The following syllabus is the teaching and learning guide for the last time this course was taught. It will give you a good idea of the descriptions of the course, how it was taught, the reading, the papers and other assignments, the intended outcomes, and the workload. By examining this syllabus and others, you will be able to form an impression of what graduate theological education at Phillips Theological Seminary requires of students.

Due to periodic curriculum revisions, course names and/or numbers may be different on this syllabus than what the name and/or number of the current offered course may be.

This syllabus is provided for your information only. The faculty reserves the right to revise the curriculum, and each professor reserves the right to decide how best to meet the learning goals of the curriculum. Therefore, the following syllabus is an historical artifact rather than a promise of how the course will be taught in the future, or that the course will be taught again.

By Phillips Theological Seminary copyright policy, the syllabus is the intellectual property of the individual faculty member, with usage rights granted to PTS. Please contact the copyright owner if you seek to use the syllabus, for other than your personal enrichment.
I. Course Description
"Comparative Theologians" is a course-structure designed to help students of theology better understand the discipline of theological reflection, (i.e., its diverse methods, assumptions, differing uses of sources, different interpretations of theological doctrines, etc.) by comparing and contrasting the works of several theologians. We will read, compare, and contrast classical and contemporary thinkers as a way of exploring the different cultural, philosophical and religious worldviews within which theology has been written. More specifically we will explore how theologians use their own life experience as both a resource and model of their theological method and/or positions.

II. Course Goals
On the basis of the student's interaction with the lectures, discussions, required readings, and additional research, the student should be able to:

A. understand how theological texts, and their "voices," emerge out of "lived" interaction of particular persons or groups with their religious, political and cultural milieu.

B. explain the "basic" questions driving the reflection of the theologians we are studying, and their theological responses to those questions.

C. discuss, in an introductory way, how narrative techniques and figurative devices shape the development of the authors' theological arguments.

D. compare and contrast the similarities and differences—in both methodological assumption and doctrinal content—among the different authors we are studying.

E. reflect on their own lives theologically.

These course goals dovetail well with the seminary’s theology and ethics departmental goals which read:

In the ecumenical ethos of the seminary, the theology and ethics division aims to nurture a contemporary expression of Christian faith and ethics, rooted in respect for Christian traditions but responsive to the differing voices and multiple contexts of today’s world.

Students completing coursework in the division should be able to: explain basic vocabulary, topics, and approaches to theology and ethics; to differentiate and compare theological/ethical arguments from various historical periods and/or social locations; and integrate these studies into a coherent theological/ethical voice of ministry and leadership.

Your work in this course should help you make progress in achieving Program Goal # 3 for those of you in the MDiv program, and Goal 2 for those of you in both the MTS and MAMC
programs, which calls for students to engage theology with a liberative hermeneutic that is responsive to key themes in Christian theology, biblical exegesis, and Christian history.

III. Class Format

Our online class week will run from Wednesday through Tuesday. Wednesday will be our official day off as it were (although students may want to be reading on their day off), with students engaged in their reading assignments from Thursday through Saturday. Students will be engaged in posting their responses to assignments (in both their small groups and the large group) from Sunday through Tuesday.

Given our enrollment of approximately 10 students, we will work in two groups of about five students each. The small group structure will allow us to go a bit more deeply with a smaller group of conversation partners, while the large group will allow us to hear and converse with everyone in the class.

Students are required to post 3 times a week (twice in small group and once in large group) to meet the minimum attendance requirement. If students do not post a minimum of three times a week they will be considered absent (in other words there will be no credit given for “partial attendance,” i.e., posting once or twice).

We will also schedule conference phone calls with a program used here at the seminary, approximately every other week for each group, depending on the group members’ and professor’s availability. Long-distance charges would apply to your phone bills. Those phone conference sessions—we might also use Skype if that works a bit better for some—will be an added opportunity to raise questions about the texts, to go into greater depth about issues raised in the discussion board, and to discuss paper topics and things like that together.

IV. Course Requirements and Grading

A. Course Requirements

1. Required Readings and Class Attendance
2. Compare and Contrast Essay
3. Book Review of an Outside Text
4. Autobiographical Essay

1. Required Readings and Class Attendance
For a basic list of required readings for the course see the attached class schedule and attend to weekly announcements of additional readings, audio/visual lectures, jings, and so on.

To be counted as attending class in any class-week (see also Class Format), students need to make three significant posts (two within the small group; one in the large group). This minimum standard of attendance equates to a “C” grade. Students are encouraged to engage the conversations on the discussion board more deeply.
With respect to attendance policy, you can expect the following: Your final grade will not be lowered for one absence. The second, however, will result in your final grade being lowered by a full letter grade. A third absence will result in failure of course. PTS academic policy mandates failure if a student misses more than 20% of a class.

2. Analysis of Augustine or Teresa (Due October 30th) 8 pages
Citing particular chapters of the relevant texts, discuss how either Augustine or Teresa uses their own life as model/embodiment of their theology. To help focus your essay you may choose a particular topic or theme such as the concept of the divided will in Augustine or the image of watering the garden in Teresa’s description of prayer. But even when you focus on a particular image or concept your analysis should help explain the broader theological vision of Augustine or Teresa. You may use outside references, but you need not do so. I am more interested in your capacity to read/interpret these texts with an eye toward how the theologian uses his/her own experience to articulate a theological position.

Choose one, 3a or 3b. (Due December 7)
3a. Essay on either Gilkey or Bondi (10 pages)
Similar to the first paper, analyze the text of either Gilkey or Bondi. Be sure to discuss how their own more modern (cultural and religious) assumptions, in contrast to Augustine and Teresa, inform their own theological positions.

3b. Write your own theological autobiography (10 pages)
In this assignment, you are asked to reflect on your own life theologically and to write a theological autobiography, utilizing a consistent theological motif or set of motifs to inform your reflection on your own/cultural experience. We'll discuss this assignment in greater detail as get further into the course.

I reserve the right to change or alter the syllabus as course needs require.

B. Grading

1. Class attendance and incompletes
Class attendance, as defined above, is required. Class participation includes but extends well beyond class attendance. The quality of class attendance—and this is surely different than simply the quantity of postings—will account for 30% of the grade. While a higher percentage of the final grade than one finds in a typical on-campus course, I believe the higher percentage is warranted by the written character of student participation in the online setting. I encourage students to draft their postings in Word where those postings can be first reflected on, spell-checked, and edited prior to pasting them into the discussion board. Give yourselves time to weigh your responses; try to avoid knee-jerk reactions either to the instructor’s questions or to one another’s postings.

I will be communicating with everyone in the class about their posting approximately every four weeks—just to give you some feedback on the trends that I see in your weekly work. Those assessments will figure into your class participation grade.
Grades typically move lower due to a variety of reasons: poor class attendance (see above), failure to show evidence in one’s postings of having read the texts carefully, late submission of assignments, and so on. All of these typical reasons fall under the heading of failing to keep pace with the course. The reading for this course is not heavy by virtually any standard. But I do expect you to read the texts carefully and thoughtfully.

Incomplete requests will be considered.

2. Value of the Assignments
1. Class Participation: 30%
2. First Paper 30%
3. Second Paper 40%

3. Grading Scale Applicable to all written work
A = Excellent work. This means an exceptional degree of clarity and organization that expresses a thorough intellectual grasp of the materials covered.

B = Good work. This means that one is able to discuss and write clearly about the basic issues and perspectives involved in the course in a way that manifests a solid grasp of the fundamental lines of argument covered in the texts and of the themes and issues encountered.

C = Average work. This means that one is able to discuss and write clearly about most, but not all, of the basic issues and perspectives of the course in a way that manifests an adequate engagement of, and grasp of, the concern and the materials of the class.

D = Minimally Acceptable Achievement. This means that one is not discussing or writing clearly about most of the perspectives, texts, and issues in the class, nor communicating clearly about issues and texts, thus manifesting a less than adequate performance in engaging the course materials.

F = Failure. This means that one has failed to perform in a way that shows any appreciable engagement with, or understanding of, the materials of the course. Generally there are three ways in which this is manifest: one, failure to attend class (see above), two, failure to do assignments in the prescribed way, and three, unwillingness to engage the texts of the course on their own terms.

Portfolio

Ideally, the graded copy of one of your papers should be included in your portfolio.

Disability Accommodation Statement:

Phillips Theological Seminary is committed to providing equal access to its programs of graduate professional education for all qualified students with learning, physical, medical, or psychological disabilities. The Seminary aims to provide reasonable accommodation for qualified individuals with a disability (based on clinical documentation) to ensure their access
and participation in Seminary programs. For details, see “Disabilities Policies and Procedures” in the 2007-2008 Student Handbook, pp. 15-16. Please contact the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Services for consultation.

**Required Texts:**

**St. Augustine, Confessions, trans. By Henry Chadwick (Oxford University Press, 2009)**
- ISBN-10: 9780199537822

- ISBN-10: 9780895556035

**Langdon Gilkey, Shantung Compound (HarperOne, 1975)**
- ISBN-10: 0060631120

**Roberta Bondi, Memories of God, Hardcover edition**
- Publisher: Abingdon Press (January 1995)
- ISBN-10: 0687038928

**E-Reserve Readings: See Content Page on Blackboard**

Additional Theological Autobiographies worth a look:
Class Calendar

Week 1
8/25-8/31
Introduction: Autobiography in the context of theology
E-Res. Geertz, Bessler Jings

Week 2
9/1-9/7
Augustine’s Confessions
Books 1-5

Week 3
9/8-9/14
Augustine’s Confessions
Books 6-9

Week 4
9/15-9/21
Augustine’s Confessions
Books 10-13

Week 5
9/22-9/28
Teresa’s Autobiography
E-Res. Weber Chs. 1-22

Week 6
9/29-10/5
Teresa’s Autobiography
Chs. 23-end

Week 7 (partial week)
10/6-10/9
Introducing Gilkey
No Posting this week

Week 8
10/10-10/14
No Class
Concentrated Course Week, I

Week 9
10/17-10/21
No Class
Concentrate Course Week II

But, 10/22-23
Resume reading from Week 7 (see above)
Posting – pickup from week 7 (see above)
E-Res. Bessler

And thru 10/26
Posting – pickup from week 7 (see above)

Week 11
10/27-11/2
Gilkey, Shantung Compound
G, 1-6

First paper due: October 30

Week 12
11/3-11/9
Gilkey, Shantung Compound
G, 7-end

Week 13
11/10-11/16
Introducing Bondi
E-Res. Saiving

Week 14 (partial week)
11/17-11/20
Bondi, Memories of God:
Pulling things together (No Posting this week)
B, first half

Week 15
AAR/SBL Thanksgiving Break
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<td>No class in this period</td>
<td>B, first half</td>
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<td>Week 16 (partial week)</td>
<td>Post on Reading from Week 14 (see above)</td>
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<td>11/27-11/30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 17</td>
<td>Bondi, Memories of God</td>
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<td>12/1-12/7</td>
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