
THEO5920 處境神學
CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGIES

Wong Foo Yuan Bldg UG01
Tu 7:00PM - 9:30PM

6/1, 13/1, 20/1, 27/1, 3/2, 10/2, 24/2, 10/3, 17/3, 24/3, 31/3, 14/4

No Class on Public Holidays
No Class on 3 March (Reading Week)

All assignments must be submitted to Blackboard & VERIGUIDE
No hardcopy is required

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Course Outline
(Blackboard)

Introduction:

This course endeavors to illuminate the particularity and contextual nature of theology, thereby highlighting the plurality within the Christian traditions. It will explore how various theological perspectives emerge within specific historical and spatial contexts. Based on this understanding, the course posits that theologians are not merely assimilating pre-existing theologies for application to contemporary situations. Instead, they are actively "doing" theology within the horizons presented by specific temporal, spatial, cultural, social, political, and economic realities. This process involves reinterpreting Christian faith traditions in light of their immediate contexts, and in so doing, rendering the traditions living. Following this line of inquiry, the course will also attempt to discuss the practical dimensions inherent in the act of "doing" theology.

Objectives:

- 1 Knowledge: students will be able to
 - 1.1 Comprehend the particularity and contextuality of all theology
 - 1.2 Understand contextual theology's methods and methodology
 - 1.3 Be familiar with at least four common contextual theologies
 - 1.4 Read at least one significant text in contextual theology
- 2 Attitudes: students will
 - 2.1 Appreciate the openness of Christian faith
 - 2.2 Be more concerned with society and the world
- 3 Skill:
 - 3.1 Students will develop the ability to conduct contextual theological analysis of social, political, cultural, and economic concerns.

Contents:

- 1 Orientation
 - 1.1 What is Contextual Theology?
 - 1.2 Gospel and Politics—Scriptural Interpretations as an Example
 - 1.3 Contextuality of Theologies—Scriptural Interpretations as an Example
 - 1.4 Re-thinking Biblical Authority
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- 1.5 The Contextuality of Contextual Theology
 - 1.6 Bevan's Models of Contextual Theology
 - 2 Contextual Theologies: Selected Readings
 - 2.1 Latin American Liberation Theology
 - 2.2 Postcolonial Theology
 - 2.3 Queer Theology
 - 2.4 European Critical Theology
 - 2.5 Reconsidering Ecotheology in Light of New Materialism
 - 2.6 Theology and Ecumenism
 - 3 Contextual Theology and Constructive Theology
 - 3.1 Jesuology vs. Christology
 - 3.2 About God

Assignments (All assignments are due by April 25, 2025)

- 1 40% AI Assignment—An "Algorithmic Bias" Critique (Methodological Focus)
 - **Title of the Assignment:** The "Universal" vs. The "Contextual": Critiquing AI Theology
 - **Format:** AI Chat Logs + Critical Essay (1,500 words)
 - **Rationale behind this Assignment:** AI models are often trained on vast datasets dominated by Global North/Western theological perspectives. In this assignment, students will treat the AI as a "traditional" theologian who claims to speak universal truth, and then critique it using the contextual tools learned in class.
 - **Instructions:**
 - **The Prompt:** Select a pressing social or political issue relevant to Hong Kong or Asia (e.g., the housing crisis, aging population, political polarization). Ask the AI (e.g., ChatGPT/Gemini) to "Construct a theology to address this issue."
 - **The Analysis:** Analyze the AI's output. Does it offer generic, de-contextualized, timeless platitudes? Does it reflect a specific "hidden" context (e.g., Western individualism, colonial assumptions)? Is its contextual analysis adequate?
 - **The Critique:** Write an essay (1500 words) critiquing the AI's response.
 - Identify the AI's "social location" (or lack thereof).
 - Using the contextual theological models/approaches you learnt in class (e.g., **Postcolonial Theology** or **Liberation Theology** concepts), explain *why* the AI's answer fails or succeed to address the specific "pain" or reality of the local context.
 - **Re-write the theology:** The student must conclude by offering a short, corrective, truly contextual theological response that the AI failed to generate.
 - **Tips (Integration with Assignment 2):** To deepen their critical engagement, students may choose to utilize the text from their Book Review (i.e., assignment 1) as a foundation for this debate. However, this is entirely optional, and students may select an unrelated theological issue if they prefer.
 - 2 60% Reading Report
 - **Choosing one of the following to write a reading report:**
 - Bergmann, Sigurd. *God in Context: A Survey of Contextual Theology*. Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003.
 - Bevan, Stephen B. *Models of Contextual Theology*. Rev. and expanded ed. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2002.
 - Green, Laurie. *Let's Do Theology Resources for Contextual Theology*. London; New York: Mowbray, 2009. (中譯:《做神學:一同走進處境神學》。香港:基督教文藝)。
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- Kwan, Simon Shui-Man. *Postcolonial Resistance and Asian Theology*. London; NY: Routledge, 2014.
 - Pears, Angie. *Doing Contextual Theology*. London; New York: Routledge, 2010.
 - Schreiter, Robert J. *Constructing Local Theologies*. London: SCM, 1985.
 - Sedmak, Clemens. *Doing Local Theology*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2002.
 - 關瑞文、龔立人、黃慧貞、黃彰輝、Stephen B. Bevans。《道在處境：處境神學的基礎、模型與多元視野》。關瑞文編。香港：基督教文藝出版社，2025。
- **Guidelines:** Since this assignment constitutes **60% of your final grade**, it is not merely a summary of the text. It is a substantial academic engagement. The goal is to demonstrate that you have not only read the text but have mastered the course objectives: specifically, understanding the **particularity and methodology of contextual theology** and the ability to critique theological works through a contextual lens.
 - **Length:** 2,500–4,000 words (Chinese or English)
 - **Suggested Structure & Content:** A successful report at this level should generally follow this structure:
 - **Part I: The Context of the Text (approx. 15%)** As this course teaches that all theology is contextual, you must not treat the book as a "timeless truth" dropped from the sky.
 - **Who is the author?** (e.g., What is their social location? Are they writing from a post-colonial, European, or Latin American perspective?)
 - **Why was this book written?** What historical, political, or ecclesial problem is the author trying to solve?
 - **Part II: Synthesis of Key Arguments (approx. 25%)** Provide a concise summary of the book's main thesis. Do not go chapter-by-chapter.
 - What is the author's primary methodology?
 - If the book proposes a model (like Bevans or Schreiter), how does that model function?
 - *Tip:* Prove you have read the whole book, but focus on the "big picture" arguments rather than minor details.
 - **Part III: Critical Evaluation (The Core - approx. 40%)** This is the most important section. You must engage the text using the tools learned in lectures.
 - **Methodological Critique:** Does the author successfully "do" theology within their stated horizon? Do they fall into the trap of merely assimilating pre-existing theologies, or do they genuinely construct something new?
 - **Comparison:** How does this author's approach compare to others discussed in class (e.g., Liberation Theology, Postcolonial Theology,)?
 - **Strengths and Weaknesses:** Where is the author's argument most convincing? Where does it fail to address the complexity of "spatial, cultural, social, political, and economic realities"?
 - **Part IV: Contextual Application (approx. 20%)** Connect the reading to your own context or the Hong Kong/Asian context.
 - How does this book help you analyze a specific social or political concern today?
 - Does the book provide useful tools for "doing theology" in your specific ministry or social setting?
 - **Technical Requirements & Submission**
 - **Style Guide:** Chicago Manual of Style 17th edition (notes and bibliography)
 - **Submission Platform:** You must upload the file to **Blackboard**.
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- **Academic Integrity:** You must submit the file to **VeriGuide**. (Note: Ensure you allow enough time for the VeriGuide system to generate the receipt. You need to sign and attach the receipt to your assignment.)
 - **Deadline:** The absolute deadline is **April 25, 2025**. Late submissions usually incur penalties.
 - **Assessment Rubrics (How to get an A)** Your report will be assessed on:
 - Did you really understand the book? (20%)
 - The Goal: Show you grasped the big picture, not just the small details.
 - What to do:
 - Explain the author's main argument clearly.
 - Do NOT just summarize the book chapter-by-chapter (e.g., "In Chapter 1 he said X, in Chapter 2 he said Y...").
 - Instead, organize your report by themes or key ideas.
 - Did you explain *who* wrote it and *why*? (20%)
 - The Goal: Show you understand that theology is shaped by context (where and when it was written).
 - What to do:
 - Identify the author's background (e.g., Are they a Western academic? A Liberation theologian from the 1980s?).
 - Explain what political, social, or historical problems the author was trying to solve.
 - Do not treat the book as a "timeless truth" that fell from the sky.
 - Did you critique the theology? (30%)
 - The Goal: This is the most weighted section. You need to act like a scholar, not just a reader.
 - What to do:
 - Assess the author's method. Did their approach work?
 - Use the theories learned in class (like Bevans' Models) to analyze the book.
 - Identify the book's strengths and its blind spots (e.g., Did they ignore gender? Did they ignore economics?).
 - Do not just say "I liked this book" or "I found it difficult." Give theological reasons.
 - Can you use this book in real life? (20%)
 - The Goal: Connect the reading to *your* context (Hong Kong, Asia, or your specific ministry).
 - What to do:
 - Take the author's ideas and apply them to a current social, political, or church issue.
 - Show how this book changes the way you view a specific problem today.
 - Do not offer a vague or generic application (e.g., "We should all love each other more"). Be specific.
 - Is the paper professional? (10%)
 - The Goal: High academic standards.
 - What to do:
 - Write clearly and logically.
 - Use correct citations (Chicago) for every quote and idea.
 - **Quick Grade Guide**
 - A Range: You mastered the book, critiqued the author's method deeply, and applied it creatively to a modern issue.
 - B Range: You understood the book well and summarized it clearly, but your critique was a bit safe or shallow.
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- C Range: You mostly just summarized the chapters without explaining the context or critiquing the arguments.

Core References (see the “Reading Report” Section)

Other References (see also suggested readings for each lecture)

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 - ◆ Althaus-Reid, Marcella, and Lisa Isherwood. *Controversies in Body Theology*. Controversies in Contextual Theology Series. London: SCM, 2008.
 - ◆ Althaus-Reid, Marcella, and Lisa Isherwood. *Controversies in Feminist Theology*. Controversies in Contextual Theology Series. London: SCM, 2007.
 - ◆ Amesbury, Richard, and G. M. Newlands. *Faith and Human Rights: Christianity and the Global Struggle for Human Dignity*. Facets. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008. (中譯: «信仰與人權: 基督教與人類尊嚴的全球奮鬥》。香港: 基督教文藝)。
 - ◆ Anderson, Gerald and Thomas F. Stransky. eds. *Mission Trends No. 4: Liberation Theologies in North America and Europe*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979.
 - ◆ Anderson, Gerald H. and Thomas F. Stransky. ed. *Mission Trends No. 3: Third World Theologies*. NY: Paulist and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1976.
 - ◆ Ariarajah, S. Wesley. *Gospel and Culture: An Ongoing Discussion Within the Ecumenical Movement*. Geneva: WCC, 1994.
 - ◆ Bergmann, Sigurd, and Mika Vähäkangas. *Contextual Theology: Skills and Practices of Liberating Faith*. Routledge New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies. London; New York: Routledge, 2021.
 - ◆ Berkey, Robert F. and Sarah A. Edwards. eds. *Christology in Dialogue*. Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim, 1993.
 - ◆ Bevans, Stephen B. *Essays in Contextual Theology*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2018.
 - ◆ Bevans, Stephen B., and Roger Schroeder. 2004. *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*. American Society of Missiology Series ; No. 30. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis. (中譯: «演變中的永恆—當代宣教神學。孫懷亮、柯博識及雷立柏譯。香港: 道風書社, 2011。)
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 - ◆ Boer, Roland. *Criticism of Heaven on Marxism and Theology*. 2 vols. Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston: Brill, 2007. (中譯: «天國的批判(上) —論馬克思主義與神學》。香港: 基督教文藝)。
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 - ◆ Boff, Leonardo and V.E. Elizando. *Convergences and Differences*. Edinburgh: T.&T Clark 1988.
 - ◆ Boff, Leonardo, et al. eds. *Option for the Poor: Challenge to the Rich Countries*. Edinburgh: T. &T. Clark, 1986.
 - ◆ Boff, Leonardo. *Good News to the Poor: A New Evangelization*. Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1992.
 - ◆ Brown, Robert McAfee. *Gustavo Gutierrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990.
 - ◆ Carson, Donald A. *Biblical Interpretation & the Church: The Problem of Contextualization*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson 1984.
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 - ◆ Dyrness, William A. *Invitation to Cross-Cultural Theology*. Michigan: Zondervan, 1991.
 - ◆ Dyrness, William A., ed. *Emerging Voices in Global Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994.
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 - ◆ England, John C., ed. *Asian Christian Theologies: A Research Guide to Authors, Movements, Sources*. 3 vols. Delhi; Quezon City; Maryknoll, N.Y.: ISPCK; Claretian Publishers; Orbis Books, 2002-2004.
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 - ◆ Fabella, Virginia and S. Torres. eds. *Doing Theology in a Divided World: Papers from the Sixth International Conference of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, January 5-13, 1983, Geneva Switzerland*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985.
 - ◆ Fabella, Virginia and Sun Ai Lee Park. eds. *We Dare to Dream: Doing Theology as Asian Women*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990.
 - ◆ Ford, David F. ed. *The Modern Theologians: an introduction to Christian theology in the twentieth century*. 3rd ed. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 2005.
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Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>.

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Policy on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

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In this course, students are permitted and encouraged to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools as a sophisticated learning aid for specific tasks, such as brainstorming, synthesizing research, and improving writing style. The judicious use of AI can enhance learning by allowing students to focus on higher-order theological tasks, critical analysis, and ethical reflection.

However, academic integrity is paramount. Students are strictly prohibited from submitting unedited AI-generated text as their own original work. All work submitted must reflect the student's own critical engagement and intellectual contribution.

Citation and Acknowledgement:

In accordance with CUHK's Approach 3, which states, "Students are allowed to use AI tools in any learning activities and/or assessments as long as they explicitly cite or otherwise acknowledge the use of these tools," students are required to cite their use of AI. This includes:

- **Model Used:** Clearly state the name and version of the AI tool(s) used (e.g., ChatGPT 4.0, Google Gemini, Anthropic Claude).
- **Description of Prompts/Process:** Provide a brief description of how the AI tool was used, including the prompts or queries entered and the specific stage of the assignment where AI was employed (e.g., used for brainstorming case study approaches, to summarize counseling theories, to refine client communication strategies).
- **Ethical Considerations:** Students must adhere to ethical principles when using AI, including accountability for the content generated, transparency in its use, and ensuring data privacy and confidentiality when sharing information with AI tools. Special attention should be paid to client confidentiality and sensitive information when considering AI applications in counseling.

Allowed AI Tools:

Students are encouraged to explore and utilize various reputable AI tools available. Examples include, but are not limited to, large language models like ChatGPT (OpenAI), Gemini (Google), Claude (Anthropic), and Perplexity AI. Students should exercise discretion and critical judgment when selecting and using AI tools, prioritizing those that offer transparency in their data handling and model training, especially concerning sensitive client data.
