusion. What is theology?