

HT 272W American Liberal Theology and Ethics

Instructor: Craig L. Nessian

Elective

Open to all. Synchronous.

1 Credit; letter grade or credit/no credit

In this seminar we read selected texts on American liberal theology and ethics. Students have the opportunity to read and discuss Gary Dorrien's *The Spirit of American Liberal Theology: A History*, which is a compendium of his three-volume magnum opus. This theological tradition incorporates the use of both reason and revelation as sources of authority for biblical interpretation, doctrinal development, and ethical reflection. Originating out of the Enlightenment, liberal theology has a distinctive history in North America that contributes to contemporary theology in significant ways. Liberal theology and ethics is foundational for the development of theologies with strong ethical commitments, including liberation, process, and progressive theologies.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To gain an introduction to American liberal theology and ethics.
2. To explore the history of American liberal theology and ethics.
3. To discuss theological texts on American liberal theology and ethics.
4. To engage in discussion on the implications of this study for the ministry and mission of the church.

PROCEDURE: The course will meet once per week for one hour. The primary format will be interactive discussion of readings led by instructor and students.

EVALUATION: 1) Class participation based on weekly preparation of assigned readings. 2) Discussion leadership of assigned readings on a rotating schedule. 3) Reflection paper or project to demonstrate integration of semester's work.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Brown, Delwin. *What Does a Progressive Christian Believe? A Guide for the Searching, the Open, and the Curious*. 2008.
- Dorrien, Gary. *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion, 1805-1900*. 2001.
- Dorrien, Gary. *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism, and Modernity, 1900-1950*. 2003.
- Dorrien, Gary. *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Crisis, Irony, and Postmodernity, 1950-2005*. 2006.
- **Dorrien, Gary. *The Spirit of American Liberal Theology: A History*. Eerdmans, 2023.
- Hodgson, Peter C. *Liberal Theology: A Radical Vision*. Fortress, 2007.
- Kittelstrom, Amy. *The Religion on Democracy: Seven Liberals and the American Moral Tradition*. Penguin, 2015.
- Langford, Michael J. *The Tradition of Liberal Theology*. Eerdmans, 2014.
- Olson, Roger E. *Against Liberal Theology: Putting the Brakes on Progressive Christianity*. Zondervan, 2022.
- Peters, Rebecca Todd. *To Do Justice: A Guide for Progressive Christians*. 2008.
- Wolsey, Roger. *Kissing Fish: Christianity for People Who Don't Like Christianity*. 2011,

**Required text.

PASTORAL PRACTICES:

The instructor aims to foster especially these pastoral practices in this course:

Practice of *Biblical and Theological Wisdom*.

Practice of *Complex Analysis*.

Practice of *Curiosity*.