Conrad Grebel University College  
University of Waterloo  
TS 680: Theologies of Everyday Life  
Fall 2021

Class Time: Wednesdays 10:00 – 11:30  
Location: CG 2202

Instructor: Assistant Professor Carol Penner  
Office Hours: Wednesday 11:30 – 12:30 or by appointment  
Office Location: Room 2112  
Phone: 519-885-0220 x24241  
Email: c2penner@uwaterloo.ca

Course Description:  
This is a practical theology course, grounded in everyday life. We will explore the theological significance of the relationships and practices we value and which take up so much of our time. Topics covered will be friendship, family relationships, homemaking, possessions, animals, food, nature, sports, technology and sacred spaces. The goal of the course is to cultivate the practice of theological reflection, to equip you to think theologically about your life.

Learning Goals:  
1. Students will be able to describe the theological issues that emerge out of everyday life.  
2. Students will be able to reflect theologically about their own experiences, and communicate those reflections in written and oral form.  
3. Students will develop listening skills, and the ability to ask insightful questions about the theological meaning of other people’s experiences.  
4. Students will analyze how their own contexts shape their theological work.  
5. Students will be able to identify a variety of theological methods for reflecting on everyday life.

Required Reading Materials:  
Articles:  


Grimsrud, Ted. “Friendship as Spiritual Encouragement” from his blog “Peace Theology”

Hill, Wesley. “‘Till Death Do Us Part.” Christianity Today 58, no. 7 (September 2014): 38-44.


Hunt, Mary W. “Fierce Tenderness in Deed.” In Fierce Tenderness: A Feminist Theology of Friendship, 165-176.


King, Sarah Withrow. “Can You Be a Peace-loving Meat-eater?” In *Animals are Not Ours (No, Really They’re Not): An Evangelical Animal Liberation Theology*, 114-120.


Stafford, Tim. “God is in the Blueprints: Our Deepest Beliefs are Reflected in the Ways We Construct our Houses of Worship.” *Christianity Today* 42, no. 10 (Sept 7 1998): 76-82.


Evaluations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Book Review</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>October 27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major Research Paper Proposal</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>November 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>On-line Discussion Forum</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>November 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Presentation, in-person or in video format</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>November 24 or December 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major Research Paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>December 8</td>
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Assignments:

#1. Critical Book Review (30%)
Goal: To develop the ability to summarize and critique a book in the field of practical everyday theology.
Due Date: October 27
Length: 1000-1250 words
Many of the readings in this course are an excerpt from a longer book, or feature an author who has written a book. In consultation with the instructor, read one of these books, and then write a critical book review. A critical book review should begin with a concise summary of the book, followed by your response to the book (equal parts summary and response). Your review should be a good introduction to the book for someone who has never read it. Would you recommend this book? Why or why not? What theological themes are uppermost in this book? Was there something surprising or new to you in this book? Were the reflections well-reasoned? Did you agree or disagree with the main points? Was it well-written and organized, or hard to understand? What questions are left unanswered by this book?
#2. On-line Discussion Forum (10%)
Goal: To foster theological reflections on your own everyday life through group discussion.
Due Date: November 24
Many of our classes will include on-line discussion boards, with questions sparked by readings from our classes, where we reflect theologically on an experience or event or practice in our everyday lives. On weeks when we have on-line discussions, expect to spend at least one hour on this assignment, which will involve checking back several times to read the threads and commenting when you have something to contribute. Evaluation of this component of the course will be evaluated on the basis of three of your best posts that you choose and submit as a single Word document. These entries will show you interacting with others, reflecting theologically on your own experience, with some reference to the readings.

#3. Major Research Paper (50%)
Goal: To demonstrate the ability to research a topic about everyday theology that has significance for you, to articulate and develop theological themes, and to apply this work to your own context.
Due Date: Proposal November 3 (10%) , Paper due December 8 (40%)
Length: 2500-3000 words
The Proposal: Pick a topic that is significant to you, in consultation with the instructor (via email, with a subject heading “Proposed topic for research paper”). Possible topics could include any of the topics discussed in class, or other subjects that are relevant to your life. Examples include: gaming, clothing, money, sex, film, aging, childbirth, work, travel, popular music, art, etc. The instructor must approve the topic in principle, since some topics may not have enough theological material to research. After the approval of your topic, write a one page proposal where you outline your topic, why you have chosen it and some of the themes your paper will address. Include a preliminary bibliography with at least two or three books, as well as two or three articles.

The Paper: has three parts
a) Survey of the literature (what people are writing about this topic, including significant authors in the field, and their theological approaches). This section should provide a good introduction to the topic for someone who does not know anything about it.
b) Reflection. What theological themes surface around this topic? What surprised you? In reflection on your own life, how has this research enriched your own theological reflections about this topic?
c) In your conclusion suggest questions that you still have, and directions for future research.

#4. Class Presentation (10%)
Goal: To articulate the main points of your major research paper to the class.
Due Date: To be determined, either Nov. 24 or Dec. 1
Length: 10-15 minutes, either in-person, or a video that is shared with the professor and will be uploaded to LEARN
This presentation will be on the topic of your major research paper. Choose a short reading about your topic (6-10 pages) for your fellow students to read. This must be submitted as a photocopy or digitally to the instructor by November 14, so that I can post it on LEARN. Begin by outlining why you chose this topic (why it is significant to you). Survey the literature, describing theological approaches and themes that emerged from your research. Conclude your presentation with a reflection on how this research impacted your own theology.

Course Schedule:

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Group A &amp; Group B:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Shapiro, Tim. “Homegrown Theology: Understanding God in Everyday Life.”</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Friendship #1</td>
<td>Group A:</td>
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<td>Hunt, Mary. “The Limits of Friendship in Loss and Celebration.”</td>
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<td>Hunt, Mary. “Fierce Tenderness in Deed.”</td>
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<td>Reiff, Joseph T. “Mission Mississippi.”</td>
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<td>Group B:</td>
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<td>Forbes, Catherine. “Authentic Friendship in the Age of Social Media.”</td>
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<td>Grimsrud, Ted. “Friendship as Spiritual Encouragement”</td>
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<td>Hill, Wesley. “Till Death Do Us Part”</td>
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<td>Stoner, Cathy. “Tennis and the ‘hood.”</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Food #2</td>
<td>Group A:</td>
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<td>Ayres, Jennifer R. “A Grounded Practical Theology of Food.”</td>
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<td>Wirzba, Norman. “Saying Grace.”</td>
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<td>Group B:</td>
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<td>Bennett, Kyle David. “This Is My Tummy That I Curb For You.”</td>
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<td>Pihkala, Panu. “Ecotheology and the Theology of Eating.”</td>
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<td>King, Sarah Withrow. “Can You be a Peace-loving Meat-eater?”</td>
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<td>Wipf, Elizabeth Schrag. “My Time in the Wilderness: Overcoming Food Anxiety.”</td>
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<td>King, Sarah Withrow. “Do Animals Suffer? (And Does it Matter?)”</td>
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<td>Largen, Kristin. “Neighbours, Neighbour-Love, and our Animal Neighbours.”</td>
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<td>Group B: Aftandilian, Dave. “Toward a Native American Theology of Animals: Creek and Cherokee Perspectives.”</td>
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<td>Hobgood-Oster, Laura. “What a Friend We Have: Our Animal Companions.”</td>
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<td>Kowalsky, Nathan. “The God(s) of November.”</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Family Relationships &amp; Homemaking</td>
<td>Group A: Family Relationships</td>
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<td>DeBerg, Claire. “Choosing Love: Adultery, Adoption, Abundance.”</td>
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<td>Longacre, Doris Janzen. “Nurture People.”</td>
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<td>Group B: Homemaking</td>
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<td>Gress &amp; Mering, “Order.”</td>
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<td>Oct 13</td>
<td>READING WEEK</td>
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<td>King, David and Margo Starbuck. “Because We Owe Our Children Every Opportunity, We Can’t Say No to Youth Sports.”</td>
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<td>Group B: Hoven, Matt. “Sport as a Celebrative and Worshipful Act.”</td>
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<td>Laytham, D. Brent. “We Watch them Play (Sports).”</td>
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<td>Reading</td>
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| 7.      | Nature     | Group A:  
McFague, Sallie. “Consider the Lilies of the Field.”  
Myers, Ched. “Nature Against Empire: Exodus Plagues, Climate Crisis and Hard-heartedness.”  
Group B:  
Dahill, Lisa E. “Living, Local, Wild Waters.”  
Kimmerer, Robin Wall “A Mother’s Work.” |
| 8.      | Possessions| Group A:  
Bennett, Kyle David. “’What Did You Have That You Did Not Receive?’”  
Friesen, Ken Martens. “A Mennonite Call to Simplicity.”  
Hsu, Albert Y. “Material World: The Challenges of Consumer Culture.”  
Longacre, Doris Janzen. “Clothes and Bodies.”  
Group B:  
Parks, Sharon Daloz. “Household Economics.”  
Turpin, Katherine. “Consuming.” |
| 9.      | Sacred Spaces| Group A:  
Daelemans, Bert. “Healing Space: The Synaesthetic Quality of Church Architecture.”  
Ellis, Robert. “Sporting Place, Sacred Place: A Theology of Sporting Place.”  
Group B:  
Daniels, Makenna. “A Walk Down Memory Lane: Sacred Space on the Camino de Santiago.”  
Jacobs, Janet. “Sacred Space and Collective Memory: Memorializing Genocide at Sites of Terror.”  
Stafford, Tim. “God is in the Blueprints: Our Deepest Beliefs are Reflected in the Ways We Construct our Houses of Worship.”  
Williams, Premkumar D. “Between City and Steeple: Looking at Megachurch Architecture.” |
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<th>Week</th>
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| 10   | Nov 17      | **Group A:**
|       |             | Canceran, Delfo Cortina. “Cybertechology and Theology: An Uneasy Relationship.”                                                                                                                                  |
|       |             | Wagner, Rachel “Me, Myself and iPod: Hybrid, Wired and Plural Selves.”                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|       |             | **Group B:**
|       |             | Wagner, Rachel “Xbox Apocalypse: Video Games, Interactivity and Revelatory Literature.”                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|       |             | Waters, Brent. “Is Technology the New Religion?”                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 11.  | Nov 24      | Student Presentations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 12.  | Dec 1       | Student Presentations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

**UWaterloo Policies**

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Arts: [Academic Integrity website](https://arts.uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity) University of Waterloo: [Academic Integrity Office](https://uwaterloo.ca/integrity/)

**Notes**

**The Land on Which We Meet:**

We acknowledge that we are located on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe, and the Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo and Conrad Grebel University are situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometers (six miles) on each side of the Grand River. Relationships between indigenous peoples and settlers has been fraught with injustice; we hope in this course to encourage careful listening to indigenous voices, and to move forward in ways that foster respect, dignity and equality.

**Readings**

The pedagogical method we are using in the class is a shared learning approach. The class is divided into two groups (Group A and Group B, this list is available on LEARN platform under Content). Each week, each group will read different material. Our class discussion will involve one group explaining their readings to the other group. Each group has between two to four articles to read each week. You are responsible to read all the articles in your group assignment, but you should come prepared to share to speak about at least two of the articles:

- What theological themes were discussed?
- What methods does the author use in their theological reflection?
- Why was it compelling?

You are expected to make a case as to why you think the other group should read the article that you chose.
Attendance and COVID-19
Being present and participating in in-person and on-line discussion forum is important for the pedagogical method of this course. Students are expected to prepare for each class by reading the required readings for the day and watching any videos provided, coming with readiness to discuss the material. If you are unable to make the class, please let the instructor know by email if you will be absent. Due to the pandemic, we will be meeting in-person for 90 minutes each week, subject to public health directives, followed by an on-line written discussion forum. Please follow the guidelines provided by UWaterloo here. If the public health directives change, or if a number of students or the instructor are isolating because of COVID-19, we may temporarily switch to a Zoom format for the in-person section of this class. Please check your email before setting out for class.

Citations and Plagiarism
Your sources must be fully documented, according to the Chicago Manual of Style, 16th edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). The latest edition is available on-line. Please use the notes and bibliography system rather than the parenthetical author/date system. Using undocumented quotations from published sources, or submitting work that is not your own will have serious ramifications for your academic career.

Tardy Assignments
Punctual submission of assignments is expected; assignments are to be uploaded through the LEARN platform. Late assignments will be accepted only if you have talked to the instructor ahead of time for an extension. Marks may be deducted for assignments that are over one week overdue.

Other sources of information for students:
Mental Health Services aim is to provide holistic programming and services to help you lead a healthy and balanced life. We strive to provide a secure, supportive environment for students of all orientations and backgrounds. Students suffering from problems with anxiety, depression, problems with sleep, attention, obsession or compulsions, relationship difficulties, severe winter blues, etc., may make an appointment by phone or in person. Appointments are usually available within two days of initial contact with one of our medical doctors. All contacts are completely confidential. Phone 519-888-4567 ext. 32655.

For students with learning differences: The AccessAbility Services (AAS) office, located in Needles Hall Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the ASS office at the beginning of each academic term.

Counselling Services: Counselling Services provides free confidential counselling, in both individual and group sessions, with qualified professionals to help registered students, faculty and staff with personal concerns, educational career decisions, and strategies to studies and exams: www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infocs, ext. 33528, NH Room 2080.
The Writing Centre: Writing Centre staff offer one-on-one support in planning assignments and presentations, using and documenting research, organizing and structuring papers, and revising for clarity and coherence. Make an appointment or drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit www.uwaterloo.ca/writing-centre.