Course Description
This course critically reflects on significant individuals, movements, events, and fundamental tenets of the Christian faith that have shaped contemporary theologies in the past century or so. Through study of varied theological expressions in the modern and postmodern decades, the student enters into the church’s enduring task of interpreting, articulating, and enacting the gospel for contemporary life. Attention will be given to selected primary sources.

Course Objectives
To understand a broad array of contemporary theological movements, their contexts, and their relevance to 21st century Christian faith.

To experience theology as an ongoing and diverse conversation across geographies, identities, denominations, and schools of thought.

To equip students with theological tools for ministry

By critically studying, writing, and speaking theologically, to empower students' theological and ministerial voices.

Required Texts
The volumes below are required for the course. Other selections will be assigned for various class sessions, and will be made available well ahead of time online via Duke Box and/or email.

- Craigo-Snell, Shannon and Shawnthea Miller: *Living Christianity: A Pastoral Theology for Today*

Assigned Work

Sermon sketches: For each Friday that we meet, bring a one-page outline or summary of a sermon you could preach addressing a major question raised by the reading for that day. Incorporate major ideas from the reading into your sermon. This exercise is intended to help you think through the ways seemingly abstract ideas may intersect meaningfully with your pastoral context.

A 6-8 page (double-spaced) research paper on a topic of your choosing. Your paper must draw from at least two thinkers discussed in our course. This is an opportunity to explore a question that arises as you read for the course, or to dig deeper into a particular theological area that intrigues you. Sources should be cited using the Chicago Manual of
Style, following Duke's standards for citation and academic integrity. See the Course of Study Writing Guidelines or Duke Divinity's writing resources for help if needed: https://divinity.duke.edu/initiatives-centers/center-theological-writing/writing-resources. The paper is due Saturday, September 26th, by email. An extension of up to two weeks on the paper is available per request, but extension requests should be submitted by September 21st, so you and your instructor can both plan accordingly.

**Engaged and prepared participation** in class discussions. Theology at its simplest is discourse about God, and theologians thus are ones who speak about God. As the aim of the course is to equip students as theologians, lectures will not be the primary format for this course (though some lecturing will occur). Theological voices, as is the case with all disciplines, are only found and honed with practice, and thus class participation is especially emphasized in the design of class sessions and in grade calculation.

**Grading Formula**
- Sermon sketches (due each Friday): 35%
- Final Paper (due 10/9): 45%
- Class Participation: 20%

**A Few Words About Class Participation**
As you have seen, participation makes up a very high proportion of your grade in this class. As such, here are the instructor's expectations:

**Come to class prepared**, having read/reviewed according to the syllabus. Reading notes are tremendously helpful, and you will find yourself using them in the future when this course no longer rings freshly in your memory. Be ready to talk and ask questions in class. Attendance is assumed; participation is an active process beyond attendance.

**Active participation in class discussions**. By this I don't mean you need to know everything or "win" arguments. I mean that you should ask questions when you do not understand a concept. Join in our discussions and debates. We are all learning, and a key part of doing theology is making oneself vulnerable to being corrected. After all, we are all speaking of a God we can never fully comprehend. So venture new ideas, try out new concepts and new ways of speaking. Think of class as a lab, not as a recital. Experiment with theological ideas and language, knowing that this is exploration, not deviation. Give your theological voice a workout. Do theology with us.

**Respectful engagement with classmates**. We will disagree with one another, and we will have differing opinions about the thinkers we are reading. It is not the purpose of this course to present one theologian or viewpoint as normative against all others, but rather to understand theology as an ongoing and passionate discussion. As such, we welcome all perspectives, and while we may disagree with ideas, we critique the ideas, and not the people espousing them.
**On Plagiarism...**

Plagiarism is failing to cite sources, or presenting another's writing as your own. It is intellectual theft, and it is not tolerated in this course. Our goal is to develop your theological voice, and plagiarism is a refusal to engage in the central task of the course. Accordingly, plagiarism will result in an automatic zero on the assignment and, in the case of plagiarism on a Final Paper, failure of the course.

More pastorally, plagiarism is generally a result of insecurity. A plagiarist is afraid of their own voice or afraid their ideas and writing are not up to snuff. *Every* writer suffers anxiety around their writing. You have resources available through Duke to help you (linked above and from the COS website), and your instructor, who can relate to your anxiety, is happy to meet with you to talk about your assignments or about the writing process. You may worry that your writing is not good enough. Your writing is good enough. Trust your voice, and use it.

**On Classroom Ethos...**

Given that we are tackling a wide range of ideas and perspectives, and that we come from different contexts, disagreements will surely arise among the participants in our discussion. These differences are in fact the engine that propels theological discussion, and will be lifted up as gifts, not as difficulties. When reading for class, remember that these theologies are already significant in their impact and represent deeply thoughtful and dedicated thinkers grappling with the same deep mysteries that we grapple with. You are under no obligation to agree with them, but you are expected to see value in their work and to respect diverse voices and perspectives.

When disagreements arise between you and a colleague or the instructor, extend to them the grace you would want extended to you. Seek to understand their perspective, and then, if you feel so moved, to respectfully articulate your disagreement. Anselm called theology "faith seeking understanding" and we are all in that boat together.

This expectation applies to the instructor as well. I have my own theological preferences and habits, and you are not obligated to adopt them as your own. Whether you agree with me or not, your work will be evaluated on its merits and on the construction and citation of your arguments. It is possible to get a good grade disagreeing with me and a poor grade agreeing with me. Honest and rigorous theological work is our mutual goal.

**Course Schedule and Readings**

**Friday, September 11th/ Saturday, September 12th (Sermon Sketch Due)**

**Speaking About God In A Changing World**

- Karl Barth: *“The Righteousness of God”* (Duke Box)
- Paul Tillich: *Dynamics of Faith*, chapters 1-3
- James Cone: *A Black Theology of Liberation*- Chapter 1 (Duke Box)
- Keller: *On The Mystery*, Chapters 1 & 2
Friday, September 18th/ Saturday, September 19th (Sermon Sketch Due)
The Trinity and Creation
   Tillich, *Dynamics*: Chapters 3,4
   Keller, *On The Mystery*: Chapter 3,7,8
   Craigo-Snell/Miller: *Living Christianity*: Chapter 1, 2
   Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, Chapter 6 (Duke Box)

Friday, September 25th/ Saturday, September 26th (Sermon Sketch Due)
Bodies, Sin, and Redemption
   Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is*- Chapter 12 (Duke Box)
   Keller, *On The Mystery*- Chapter 5,6
   Craigo-Snell/Miller: *Living Christianity*: Chapter 3,4

Friday, October 9th
*Final Papers Due via email (sjlaurent@gmail.com)*