

Revised January 15, 2009

**The University of Calgary  
Faculty of Humanities  
Department of Religious Studies**

**Religious Studies 417.01 L02**

Winter 2009

Instructor:

Office:

Office Hours:

Telephone:

E-mail:

**Recent Religious Thought: Process Theology**

SS 1332: Thursday 12:00 – 2:50 pm

Dr. Virginia Tumaszk

SS 1302

M 1:00 – 2:00 or by appointment

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**Texts:**

Alfred North Whitehead. *Modes of Thought*.

Charles Hartshorne. *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God*.

Hans Jonas. “The Concept of God After Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice.”

Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki. *The Fall to Violence: Original Sin in Relational Theology*.

**Course Description:**

This course is a seminar for the study of process philosophy and theology. Reflection on the study of theology in the context of Religious Studies and an introduction to Alfred North Whitehead’s philosophy of organism will provide the background for a consideration of process theology done in two modes: in the mode of ‘natural theology’ by Charles Hartshorne and as a basis, along with evolutionary theory, for the theological reinterpretation of the Christian doctrine of original sin by Marjorie Suchocki. Throughout the course, reflection on the nature of theology and the relationships among theology, philosophy, and science will be encouraged.

**Course Procedure:**

The class will meet as a seminar on Thursday afternoons. Each student will have primary responsibility for presenting the assigned reading in one seminar session by providing pertinent background material, when necessary, and leading the class in discussion. That person will meet with me on the preceding Friday or Monday to prepare for this responsibility by discussing the content of the reading and talking about effective presentation strategies, especially with regard to generating and leading discussion.

Please note that all members of the seminar are expected to be active participants at all class meetings. The success of the seminar depends on all members preparing for and attending each meeting and making thoughtful and informed contributions to the discussion.

**Course requirements:**

- 10% for level and quality of participation throughout the term

A successful seminar requires the preparation and participation of all of its members. You are expected to prepare for each class by reading the assigned text and reflecting on it so that you arrive at class ready for discussion. This portion of your grade will be determined by your willingness to contribute to discussion throughout the term, as well as the nature and quality of your contributions and the respect that you show to other members of the seminar in discussion.

- 15% for six written responses to assigned texts
  - You are required to write six short response papers, each about two pages in length. The papers will be equally weighted and amount in total to 15% of your final grade. The responses will be marked Pass/Fail. The Pass will be counted as an 'A' and the Fail will be counted as an 'F.'
  - You can complete this requirement for any six weeks starting with the second week, with the following exceptions: 1) everybody must write a response paper for the February 26<sup>th</sup> session, 2) you cannot write a response paper for the session that you are responsible to lead, 3) you must write at least one response paper on the Suchocki readings.
  - Written responses should consist of critical reflections on the text and the articulation of questions that the text raises for you. They should not summarize the text.
  - Responses must be handed in at the beginning of class. In no case will a paper be accepted at a later time, as this would defeat the purpose of the assignment, which is to prepare for class discussion by focused reflection. For the same reason, neither will the paper be accepted if you cannot stay for class on that day.
  - 35% for seminar presentation and direction of discussion
    - The student responsible for Thursday's seminar will make arrangements to meet with me earlier in the same week or at the end of the preceding week to discuss the material and to develop presentation and discussion strategies.
    - You are required to prepare a handout for distribution to the class to facilitate your presentation. You must bring a draft of the handout to your consultation with me.
    - After your presentation, you are required to submit a self-assessment of about one page in length. The self-assessment should be emailed to me before noon of the Monday following your presentation. Please insert your text into the body of the email message, i. e., do not send as an attachment. Failure to complete this requirement will result in a penalty of one full letter-grade (e.g., a drop from a B to a C) on the presentation.
    - Your grade will reflect an assessment of your preparation, your handout, your presentation, and your self-assessment.
- 40% for research essay, due April 20
  - In an essay of 10-12 pages (3000 – 3600 words) you should address a topic relevant to the course content. You must obtain approval from me of the topic of your research; the final paper will not be accepted if the topic was not approved.
  - You must email me a statement of your research topic, including a research question and tentative bibliography, by March 19. Your bibliography should have no less than 5

sources should include recent articles from academic journals. Please use the MLA style of documentation.

- You are required to talk about your research sources and conclusions at one of the last two meetings of the term. (More specific direction will be given later in the term.) A penalty of one full letter grade will be imposed if you fail to meet this requirement or if it is obvious that you did not prepare for the presentation.
- N.B. Your essay must present a thesis and develop an argument for the thesis.
- In grading the essay, I will take into account the sophistication of your analysis and cogency of your argument, your writing style, and the selection, use, and documentation of sources.

#### Grading:

A letter grade will be assigned to each component of the course (with the above-noted exception of the weekly written responses) according to the University's "Undergraduate Grading System," which appears in the University Calendar:

A+	4.00	Outstanding.
A	4.00	Excellent-superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.
A-	3.70	
B+	3.30	
B	3.00	Good - clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.
B-	2.70	
C+	2.30	
C	2.00	Satisfactory - basic understanding of the subject matter.
C-	1.70	
D+	1.30	
D	1.00	
F	0	Fail - unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.

N.B. All written assignments will be graded with regard to both form and content.

#### Core competencies:

Some of the skills that students can expect to develop in completing the work for this course include:

- careful reading of texts
- critical analysis
- organization of material for presentation
- effective direction of discussion
- oral presentation
- written communication
- independent research