

Liberation Theology

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Spring 1995

Course Description

Requirements:

- 1) 5 seminar papers -- on topics assigned and scheduled by me
- 2) The final exam set by the external examiner. (The exams of students who are not sitting for the External Exams will be evaluated by me.)
- 3) Regular and informed participation in seminal discussions

Seminar papers:

1) Papers should have maximum length of 3 single-spaced pages. *Their purpose is to initiate discussion.* Thus, they should contain: a) clear statements of the theme(s) under discussion; b) questions pointing to difficulties, lacks of clarity, ambiguities in the texts; c) criticisms of the materials read (where appropriate); d) personal reflections (where appropriate), or indications of what you think might be useful foci for discussion.

All papers must contain responses to a) and b); responses to c and d) are desirable but optional.

- 2) Seminar papers (7 copies) must be placed in the folder marked "Liberation Theology" on the table in the middle of Papazian by 9:00 a.m. on the day of presentation.
- 3) On the day after each seminar meeting I will schedule 15 minute meetings in my office with each student who presented a paper.
- 4) Feel free to contact me while you are preparing a paper.

Preparation for seminar:

- 1) All students are expected to be well prepared for seminar meetings, and to have read the papers to be presented thoroughly before class.
- 2) Students are *strongly encouraged* to submit to me - *in writing or via email* - questions, comments, criticisms connected with the meetings before 10:00 a.m. on the day of our seminar meeting and *also* connected with issues that have arisen out of previous classes, new thoughts, matters that were inadequately discussed, etc.
- 3) Remember that *this seminar represents 2 credits worth of work* .

Other matters:

- 1) It is always appropriate to bring into the discussion relevant biblical passages, and issues about their interpretation. LT is controversial, as are many of the biblical interpretations which it has nourished. So, if I (or the reading) do not address some biblical passage that you consider particularly pertinent, bring it up.
- 2) Where the syllabus does not address a theme you are interested in, let me know, and I will attempt to incorporate it. I have structured the syllabus around material available in English. Much important work, e.g. recent work in LT on ecological issues, has not been translated into English.
- 3) Studying LT is an interpretive study of what is, for many of you, a very different culture. Almost all of the readings are from Latin American sources, and most of them are addressed primarily to a religious audience. Keeping this in mind is crucial for developing sound interpretations of these writings. Inevitable, however, they will often not address your concerns and questions. This, I suggest, should be treated not in general as a limitation of the writings, but as a challenge to put them into real contact with your concerns. That challenge can only stimulate your imagination. Clearly, gaining sound understanding of a text does not involve agreeing with it, or - coming to accept that it is relevant for one self; it does involve grasping how the text is linked with the practices of those who constitute its primary audience.

First seminar meeting :

In the first session, we will discuss why LT is important for understanding present-day realities in Haiti and Mexico (Chiapas). On your return in January, I will have available readings on Chiapas, and also 2 questions for seminar papers. I will leave them in an envelope outside my office door.

I would like 2 volunteers to write these papers.

For the first week I have also listed Whitfield's, *Paying the Price*. This is a book that you should read over the course of the semester. It supplies good background to many of our themes.

Books : All assigned works will be on *honors reserve* for Liberation Theology. I attach a copy of the books that I have ordered from the Bookstore.

Course Schedule

I. LT at the front line: Haiti, Mexico (Chiapas), El Salvador

Reading: Jean-Bertrand Aristide, *In the Parish of the Poor*

Material on Chiapas (to be determined)

T. Whitfield, *Paying the Price. Ignacio Ellacuria and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador*. [Read this book gradually through the semester]

II. The historical context of LT

1) Socio-political background to the origins of LT and the *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* (CEBs - Christian Base Communities).

2) The roots of LT in the tradition of Catholic Social Thought (CST); overview of theological/biblical themes that characterize CST: creation, humans as matter infused with spirit, fall, covenant with Israel, incarnation, resurrection, sending of the Spirit, fulfillment at the end of history.

3) Biblical tensions: a) Kingdom of God -- in but not of *the world*; already present but yet to come; b) nature/spirit; c) political/spiritual

Reading :

I. Ellacuria, "The political nature of Jesus' mission"

_____, "The true social place of the church"

_____, "The challenge of the poor majority"

I. Martin-Baro, "From religion as opium to religion as liberating faith"

_____, *Writings for a Liberation Psychology*, ch. 8

J. Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, ch. 7

H. Lacey, "On liberation"

_____, "Catholic social thought and economic systems"

_____, "What is liberation theology?"

III. LT: Theology as critical reflection on the practices of liberation

1) The connection between faith and justice

2) The "preferential option for the poor"

3) The Kingdom of God and politics

4) The dialectic of the personal and the social

5) Liberation and spirituality

Reading : I. Ellacuria, "Liberation theology and socio-historical change in Latin America"

_____, "Utopia and prophecy in Latin America"

J. Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, chs. 1 - 5
_____, *The Principle of Mercy*, chs. 1-6, 8

NB: The "classic" source of LT is G. Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (you may want to consult it on all our themes).

IV. LT: some key biblical themes

- 1) genesis
- 2) exodus
- 3) prophecy
- 4) Christ's option for the poor
- 5) the Kingdom of God

Reading: to be provided

E. Cardinal, *The Gospel of Solentiname* (Re: the poor - Vol. 1, chs.4,6, 14,20,21;vol.3,chs. 11,22;vol.4,ch.7. Re: The Kingdom of God -- Vol. 1, ch. 22; vol. 2, ch. 22; vol. 3, ch. 21; Vol. 4, chs. 1, 13, 15, 16, 18).

V. Conscientizacao: the raising of consciousness and the formation of conscience

Reading :

P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

I. Martin-Baro, "Developing a critical consciousness through the university curriculum"

VI. Violence

- 1) kinds of violence
- 2) causes of violence
- 3) "just war" and "just insurrection"
- 4) revolutionary struggle
- 5) violence cannot produce liberation

Reading: I. Martin-Baro, "Violence in Central America: a social psychological perspective"

_____, "The appeal to the far right"

_____, "From dirty war to psychological war"

_____, "Political violence and war as causes of psychosocial trauma in El Salvador"

_____, *Writings for a Liberation Psychology*, chs. 6, 7, 9

I. Ellacuria, "Liberation theology and socio-historical change in Latin America" (section on "violence")

_____, "Violence and non-violence in the struggle for peace and liberation"

J. L. Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology*, ch. 6 *America's Watch, Rural Violence in Brazil*

_____, *The Struggle for Land in Brazil: the struggle continues*

United Nations, "From Madness to Hope: the 12-year war in El Salvador"

H. Lacey, "U.S. intervention in Central America and the principles of just war"

VII. a) Non-violence

- 1) the primacy of non-violence
- 2) non-violent struggle within structures of violence
- 3) the Bible and non-violence

Reading: D. Barbe, *A Theology of Conflict*

J. Sobrino, "Notes on maintaining spirituality in times of violence"

b) Human rights

- 1) human rights: civil/political and economic/social/cultural
- 2) the foundation of human rights
- 3) human rights and the non-violent struggle
- 4) the violation of human rights and the roots of violence

Reading:

I. Ellacuria, "Fundamental human rights and the legal and political restrictions placed on them"
 _____, "The historization of the concept of property"
 _____, "Human rights in a divided society"
 _____, "The kingdom of God and unemployment in the third world"
 _____, "Historization of human rights from the perspective of oppressed peoples and the popular majority"
 _____, "Underdevelopment and human rights"
 S. Montes, et al., "Economic, social, and cultural rights in El Salvador"
 H. Lacey, "Liberation theology and human rights"
 J. Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, ch. 6.

VIII. LT and analyses from the social sciences and from psychology

- 1) the quest for justice requires analyses of the causes of injustice
- 2) system injustice
- 3) the dialectic of the personal and the social
- 4) the use of "Marxist" analysis and "dependency" analysis
- 5) the hegemony of "neo-liberalism"
- 6) the relationship of theological categories, e.g., "sin", "idolatry", to social analytical categories

Reading:

G. Gutierrez, "Theology and the social sciences"
 I. Martin-Bar6, "Towards a liberation psychology"
 _____, *Writings for a Liberation Psychology*, chs. 1-5
 H. Lacey, "On liberation"
 _____, "Catholic social thought and economic systems"
 _____, "Understanding conflicts between North and South"
 I. Ellacuria, "The function of economic theories in the theological theoretical discussion on the relationship between Christianity and Socialism"
 F.J. Hinkelammert, *The Ideological Weapons of Death*
 Readings on LT and neo-liberalism to be provided
 S. Montes, "What is the dominant mode of production in El Salvador?"
 _____, "Classes and social movements in El Salvador"
 _____, "El Salvador: its land, epicenter of the crisis"

IX. Christian Base Communities (CEBs) -- theological

Reading: M.deC. Azevedo, *Basic Ecclesial Communities in Brazil*
 L. Boff, *Ecclesiology*
 P. Galdamez, *Faith of a People*
 E. Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, 4 vols. (selections)

X. CEBs --links with social movements

Reading:

R. Golden, *The Hour of the poor, the Hour of Women*, ch. 1
 D. Patai, *Brazilian Women Speak*, ch. 1
 Caipora Women's Group, *Women in Brazil*- section, "women and religion"
 A. Escobar & S.E. Alvarez (eds.), *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America* (selections)
 (more readings will be provided)

XI. Women's contributions to LT

Reading :

E. Tamez (ed.), *Through Her Eyes*

M.P. Aquino, *Our Cry for Life*

XII. LT and biblical interpretation: an exemplary instance

Reading :

J. L. Segundo, *The Humanist Christology of Paul*

XIII. Criticisms of LT

1) from the Vatican

2) Michael Novak

Reading: to be provided

XIV. Liberty, biblical vs. modern notions of freedom, liberation with spirit

Reading: J. Comblin, *The Church and the National Security State* , ch. 7

Selections from Ellacuria and Sobrino to be provided