



BRISBANE COLLEGE OF THEOLOGY UNIT OUTLINE

MASTER OF THEOLOGY MASTER OF MINISTRY

UNIT TITLE	READINGS: CREATION THEOLOGY
UNIT CODE	C74121
UNIT STATUS	Elective
HOST FIELD	C
PREREQUISITE	C51013; C73113 Introducing Theology
INCOMPATIBLES	-
CREDIT POINTS	10cp
REQUIREMENTS	Attendance at four Masters-level seminars throughout the semester and completion of research and writing projects.
FREQUENCY OF OFFERING	Even Years – Semester 2
PREPARED BY	Revd Dr Ormond Rush
UNIT COORDINATOR	Revd Dr Ormond Rush
TEACHING STAFF	Revd Dr Ormond Rush
DATE PREPARED	11 February 2004

Rationale

It is fundamental to Christian belief that the universe and the environment in which human beings live has been purposefully brought about by a loving Creator God. “Nature”, for Christians, is “creation”. Although this created world is utterly other than the God who created it, it is nevertheless the environment within which God has planned to create the possibility of divine-human encounter. How God has brought about this world and ways of conceiving divine-human encounter are central issues for theological reflection. With the emergence of modern science, the relevance of scientific theories of initial “creation” require considered reflection for theologians. The contemporary ecological crisis, furthermore, requires reflection by Christians on their responsibility for the world God has given them. All of these issues are highly relevant for the church’s ethical engagement in the contemporary world, and thus important subject matter for theological reflection.

Relation to Unit

This elective unit teaches specialist knowledge and skills in systematic theology (Field C) by focusing on the doctrine of creation. The unit is an appropriate focus for specialised study in the Master of Theology and Master of Ministry units because of the centrality of belief in God as Creator for all beliefs addressed in systematic theology. It is an elective that presupposes the introductory knowledge and skills acquired in *C73113 Introducing Theology*.

Aims

This unit aims to deepen the student's understanding of the doctrine of creation, and to develop in the student critical theological skills for assessing current theological approaches to creation.

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, the student should be able to:

1. Outline the major features and history of formulation of the Christian doctrine of creation;
2. Evaluate the impact of the ecological crisis on theological re-interpretations of the Christian doctrine of creation;
3. Outline the major features and history of the interrelationship between religion and modern science and between theology and modern science;
4. Evaluate the function of scientific theories of creation as appropriate background theories for articulating a theology of creation;
5. Demonstrate a critical understanding of current creation theologies and creation spiritualities;
6. Demonstrate a capacity to engage in constructive learning through lecture and tutorial teaching, peer discussion and critical independent research, reading and writing;
7. Write extended essays and papers on directed or chosen topics.

Content

Throughout the seminars the following content will be addressed:

1. The major features and history of formulation of the Christian doctrine of creation, including the biblical witness, the patristic period, and the challenge of the Enlightenment the emergence of modern science;
2. The impact of the ecological crisis on theological re-interpretations of the Christian doctrine of creation, including the claim that Christian receptions of the doctrine of creation have contributed to the ecological crisis;
3. The major features and history of the interrelationship between religion and modern science and between theology and modern science, and models for understanding that interrelationship within the contemporary context;
4. The function of scientific theories of creation as appropriate background theories for articulating a theology of creation, given a particular model of interrelating religion and science;
5. Current creation theologies and creation spiritualities, including Jürgen Moltmann, Sallie McFague, Denis Edwards, Leonardo Boff and Thomas Berry.

Organisation and Teaching Strategies

The unit provides the student with opportunities for independent learning by means of a guided reading unit, seminars, regular sharing of learning by means of collaborative mechanisms such as internet Discussion Boards and Chat Rooms, as well as email reporting of progress to the unit presenter.

The seminar group will meet at least four times throughout the semester, for three hours on each occasion. At these sessions, time will be allocated to input by the lecturer on core content issues of the unit. These opportunities for contact with the lecturer will be supplemented by regular one-on-one meetings between the lecturer and the students. Students will also be encouraged to meet in informal study groups. An *Initial Book of Readings* will provide the student with the core content for the unit. At the second and third seminars, students will present papers on the fruits of their research. In the weeks between the seminars, the students will be required to post their weekly reflections regarding their learning to the unit Discussion Board on the unit homepage. These two presentations and a final integrating essay will provide the items for assessment of learning.

Assessment

Three items will assess the unit objectives.

Items 1 and 2: Two Seminar Presentations (Each with a weighting of 20%)

At the first seminar, each student will be nominated a topic related to the unit content and will be required to present a twenty-minute paper (1500 words) to the group on that topic at the second seminar and guide further discussion on the issue. This item will assess objectives 1 and 2 above.

At this second seminar, the students will agree on the different but related topics that should be addressed at the third seminar. Each student will be allocated a specific topic. At the third seminar, each student will present a paper on their chosen topic. This item will assess objectives 3 and 4 above.

Criteria for Assessment

1. demonstration during seminar presentation of a clear understanding of the issues, key ideas and concepts related to the particular topic chosen;
2. demonstration of proficiency in researching, selecting and organising information relevant to the topic; structured argumentation; informed conclusions;
3. clear communication; accurate use of subject specific terminology.

Item 3: Written Essay (4000 words; weighting 60%)

At the fourth seminar, the student will propose to the lecturer a topic for the essay. This item will assess objectives 1-5 above.

Criteria for Assessment

1. concentration on the set topic
2. communicability and overall persuasiveness of the argument
3. presentation of a well-formatted text using the required style-sheet for referencing
4. coherent structure and progression of the essay's thesis
5. evidence of research and critical reading
6. demonstration of an understanding of the issues involved, an ability to integrate and show the interrelationship of those issues, and an ability to present a personal synthesis through a thesis.

Generic Skills

- consolidation and adaptation of undergraduate skills related to critical reasoning, evaluation of scholarly opinions, independent learning, and the ability to collect, analyse and organise ideas and present a persuasive argument of a scholarly position regarding a topic;
- advanced skills in research, including primary and secondary texts.
- advanced skills in integration of a variety of research material.
- advanced writing skills: organisation, focus and conciseness.
- advanced skills in use of information technologies.

Textbooks

Required

A book of readings will be provided, including articles/chapters such as:

Boff, Leonardo *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 139-162. Chapter 8: 'Nurturing Our Mysticism'. [23 pages]

Deane-Drummond, Celia *A Handbook in Theology and Ecology* (London: SCM Press, 1996), 15-35. Chapter 2: 'Ecology and Biblical Studies'. [20 pages]

Edwards, Denis *Jesus the Wisdom of God: An Ecological Theology* (Homebush, Australia: St Pauls, 1995), 111-130. Chapter 5: 'An Ecological Theology of the Trinity: Some Theses'. [19 pages]

Haight, John F, *Science and Religion: From Conflict to Conversation* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1995), 9-26. Chapter 1: 'Is Religion Opposed to Science'. [17 pages]

Moltmann, Jürgen, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London: SCM, 1985), 72-103. Chapter 4: 'God the Creator'. [31 pages]

Recommended

McFague, Sallie. *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.

Academic and General Resource Requirements

References - Books

- Bonting, Sjoerd Lieuwe. *Chaos Theology: A Revised Creation Theology*. Toronto: Novalis, 2002.
- Gilkey, Langdon. *Maker of Heaven and Earth: The Doctrine of Creation in the Light of Modern Knowledge*. Lanham, Md.: University of America Press, 1985. [still an essential text for the subject matter]
- Haught, John F. *Science and Religion: From Conflict to Conversation*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1995.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. *Science and Wisdom*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.
- . *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*. London: SCM, 1985.
- Page, Ruth. *God and the Web of Creation*. London: SCM Press, 1996.
- Powell, Samuel M. *Participating in God: Creation and Trinity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.
- Santmire, J. Paul. *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985.

References – Journal Articles

- Bouma-Prediger, Steven. "Creation as the Home of God : The Doctrine of Creation in the Theology of Jürgen Moltmann." *Calvin Theological Journal*. 32 (1997), 72-90.
- Brinkman, Martien E. "The Challenge of an Ecumenical Creation Theology." *Exchange* 20 (1991), 87-98.
- . "A Creation Theology for Canberra." *Ecumenical Review* 42 (1990), 150-156.
- Chapman, Audrey R. "Integrating Science with Eco-Theology and Eco-Ethics." *Dialog* 36 (1997), 295-304.
- Everi, Martin. "Eco-Theology and Its Application to the Pacific Context." *Pacific Journal of Theology* (2001), 69-94.
- Hadsell, Heidi. "Creation Theology and the Doing of Ethics." *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 14 (1992), 93-111.
- Pope, Stephen J. "Neither Enemy nor Friend : Nature as Creation in the Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas." *Zygon*. 32 (1997), 219-230.

References – Online and Other IT Resources

- The online databases Ovid and ProQuest, which provide many full-text articles, are accessible through http://www.st-pauls.qld.edu.au/library_home.htm
- An Electronic Archive of Selected Papers by Thomas Berry (Harvard, 1996). <http://ecoethics.net/ops/berrybio.htm>
- Valerie Brown, The Rise of Ecotheology. <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/21stC/issue-3.4/brown.html>
- Ecotheology Website. <http://www.ecotheology.org/>