

Course Description

HT 396W

Course Title: *The Contemporary Crisis of Defining and Confessing the Gospel*

Name of Instructor: Winston D. Persaud

Semester and Year: Fall 2023

Requirement fulfilled: Final-year MDiv *Capstone*

Number of hours, grading option: 3 credit hours; letter grade or credit/no-credit

COURSE DESCRIPTION: The underlying assumption is that there is only one gospel of Jesus the Christ which is always expressed and concretized in a cultural matrix. The gospel is the good news of forgiveness, reconciliation, liberation and salvation, and communion with God, through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To examine the biblical witness (both Testaments) to the gospel;
2. To explore the Lutheran principle of law/gospel;
3. To discern some of the primary and enticing, distorted formulations of the gospel;
4. To consider the meaning of the gospel in the encounter with the religions of the world;
5. To consider the contemporary meaning of the article on justification as the article by which the Church stands or falls (AC, Art. VII);
6. To explore the interrelatedness of gospel, culture, and mission.

PROCEDURE:

This will be a combination of discussion of required and other readings, and lecture. Each week, two students will be expected to prepare a three-to-four-page summary of the class discussion/lecture.

EVALUATION:

1. Regular and systematic preparation for and participation in the weekly seminar will count up to 50% of the grade.
2. **Term paper: due on Friday, 15 December 2023.** Maximum length: 8-10 pages. The **topic must be based on the objectives of the course** and must include an annotated bibliography of everything the student read for the course (minimum: 1,000 pages). This paper or examination (see #4 below), together with the annotated bibliography, will count up to 50% of the grade. Students must receive a C (on the paper or examination) in order to receive a minimum overall grade of C for the course.
3. The first draft of the final paper, in which the student defines the proposed area of research, states why it is important, identifies and elaborates on the issues involved and proposes a bibliography, will be due on **Monday, 30 October 2023.**
4. Instead of the term paper, students may elect to do a final, five-hour written examination in a classroom setting. The examination question will be made available before the day of the examination. Students who choose this option are required also to hand in an annotated bibliography.
5. During the **weeks of 17/19 and 24/26 October 2023**, each student will submit a 2000-word (double-spaced), critical book review, which will be discussed in class. A list of books for review will be presented. The evaluation of the written review and the oral response to questions and comments raised in class will be included in #1 above.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Required: Bible; Kolb/Wengert, Eds. *The Book of Concord; Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*

Recommended: to be given later.

Commitment to DEI Work

Creating Beloved Community and a learning environment full of mutual respect is hard and ongoing work. We are a diverse community seeking greater diversity, and this diversity is paramount in the beauty of God's good creation. Indeed, we see this diversity as grounded in the doctrine of the Trinity. Diversity can refer to multiple ways that we identify ourselves, including but not limited to race, national origin, languages, sex, ability, body type, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, gender identity, ancestry, veteran status, culture, or genetic information. These diversities and more contribute to the perspectives and excellence that, I, as an instructor, bring into the classroom and beyond and will be affirmed.

I am still learning how to best celebrate multiple perspectives; please let us know ways to celebrate your identities, pronouns to use, and/or when something said/assumed in class concerns you. I acknowledge that for centuries white male authors have dominated this field and are present in our course readings and may present overt and covert biases in the material due to the lens through which it was crafted. I have attempted to present materials from diverse perspectives. I continue to work at finding textbooks, articles, and other resources on the focus of the course by authors who reflect the diversity of voices to which I am committed. We will share stories that reflect diversity of people, voices, contexts, and experiences which reflect the thrust of the course. In our common work in Jesus' Name, your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated to help improve the effectiveness of this course for you personally and for groups of students.

Topics covered in seminary are often difficult on various planes. When we embrace diverse perspectives, we embrace healthful disagreement—a mark of deep and true community. Please engage in discussion with care and empathy for yourself and others. In this class we endeavor to embrace the uncomfortable as we critically examine some of our most basic assumptions, values, and beliefs. As you work to bring good courage to this course, I will work to ensure an environment that supports your full participation and risk taking.

The instructor intends that this course will foster especially the following Pastoral-Diaconal Practices:

- *Practice of Being Rooted in the Gospel:* Articulates the Gospel in a way that is heard as Gospel. Is publicly Lutheran and Gospel-centered.
- *Practice of Missio Dei in Word and Sacrament:* Is grounded in Word and Sacrament as the means by which God creates faith in Christ and a community (*koinonia*) for God's mission (*martyria* and *diakonia*) in the world. The ordained exercise faithful worship preparation, evangelical preaching, and sacramental leadership. The consecrated serve as a strategic bridge between church and world. Associates in ministry serve faithfully in their areas of call in relationship to the worshipping community. All the baptized are sent by the Spirit to employ their gifts in God's mission for the life of the world.
- *Practice of Curiosity:* Is fundamentally curious, employing creativity in the use of language. Is open to grow beyond current perspectives and willing to pursue learning with intellectual depth.
- *Practice of Evangelical Listening and Speaking the Faith to Others:* Listens in a way that leads people to deeper faith questions. Engages in thoughtful witness to the Christian message, especially to youth and those outside the faith.
- *Practice of Sensitivity to Cross-Cultural and Global Dimensions:* Is sensitive to multicultural issues and religious pluralism in the context of globalization. Understands the inclusive character of the Christian Gospel.

ACCOMODATIONS POLICY: It is seminary policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disability conditions that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students are responsible for informing their instructor of any documented disability by the end of the first week of class or upon subsequent diagnosis. Documentation on disability conditions is kept in a confidential file in the ADA Compliance Officer's office.