RELIGION 191

Religion, Meaning, and Knowledge

Spring 2015

Wednesdays
5:15 P.M. to 8:00 P.M.
202 Hall of Languages

Professor: Dr. Marcia C. Robinson
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Course Description and Methods

This course explores the age-old quest for wisdom and faith in the face of suffering, injustice, and loss, by focusing on theology, philosophy, literature, music, and art. Prominent religious thinkers and practitioners will guide us on our journey into this dynamic world of the examined life. Three religious thinkers and practitioners will orient our study, namely, Søren Kierkegaard, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Howard Thurman. Plato’s Socrates will assist them in focusing our exploration, and so will take a prominent role among other figures and texts whom we will read or to whom I will refer. Some of these other figures or texts include Augustine, Friedrich Schleiermacher, the Bible, Toni Morrison, Euripides, Shakespeare, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the creative expressions of a select group of artists and musicians. All of them will help to keep our conversations focused, lively, and imbued with the right sensibility or tone. Indeed, Plato and the playwrights in our readings will afford us the opportunity to enact some of life’s most gripping trials!

As the title of the course suggests, the fundamental issue we will explore is the way in which religion might be said to shape—positively and/or negatively—the search for existential meaning or wisdom. Hence, we will naturally explore the meaning of religion, or to put it more pointedly, how particular people conceive of and experience God or the divine, and the way that this experience influences their perspective on and interaction with the world.

Course Goals

To offer students an imaginative and exploratory environment in which to read and to listen closely so that they might develop an appreciation for the examined life, and perhaps even become wise and reflective people themselves, whatever paths they choose.
Required Course Texts in the Syracuse University Bookstore

Plato, THE LAST DAYS OF SOCRATES (Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo), trans. Christopher Rowe (Penguin)
Søren Kierkegaard, FEAR AND TREMBLING, trans. Alastair Hannay (Penguin)
Howard Thurman, THE CREATIVE ENCOUNTER (Friends United Press)
______________, JESUS AND THE DISINHERITED (Friends United Press or Beacon editions)
Thich Nhat Hanh, LIVING BUDDHA, LIVING CHRIST (Riverhead Books, Berkeley Publishing Group, Penguin, 2007)
______________, THE POCKET THICH NHAT HANH (Boston: Shambala, 2012)
William Shakespeare, MACBETH, Folger Shakespeare Library edition (Mass Market Paperback)

Students should acquire these particular editions or versions of these texts.

Other Required Readings on Reserve via Blackboard

Other required readings, which I will refer to as we go along, will be available on Blackboard. Students should make their own copies of these texts, and bring them to class, when they are discussed.

Course Assignments and Grading

This is a reflection course. Thus, the primary skill that students should develop is their ability to read closely and to think critically — yet in an easy and personal manner. The primary assignment that students have, then, is to read the assigned materials for the day and to participate in class discussion, since this is the main way they will demonstrate their development as readers. Equally important are two reflection papers that students will do at high points in the course that will ground a final dialogue that students will put on as a group. To this end, students should do the following:

• do all assigned readings when they are due;
• prepare for class discussion by selecting a passage from the assigned text or texts, and typing 1-3 questions on the reading or each of the readings in order to focus their participation in class discussion;
• participate in class discussion, group work, and any re-enactment of a section of a play;
• write two short reflection papers of no more than four (4) pages. The first, which will be due in after Spring Break, should compare the orienting figures of the course (SK, TNH, and HTh) and Socrates. The second, which will be due after we complete our study of Fear and Trembling, but before the final dialogue at the end of the semester, should consider how the position of each of the orienting figures represents a paradigm shift.
• help to organize (in-class) and participate in a final dialogue, using assigned readings for this exercise and other pertinent work done throughout the semester.

Hence, a student's final grade will be constituted of three things: 1) class participation, which entails attendance, contributions to class discussion, and selected passages and discussion questions; 2) two short reflection papers; and 3) a final group dialogue on readings assigned at the end of the course. Class participation will count for one third of a student's grade; the two reflection papers will count for a third of a student's grade; and the final dialogue will count for a third of a student's grade. Please note, though, that the two reflections papers will not be averaged. The grade for the second reflection paper will be used either to retain or to raise the grade for the first reflection paper, depending upon its quality by comparison to the first.
As a general rule, when doing readings, writing papers, and preparing for the final dialogue, students should always ask three basic and related questions reflecting the main topic of this course:

1. What is faith or religion for this person?
2. Who is God or the divine, or what is sacred or inviolable, for this person?
3. How does faith, religion, God, and/or the sacred affect and inform life for this person?

Asking these basic questions does not mean that they themselves should literally be the ones that students turn in after every reading. Rather, it means that students should use them as guides as they approach the readings. Once students began to get into the readings, they should develop their own questions, which should naturally relate to the guiding ones.

Discussion questions with selected passages from readings should be done for every class session in which there are assigned readings, starting with the readings from Plato’s dialogues. Therefore, students should have them typed, printed, and ready to turn in after every class session as indicated. In regard to a basic form at for presenting questions and passages, students should connect the passages that they select with their questions. They might do something like this:

“On reading Socrates’ initial remark to Euthyphro about taking his father to court (p. xx), I immediately thought: What does Socrates mean by....? The full passage reads thus:......”

Students might also simply place the passage(s) of interest, and that are related to the course topic, at the top of the page, and follow the passage(s) with their questions. Either way, they should make sure that their questions show a line of related inquiry. Students should not simply say “I don’t understand.” If you don’t understand a passage, but wish to discuss it in class, indicate what exactly is confusing to you with a line of questions that show that you are making a serious attempt to understand the text. In regard to style, be sure to provide the title and author of the reading and the page numbers. For quoting, give us page numbers only, if you have indicated the author and title of the work at the top of the page. Be sure to print your passages and questions on clean paper. Also keep a collection of them in a notebook or portfolio as you go along so that you can turn the full collection of them in easily when we request them, and especially at the end of the semester. I and/or my TA will use the questions that you hand in to determine the quality and the depth of your engagement of the text. We may pass them back with comments on occasion so that you get some idea as to how we are viewing your participation. However, your questions and passages will not be graded separately. Rather, they will be used as a whole to help me to determine the overall quality of your participation in the course. Therefore, take these little exercises seriously; don’t just dash off something.

The two short reflection papers should be four pages, no more than five. They should be typed, double spaced, printed on clean paper, and handed in when due. Students should select a group of focal passages from the readings on which to develop a thesis. Although students will be comparing and situating the orienting figures in these papers, they should nevertheless compose an argument based on a selection of passages that are of real interest to them. In other words, make these papers address something you can get into just as you could a discussion. And in order to help me and/or my TA follow your interests and concerns, be sure to type a small, yet pertinent portion of the passages that you select from these figures at the top of the first page of the paper. Don’t forget to provide a brief citation of the work and the page number, and be sure to put your name and the date on your paper.

Course Format: Lecture, Discussion and Group Work. Lectures are meant to facilitate the reflective process at the heart of this course by demonstrating how students might carefully reflect on particular
materials. To this end, there will be lecture days, as well as coordinating discussion days in which students will demonstrate their own reflection on the same materials, either individually or in group work. There will also be days when students will lead discussion through group work or in the re-enactment of dialogues or plays. The dialogue at the end of the course, then, is meant to give students the opportunity to present their gained “understanding” by creating and performing a conversation engaging the three orienting figures and a questioning figure such as Socrates or Johannes de Silentio.

Grade Scale

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Fractions of points will be rounded to the nearest whole point only at my discretion, and only in regard to the final grade. No rounding off will apply to individual exams, pop quizzes, or written assignments.

Expectations and Policies

Attendance: Students are expected to attend each class session regularly and timely. You are not fully present, if you do not have your books or readings for the day. THEREFORE, MAKE SURE THAT YOU ATTEND REGULARLY AND TIMELY; THAT YOU SIGN IN EVERY DAY; AND THAT YOU HAVE YOUR BOOKS FOR THE DAY. Irregular attendance, including regular tardiness, will diminish your overall class participation grade in the following manner:

- One absence = No deductions.
- Each absence thereafter = 10 points per instance.
- Regular tardiness = 10 points per instance.

These penalties will be enforced. However, if you are having problems or have special issues, do not hesitate to inform me. I am always willing to work with you.

Preparation: Students are expected to be prepared for each class and to submit all assignments when due. Tardy work will not be accepted.

Students are also expected to do their own work, and not to plagiarize anyone else’s work. Plagiarism not only means using someone else’s exact words and ideas without putting them in quotation marks and providing a citation. But it also means rephrasing someone else’s ideas or words in such a way that it is clear that you are still borrowing from them without citing them. Plagiarism is a very serious academic offense that can cause you to fail an assignment and the course. Be sure, then, that if you use someone else’s words or
ideas, including in a summary, cite that person. In other words, avoid even the hint of plagiarism. For more information on the University’s policy on this issue, go to: http://supolicies.syr.edu/studs/acad_integrity.htm.

Respect: Students are expected to be attentive and courteous to me, my assistant, and each other. This means no talking while others are talking; no entering and exiting while class is in session (unless there is an emergency or this is part of the structure of a presentation); no cell-phone calls; no text messaging or writing and sending e-mails; no reading newspapers during class; no chewing gum or eating; no putting on makeup or combing one’s hair; and so forth.

Use of Text Slides Posted on Blackboard: Text slides from PowerPoint lectures are posted on Blackboard for your use and convenience. They, however, should never be downloaded and posted by students to any external website without the permission of the instructor. That is a violation of the instructor’s intellectual rights and the University’s rights as the instructor’s employer. Any student who violates this policy will receive a “0” in participation. Slides may also no longer be posted to Blackboard.

Computer Use During Class: Unless abuses become a problem, students are permitted to use computers in order to access readings and take notes. Students, however, are not allowed to surf the web, read the news, answer email, etc. during lecture, discussion, or any other class activity. Students who violate this rule will be confronted during class; maybe denied the use of their computer in class; or asked to leave.

Disability: The Syracuse University community and I value diversity and seek to promote meaningful access to educational opportunities for all students. This includes supporting Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at (315) 443-4498 or (315) 443-1371 (TDD). They are located at 804 University Avenue, Room 309. For more information, please visit their website at: http://provost.syr.edu/provost/Units/academicprograms/DISABILITYSERVICES/index.aspx

Problems: If you have problems with the assignments or anything else that might affect your performance, please contact me or my teaching assistant immediately. If you cannot reach us during office hours, please e-mail us.

Holidays: The University no longer observes any religious holidays. Therefore, students planning to observe religious holidays must contact me and my assistant well ahead of time so that they might arrange to be absent without penalty and to complete any missed assignments. Students will not be given the opportunity to avoid a penalty or to complete any missed assignments, if they do not contact us ahead of time.
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF LECTURES, ASSIGNMENTS, FILMS, & PRESENTATIONS

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<td>Wed., 1/14</td>
<td>Introductions—and an Introduction to the Course.</td>
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For the first five weeks of the course, we will get acquainted with our three orienting figures—Søren Kierkegaard, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Howard Thurman—and their conversation partner, Socrates. These opening lectures and discussions will address selections from Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* and *late Christian discourses*, selections from Nhat Hanh’s poetic meditations in *The Pocket Thich Nhat Hanh* and *Going Home*, and the first two chapters of Thurman’s *The Creative Encounter* and several meditations from *The Inward Journey* and *Meditations of the Heart*. I may also refer to Schleiermacher’s 2nd Speech in *On Religion*. All of the Kierkegaard selections and several of those from Nhat Hanh and Thurman are available on Blackboard. The Schleiermacher selection to which I may refer is also available on Blackboard as a supplementary reading. Feel free to start composing questions, and asking them in class. HOWEVER, YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO TURN IN DISCUSSION QUESTIONS UNTIL WE START READING AND DISCUSSING PLATO.

We will cover the Kierkegaard selections Wed., 1/14-1/28. After class on 1/14, read the short selections from Kierkegaard’s *Works of Love* and *Christian Discourses* that were discussed in class. **For Wednesday, 1/21 through the first part of class on 1/28,** please read Kierkegaard’s discourse on weakness and strength before God from the *Christian Discourses*. This selection can be found on Blackboard. In preparation for discussion, focus on pp. 127-129. Please also read the first creation story in Genesis 1, focusing on the creation of human beings in Genesis 1:26-30, and Acts 17:28, noting its context in a conversation that the Apostle Paul was having with ancient Athenians. This selection is also available on Blackboard. During the last part of class, we will complete our preliminary discussion of Kierkegaard.

We will cover the Nhat Hanh selections Wed., 1/28-Wed., 2/4. For the second part of class on 1/28, read the first part of *The Pocket Thich Nhat Hanh*, entitled, “Mindfulness,” at pp. 1-52. Please also start reading the second part, entitled, “Enlightenment,” at pp. 53-107. **For Wed., 2/4,** finish reading “Enlightenment,” at pp. 53-107 in *The Pocket Thich Nhat Hanh*. Please also read *Going Home: Jesus and Buddha As Brothers*, pp. 1-31, 43-45, 56-65, on Blackboard. Nhat Hanh is not difficult to read; however, do read carefully. If needs be, just read as much as you can before class, then return to it after class. Don’t rush.

We will cover the Thurman selections Wed., 2/11-Wed., 2/18. For the first part of class, Wed., 2/11, read selections # 1, “Meaning is Inherent in Life,” and # 8, “Belief and Faith,” from Thurman’s *The Inward Journey* and # 4, “Life Abounds,” and # 18, “Not We Ourselves,” from *Meditations of the Heart* on Blackboard, and Chapter I in *The Creative Encounter*. **For the second part of class, Wed., 2/11,** please read Chapter II in *The Creative Encounter* and # 7, “Accept Our Fact,” # 29,
“Night View of the World,” and #s 58-61, “Making a Good Life” through “The Narrow Ridge” from The Inward Journey and # 5, “All Men Live the Eternal” and # 18 “Reservoir or Canal” from Meditations of the Heart on Blackboard. Like Nhat Hanh, Thurman is not difficult to read; however, do read carefully. If needs be, just read as much as you can before class, then return to it after class. Please note: If you are willing and able, you might read Thurman’s Mysticism and the Experience of Love on Blackboard ahead of schedule (see below), especially after class discussion. You may find it helpful, and I may refer to it as well. Our discussion of Thurman will end with a summary lecture on Wed., 2/18, during the first part of class.

6. Wed., 2/18


All of the figures we have discussed thus far were readers of Plato’s dialogues. In several of Plato’s dialogues, Socrates, the central figure, muses about religion, and reveals its impact on individuals and society. Keeping our orienting figures in mind, we will shift our discussion to Plato’s Socrates.

NOTE: Start selecting passages and composing discussion questions this week and bringing them (typed) to class, along with texts for the day. In composing your questions, be sure to place the passages to which they refer at the top of the page, or to follow the alternate format indicated on p. 3, above. As indicated there, please also be sure provide author, title, and page number(s), as you would in any citation. Once again, see instructions on p. 3, above.

The second part of class, Wed., 2/18 will begin with an introductory lecture, and then move into a discussion of Plato’s Euthyphro. Please read the Euthyphro in the Plato anthology, The Last Days of Socrates. Select passages and compose questions for class discussion.

7.-8. Wed., 2/25-

Wed., 3/4

The Peripatetic of Athens: Plato’s Socrates on Faith and the Examined Life.

Over the next two weeks, we will focus on Plato’s Apology and Crito in light of the Euthyphro. For Wed., 2/25, read the Apology. Compose discussion questions by highlighting a passage of dialogue for class discussion. For Wed., 3/4, read the Crito in light of our discussion of the Apology. Compose discussion questions by highlighting a passage of dialogue for class discussion. Both dialogues are in the Plato anthology, The Last Days of Socrates. At the end of class today, we will discuss your first reflection paper.

FIRST REFLECTION PAPER. In a paper of no more than four typed, double-spaced pages, compare Kierkegaard, Thich Nhat Hanh, Thurman, and Socrates on either religion, God, or what constitutes an authentically human life. In preparation for this paper, consider what each figure means by these things individually. As you do, consider what kind of argument you wish to make. That is, on seeing what they each think, what can you say about them collectively? This will be your thesis. The rest of your paper is support for this. Be sure to use specific passages from the texts. Also be sure to cite these passages or
any others briefly, but in a consistent way. Proof your papers after you write them. And print them on clean paper, and staple the pages. **THIS FIRST REFLECTION PAPER IS DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS ON WED., 3/18.**


**SPRING BREAK. NO CLASS.**


The Conflict of Religion with the World: A Poet Ponders the Faith of Abraham.

Over the next three weeks, we will focus on Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling*. I will begin with a more substantive orientation of Kierkegaard in his own historical context. We, however, will focus most of our time on the text. Be sure also to read Genesis 12:1-23:2, which includes the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac on which *Fear and Trembling* is based. When we discuss Johannes de Silentio’s interpretation of the Abraham and Isaac story in light of the biblical story of Jepthah and his daughter, the tragedy of Agamemnon and his daughter Iphigenia, and the tragedy of Lucius Junius Brutus and his sons (cf. Marcus Junius Brutus, a purported descendent and assassin of Julius Caesar), we will also look at Judges 11 and a selection from Euripides’ *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Time permitting, we will re-enact a portion of Euripides’ play, which is posted on Blackboard; therefore, please be sure to bring it to class on the noted day. As we discuss Abraham’s distinction from these other fathers and children, particularly Euripides’ *Iphigenia at Aulis*, I may refer to Sophocles’ *Antigone* and Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*. **As with all class sessions, bring *Fear and Trembling* and all other required texts for this period to class everyday.**

**10. For Wed., 3/18**, read the “Preface,” “Attunement,” and “Speech in Praise of Abraham” in *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 39-56 (Hannay translation). Also read Genesis 22. For context, read Genesis 12:1-23:2. These biblical passages are available on Blackboard. Focus your discussion questions for this week on the “Attunement” first, since we will focus on it first. Then focus your next set of discussion questions on the “Speech in Praise of Abraham,” which might also be translated as “Eulogy on Abraham.” In other words, in regard to the “Attunement,” pick one or two of the sketches as your base passage(s) for your discussion question(s). In regard to the “Speech,” choose a passage or two from it as the basis for a discussion question or set of discussion questions.

**11. For Wed., 3/25**, read “Preamble from the Heart” in *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 57-82 (Hannay translation). This week we are going to focus on de Silentio’s discussion of Abraham in terms of two types of “knights”: a knight of resignation and a knight of faith. As you will soon see, Abraham is the exemplary knight of faith. Pick passages in the “Preamble” that will allow you to raise discussion questions on the two knights separately, and then on the two knights together, since we will talk about them separately first, and then comparatively. In order to facilitate discussion, we will begin working in discussion groups, which we probably will retain until the end of the semester. Each person in the group, however, should bring her/his question(s) and thoughts to the group.
12. On Wed., 4/1, read “Problema I: Is There a Teleological Suspension of the Ethical” in Fear and Trembling, pp. 83-95 (Hannay translation). Focus on the way in which Abraham differs from Jepthah, Agamemnon, and Brutus. That is, consider how the “knight of faith” differs from the “tragic hero.” Screening a portion of Iphigenia, a contemporary Greek film adapted from Euripides’ tragedy Iphigenia at Aulis, will help us in this interpretive effort. Therefore, please read the selection from Iphigenia at Aulis on Blackboard, and be prepared to discuss it with Fear and Trembling. Also be prepared for a possible impromptu re-enactment and comparison of Iphigenia with the “Attunement.” Please review Genesis 22 with Judges 11 on Jepthah and his daughter.


Summary Discussion and Lecture of Fear and Trembling: A Suggested Reading, and Religion as Experience or “Religio” and the Life-giving Person: A Return to Thich Nhat Hanh.

During the first part of class, we will finish our discussion of “Problema I” and Fear and Trembling by questioning the meaning of the ideal that initially drove Abraham. In doing so, we will not only return to the notion of weaning raised in the “Attunement,” but we will also attend to the issue of idolatry, and with it, the issue of power. As we will consider these moves as Kierkegaard presenting faith as a paradigm shift, this will lead us back to the issue of faith and the authentic life in Thich Nhat Hanh, Howard Thurman, and the Kierkegaard of the Christian discourses.

After this discussion, we will discuss your second reflection paper. For the SECOND REFLECTION PAPER, use what you have now learned to compare our three orienting figures once again. This time, though, consider what they each offer as a kind of paradigm shift for the societies in which they lived. Follow the same format as the first reflection paper; therefore, review the instructions for the first paper above under Wed., 3/4. THE SECOND REFLECTION PAPER IS DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS ON WED., 4/15. This paper is meant to give you time to reflect a bit more deeply on the way in which each of our figures attend to conflict. You will be able to use the comments from the first reflection paper to help you with this. Once you have done this exercise, it should help you as we move on through the next set of readings and into the final dialogue.

During the second part of class, Wed., 4/8, we will return to the writings of Thich Nhat Hanh in order to focus on the way that religion might provide a difficult, but fundamentally life-giving ethic. To this end, please read and compose the usual discussion question(s) for the Foreword and pp. 1-59, 66-69, 156-157, 178-189 of Nhat Hanh’s Living Buddha, Living Christ. Please also review the pages that we read earlier from Going Home, and as you are able and have time, the second and fourth parts, “Enlightenment” and “Peace,” in The Pocket Thich Nhat Hanh. For context, read the short biography of Thich Nhat Hanh by Sister Annabel Laity.

In regard to your discussion questions, please focus on Living Buddha, Living Christ, pp. 34-47, 58-59, 66-69. This will set the stage for our discussion of Thurman and King over the next few weeks. Once again, please note that Nhat Hanh is not difficult reading. So these pages will go quickly. Finally, please notice how Thich Nhat Hanh deliberately tries to make cross-cultural and ecumenical
connections in *Living Buddha, Living Christ*. Take it primarily as a strategy for conversation.

14.-15. Wed., 4/15-
Wed., 4/22

**Religion and the Meaningful Life: Howard Thurman on Jesus as Life-giving Person.**

Over the next few weeks, we will use the wisdom of Thurman to synthesize the themes and topics of the course. We will start with *Mysticism and the Experience of Love* and the last two chapters of *The Creative Encounter*, and use them to help us focus Thurman’s treatment of the person of Jesus in *Jesus and the Disinherited*. This, along with a discussion of Martin Luther King, Jr., Kierkegaard, and Thich Nhat Hanh on loving the enemy, will provide the final pieces of our study as we move toward your production of a final dialogue.


For the first part of class, please read *Mysticism and the Experience of Love* on Blackboard. Please also read as much of pp. 114, 2nd paragraph-153 of *The Creative Encounter* as you can. This selection is the last portion of Chapter III and all of Chapter IV of that text. Be sure to bring both texts to class. There will be lecture and general discussion to open this part of our class. To facilitate discussion, please pick two passages, one from each reading, and compose at least two questions, one from each reading. THE SECOND REFLECTION PAPER IS DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS TODAY.

For the second part of class, read Chapters I and III of Thurman’s classic work, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Focus on pp. 15-35 of Chapter I, on the significance of Jesus, and on pp. 62-73 of Chapter III, on the practice of deception by the powerless and the powerful. There will be lecture and general class discussion; therefore, prepare the usual discussion questions by picking passages from each chapter that will allow you to ask a substantive question. Be attentive to the issue of power, especially the immoral relations between the powerful and the powerless, and the relation of God to power for the powerful and the powerless. Finally, if you have time, please also read Chapters II and IV on fear and hate.

15. Wed., 4/22

Today, we will continue our discussion of *Jesus and the Disinherited* by focusing on Chapter III. There, we will give particular attention to Thurman’s treatment of deception and the disinflicted by focusing on his reference to Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, and by reading *Macbeth* with Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*.

For the first part of class, we will discuss Chapter III of *Jesus and the Disinherited*, and then screen part of Rupert Goold’s production of *Macbeth*, a contemporary adaptation featuring Sir Patrick Stewart, in order to establish the issues of Shakespeare’s play in light of Thurman’s reference. Afterwards, students will break into groups, and discuss the play in its filmic and original versions. To this end, please read *Macbeth*, Act 1, sc. 1-7; Act 2, sc. 1-2; Act 3, sc. 1-4; Act 4, sc. 1-2; Act 5, sc. 1, 5, 8, and BE SURE TO BRING YOUR COPY OF *MACBETH* TO CLASS. (Make sure that it is the specific edition of *Macbeth* ordered for class, so that we can all be on the same page—literally.) Each group will be assigned certain sections of the play to present in general class discussion. All groups, however, will be asked to consider how Macbeth and his wife deceive themselves, and to relate this to Thurman’s discussion of power, deception,
and immoral relations in Chapters I and III of *Jesus and the Disinherited*. In order to facilitate discussion, please write out your thoughts in your journal, along with any other questions you may have. In doing so, be sure to note the corresponding passages in the play and in *Jesus and the Disinherited* so that you can easily refer to them.

**In the second part of class,** Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved* will provide a counterpoint to Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. To this end, please read the selections from Morrison’s novel on Blackboard, along with the poems on slave mothers by Frances E. W. Harper. In its reference to a celebrated slave from the mid-1850s named Margaret Garner, Harper’s 1856 poem on the slave mother provides historical context for *Beloved*. It and the first poem that Harper writes on the particular plight of the slave mother are available on Blackboard.

As you prepare your thoughts on *Beloved*, keep in mind what you just did in reading *Macbeth* in light of Thurman’s views on power, deception, and the disinherited. That is, remember that although Thurman’s point in Chapter III is to say that the disinherited should avoid becoming a deception or a lie like Macbeth, **our concern in discussing *Macbeth* with *Beloved* is also to focus on deception in the powerful and its effects on the powerless**. Thus, as *Macbeth* allows us to see how the powerful can be seduced by or drunk with power, *Beloved* allows us to see how that power can press the powerless into such desperate situations that the powerless come to express their most intimate relations—e.g., a mother’s love for her children—as their very opposite—e.g., a mother murdering her children (cf. Abraham and Isaac). In light of Thurman’s views on honesty (over deception), **consider the way in which *Beloved* also allows us to see how the defiant, yet tragic actions of the powerless poignantly raise the specter of delusion for the powerless, who can then only be freed from this entire web of destruction by courageous, life-giving people**.

After we finish discussing *Macbeth* and *Beloved*, we will then briefly discuss the FINAL DIALOGUE for Wed., 4/29.

**PREPARE A PRELIMINARY DIALOGUE FOR WED., 4/29:**

Over the break, read Chapter V and the Epilogue of *Jesus and the Disinherited* and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Loving Your Enemies” from *Strength to Love*, on Blackboard. Please also read Thich Nhat Hanh’s *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, 76-86, and *Going Home*, 31-38; and the second selection of pages from Kierkegaard’s *Works of Love* (cf. the selection from pp. 114-115 used at the beginning of the course), also on Blackboard.

After you read these selections, compose (i.e., type) a preliminary dialogue in which King, Thurman, Nhat Hanh, Kierkegaard, and Kierkegaard’s pseudonym Johannes de Silentio discuss the viability of loving the enemy. As you prepare your preliminary dialogue, keep in mind that King was influenced by Thurman’s *Jesus and the Disinherited*; was a reader of Kierkegaard (and Plato); and a colleague of Nhat Hanh. In your dialogue, be sure to create a concrete scenario that will allow all of the figures to engage this issue in some detail. Allow de Silentio, Kierkegaard’s pseudonym from *Fear and Trembling*, to function as a Socratic (i.e., critical or questioning) voice.

Finally, when you complete your dialogue, use Blackboard to email it to the everyone in the class, being sure to include me. Before you come to class on Wednesday, read everyone else’s dialogue, and decide which
dialogue you think the class should put on. However, in order to be ready to perform, make paper copies of everyone’s dialogue in your group, including your own. That way, if your or another group member’s dialogue gets selected, everyone in the group will already have a copy of the dialogue to use as her/his script for her/his part. You do not need to make copies of the dialogues from other groups, as long as you bring your computer to class. However, you do need to read the other dialogues carefully enough to vote on the one to be presented. Be sure to send your dialogue to me and the class no later than 8:00PM, Monday, 4/27, since we must all read these ahead of time.


POST-OFFICIAL LAST DAY OF CLASS MEETING FOR FINAL DIALOGUE: We will finish our conversation on wisdom and the quest for the authentic life by “putting on” one of your dialogues.

During the first 25 minutes of class, we will break into groups to discuss the readings from the break and the way that you addressed them in your dialogues. Therefore, bring the readings to class, along with copies of your and other group members’ typed dialogues. Please also bring your computer, with downloaded copies of the other class members’ dialogues, or copies of the dialogue you wish to see performed.

After this discussion, we will take about 5 minutes to vote on the dialogue that will be presented and discussed by the class. In order for this to move efficiently, come to class having read the emailed dialogues, and having chosen the dialogue you wish to see performed.

After the class selects a dialogue, the person whose dialogue it is will take 15 minutes to prepare her/his group to present it the class. During this time, the rest of the class will take a break. The group putting on the dialogue will have a 5 minute break after it gets its parts settled, refined, and/or distributed, and any stage direction in place.

At 6:05PM, 50 minutes into the last class session, the final dialogue will start. It will continue for 25 minutes, after which, there will be about 20 minutes of discussion, aimed at assessing the presenters’ treatment of the issues.

After the dialogue and discussion, there will be another 5-minute break. The remaining hour and five minutes will be devoted to a closing summary of the course (20 minutes) and class evaluations (45 minutes).

AT THE END OF THE CLASS SESSION, EVERYONE SHOULD TURN IN HER/His OWN PRELIMINARY DIALOGUE, FIRST REFLECTION PAPER (we will already have your second reflection paper), AND PORTFOLIO OF DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (the complete set that you have been collecting throughout the semester). NO LATE WORK ACCEPTED.