

Religion/Women's Studies 366

Latin American Liberation Theologies

"To know God is to do justice."

- Gustavo Gutiérrez, Peruvian priest

"Poverty is a sin. Sin is that which leads to death. Salvation is that which brings life.

Salvation means liberating people from all that leads to death."

- Jon Sobrino, Salvadoran priest

"A feminist theological perspective that looks beyond the crucifixion of one man for the salvation of all denounces using the cross to maintain the oppression of women and the poor. Jesus' suffering on the cross has often served as an excuse for justifying the misery imposed on the poor and especially on women. In fact, their submission to male authority has been presented as a duty based on obedience to Jesus, who was obedient to his Father even to death on the cross."

- Ivone Gebara, Brazilian nun

"Unveiling sexuality as an ideology within theology helps us to remain more faithful to our faith not only as a negative exercise of denouncing theological manipulations, but also by rediscovering the presence of God and God's wisdom in the communities of those outside heterosexual ideologies."

- Marcella Althaus-Reid, Argentinian Queer Liberation Theologian

Instructor: Dr. Ann Lutterman-Aguilar, lutterma@augsborg.edu,

Prerequisites: REL 100 or equivalent.

Departmental Cross Listings

This course is cross-listed as both a Religion and a Women's Studies course. You may choose either discipline. *Regardless of whether or not you register for Religion or Women's Studies credit, this course will help you explore the diversity of human experiences and encourage you to examine your forms of communication and persuasion, your powers of reason, sympathy, and imagination, your needs as individuals and roles as global citizens, and your relationship to the beautiful, the transcendent, and the divine.*

Augsburg General Education Requirements

Augsburg students who take this course can receive credit for the Humanities LAF (Liberal Arts Foundation), as well as credit for the Critical Thinking (CT) skill requirement. This course can also meet the "Search for Meaning II" Signature Curriculum requirement at Augsburg. However, if you are an Augsburg student, you must choose whether you want to take it for Humanities LAF credit or "Search for Meaning II" credit. It cannot fulfil both.

Humanities Liberal Arts Foundation Statement

This Humanities Liberal Arts Foundation will help you explore the range and possibilities of human experience. Depending on the course, you may investigate the diversity of human nature and culture, our forms of communication and persuasion, our powers of reason, sympathy, and imagination, our needs as individuals and roles as citizens, and our relationship to the beautiful, the transcendent, and the divine. As the philosopher Martha Nussbaum has written, however, all Humanities disciplines have something in common: they help students *use reason and imagination to enter broader worlds of cultures, groups, and ideas.*

Augsburg's Humanities departments are Communication Studies, English, History, Modern Languages, Philosophy, and Religion. These six disciplines engage human experience from different perspectives using different modes of discourse, but they share a common goal of rigorous inquiry into the ways written and spoken language can record, discover, and creatively express the truths of human experience.

Required Readings

- Bromley, Victoria L. *Feminisms Matter: Debates, Theories, Activism*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.
- De La Torre, Miguel A. *Liberation Theology for Armchair Theologians*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013.
- Gebara, Ivone. *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002. (Selected chapters)
- Pineda-Madrid, Nancy. *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juárez*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011.
- Steger, Manfred B. and Ravi K. Roy. *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction*. NY: Oxford University Press, 2010.

You will also be given a short supplemental course reading packet, which will include a variety of articles and book chapters.

Supplemental Reading

In addition, you will most likely read excerpts of the following (as well as other books and articles):

- Althaus-Reid, Marcella. *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics*. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Althaus-Reid, Marcella. *The Queer God*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Boff, Leonardo. *Christianity in a Nutshell*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013.
- Carrasco, David. *Religions of Mesoamerica: Cosmovisions and Ceremonial Centers*. Waveland Press, Inc.: 1998.
- Castillo, Ana, ed. *Goddess of the Americas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe*. NY: Riverhead Books, 1996.
- Cooper, Thia, ed. *The Reemergence of Liberation Theologies: Models for the Twenty-First Century*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- DeYoung, Curtiss Paul, Wilda C. Gafney, Leticia A. Guardiola-Sáenz, George "Tink" Tinker, and Frank M. Yamada, eds. *The People's Companion to the Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010. (Excerpts.)
- González, Odina E. And Justo L. González. *Christianity in Latin America*. NY: Cambridge U. Press, 2008.
- Gutierrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation, 15th Anniversary Edition*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988.
- Petrella, Ivan. *Latin America Liberation Theology: The Next Generation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005.
- Steger, Manfred B. *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*. NY: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Tamez, Elsa. *Bible of the Oppressed*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1982/2006.

Course Rationale and Purpose:

The cross and the sword: you can't understand contemporary Latin America without at least a basic understanding of these dual forces and the complex ways in which religious beliefs have shaped Latin American history and culture. From the indigenous spiritualities of pre-Hispanic times to the Catholicism brought about by the Spanish conquest to the churches of today, theological perspectives have been used to justify, shape, maintain, and transform gender roles, sexuality, economic structures, nationalities, politics, and culture throughout Latin America. In fact, it would be impossible to fully understand Latin America without a basic comprehension of the historical roles played by the Roman Catholic Church and the multiple impacts of different theological perspectives on Latin American societies.

Although pontifical theology was used by the Roman Catholic Church in the late 1400s and early 1500s in order to justify Spain's political, economic and religious expansion, many Latin Americans have embraced different forms of Christianity despite the conflicting imposition of the "the cross and the sword" at the time of the Spanish Conquest. Throughout Latin American history, progressive Catholics and Protestant Christians have often participated in struggles against slavery and the oppression of indigenous and Afro-Latino peoples, as well as in independence movements and revolutionary movements. The best known movements are revolutionary movements that took place in Central America in the 1980s and the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico that became public in 1994 and continues today.

Therefore, the purpose of this course is to help you comprehend the complex relationship between theologies and social/political transformation in Latin America and the emergence of Christian theologies that seek to foment human liberation from oppression based on socio-economic class, race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and culture. We will begin with a very brief examination of pre-conquest indigenous theologies and the theological arguments that were used to suppress indigenous theologies and rationalize the conquest and colonization of Latin America. However, the primary focus of the course will be on Latin American Christian theologies of liberation, which started with Christian reflections on economic and political liberation and later began to address racial and ethnic liberation, women's liberation, and the liberation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer (LGBTQ) people. Because women represent more than half of the general population and the majority of active church members, we will pay special attention to theories regarding the social and political impacts of diverse theologies on Latin American women. We will also analyze and critique feminist, postcolonial, and queer theologies of liberation in Latin America. Themes of race, ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic class, gender, and sexuality will be woven throughout the whole course.

Throughout the course, you will also be encouraged to reflect upon your own religious and/or philosophical beliefs and to deepen your appreciation of religious values and theological perspectives that differ from your own. In addition, special attention will be given to critical thinking, which is defined as "an investigation whose purpose is to explore a situation, phenomenon, question, or problem to arrive at a hypothesis or conclusion about it that integrates all available information and that can therefore be convincingly justified." (Kurfiss 1988, 2) The goal is for you continue to develop skills of analysis, critique, and evaluation, and to present your own beliefs, viewpoints, and positions to others.

You will use and develop your critical thinking skills by analyzing, critiquing and evaluating competing claims regarding each of the theological perspectives addressed in the course. One of your first tasks in this course is to understand and identify the different types of claims – i.e., beliefs, assertions, positions, theses, and hypotheses - that are made in the fields of Religious Studies and Women's Studies. While certain authors and guest speakers who address the course make theological assertions regarding beliefs, other authors are make claims and assertions about the nature of religion itself. Therefore, before you can analyze the claims made by these authors and guest speakers, you must first learn to distinguish between these different genres and to identify the author or speaker's intended audience and purpose.

Upon completion of the course, you should be able to demonstrate proficiency in each of the following critical thinking skills: 1) the identification, knowledge, and comprehension of other people's theological claims, beliefs, and assertions, as well as political and sociological claims regarding the role of religion; 2) the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of other people's claims; 3) the assessment of competing claims; 4) the development of your own claims; and 5) the presentation of your own claims. *Please note that you who seek to use this course to fulfill your Critical Thinking skill requirement at Augsburg College must obtain an average of at least 73% for the Critical Thinking Exercises and for the final course grade.*

Course Units

I	Weeks 1-2	Course Introduction – Why Women’s Studies? What are Feminisms?
II	Weeks 2-4	Mesoamerican Cosmovisions, the Spanish Conquest, and Theologies Used to Rationalize It
III	Week 5-6	Globalization, Neoliberal Economic Policies, and Liberation Theologies
IV	Week 7	1 st Generation of Latin American Liberation Theologies (1960s-80s)
V	Week 8	Liberation Theologies around the World and Critiques of the 1 st Generation of Liberation Theologies
VI	Weeks 10-15	Contemporary Latin American Liberation Theologies (90s-Present): Feminist, Indigenous, Queer, and Postcolonial Liberation Theologies
VII	Week 16	Where Do We Go From Here? Our Responses to Latin American Liberation Theologies.

Teaching Methodology, Pedagogy, and Ethics

Teaching strategies include numerous lectures; small and large group discussions of required readings and experiences; films; artwork and music which express course-related themes; field trips; guest lectures and conversations with a wide range of Mexicans expressing diverse viewpoints; participant observation; and spontaneous writing exercises in class. Particular attention is given to story-telling, particularly by members of groups whose voices have been silenced. In addition, when scheduling guest speakers and other encounters, priority is given to women and to other individuals and groups who have been marginalized and under-represented in academia.

Due to the fact that approximately half of class time is spent listening to guest speakers, you are encouraged to develop your strategic questioning and listening skills. It is very important that you ask informed questions and share your own interests, opinions, and experiences with speakers so that they are not just educational consumers but partners in a common quest to learn more about social change.

During internal class discussion sessions (those not involving guest lectures or excursions), I will try to apply principles of experiential, critical, and feminist pedagogies by encouraging you to reflect upon both cognitive and affective learning and to draw upon your own prior life experiences, as well as new experiences in Mexico.

Cultural Issues and Social Change Lab Group

You will be asked to consider your own group of co-learners as a social change “laboratory,” as many of the same issues that require liberation and social change in society at large can be found within the smaller microcosms of learning groups. Therefore, in addition to our regular weekly internal class sessions, “cultural issues and social change lab groups” will meet approximately once/week throughout the semester. Active participation in the lab group includes planning and facilitating at least one hour of a lab group session in coordination with the T.A. You will sign up near the beginning of the semester. At least 48 hours prior to the lab group session, you must submit a short proposal that outlines the topic(s) you plan to address and the specific lab group objectives you will fulfil. You will then meet with your T.A. to discuss the proposal and plans for the session. At the time of the session, you must submit a one-page outline. The T.A. and other you will be asked to complete a short feedback form at the end of the session, and you will be expected to submit your own completed self-assessment form. Be sure to read the separate handout about the Cultural Issues and Social Change Lab Groups.

Learning Objectives/Outcomes

By the end of the course you should be able to:

1. Identify the key characteristics of the first generation of Latin American liberation theologies - theologies addressing economic, political, and racial/ethnic liberation.
2. Analyze the complex relationship between Latin American liberation theologies and movements for social change, including movements that seek to improve the quality of women's lives and movements that advocate gender equality.
3. Demonstrate your ability to find meaning in a written, visual, or spoken text by identifying different genres of both written and oral texts (rhetorical, literary, or other), identify the speaker's or author's thesis and/or theme, discern how the speaker or author develops and supports her or his arguments, and accurately paraphrase the main points in your own words.
4. Articulate what you have learned about the diversity of Mexican and other Latin American cultures and their religious belief systems or worldviews.
5. Demonstrate improvement in your critical thinking skills through ongoing analysis, critique and evaluation of competing claims regarding Latin American theologies of liberation.
6. Compare and contrast Latin American liberation theologies with the theology and/or philosophy to which you were exposed as a child.
7. Reflect on and critically discuss respect for human diversity and difference in religious, philosophical, and cultural approaches, thought patterns, and values.
8. Articulate your understanding of the relationship between faith and reason.
9. Develop and present your own position on each of the primary currents within Latin American liberation theology.
10. Employ theological arguments to advocate effectively and with integrity in favor of or against a political or social cause you learned about while in Mexico or Latin America.
11. Record and reflect on your aesthetic response to experiences in Mexico.
12. Reflect on the ways in which Latin American liberation theologies affirm, challenge, and/or change your own beliefs and praxis as a person who lives in the United States – particularly with regards to issues such as globalization, migration, femicide, and the drug war.
13. Create original work in a genre of creative written, visual, or oral expression that expresses your position on one of the prominent currents of Latin American liberation theologies that we studied over the course of the semester.

Course Requirements (100%)

1. **Class Participation (25%):** Effective class participation includes not only regular attendance but also active participation in class sessions involving guest lectures and excursions, internal class sessions, and lab group sessions, as well as completion of a portfolio of all your work. *Please note that class participation is required for a passing grade.* Because participation is essential to the learning process, if you miss class activities for any reason you must speak to me prior to class and make arrangements to complete a short assignment. Absences due to religious holidays and illness are considered excused absences. However, you still must inform me of such absences in advance and talk to me about how to make up the missed session/s. You are also responsible for obtaining notes, handouts, and announcements from other you if they arrive late to class or miss a class session. Absences for personal travel or visits from family or friends are not excused absences. Your class participation grade includes:

- ❖ Active Participation in Class Sessions Involving Guest Speakers and/or Excursions and In-House Class Sessions
 - ❖ Active Participation in Lab Group and Co-Facilitation of a Lab Group
 - ❖ Group Blog and Photo-Essay: You will be expected to create and post at least two blog entries with photos that enable you to “pay it forward” by sharing what you are learning from guest speakers in Mexico with people back home. Your entries should focus on what you are learning about from speakers and excursions related to this course.
 - ❖ Three Short Oral Presentations in Class and/or 1-page hand-outs due in class: Dates to be assigned.
2. **Paper or Creative Project #1: Indigenous Spirituality, Gender, and the Conquest (15%):** You will write a paper or design a creative project about what you have learned the impact of the Spanish Conquest and imposition of Christianity on indigenous peoples, paying particular attention to issues of gender and sexuality. You will be expected to draw on required readings, guest speakers, and experiences, such as the excursion(s) to Amatlán de Quetzalcoatl. See separate handout for detailed instructions.
 3. **Exam #1 on the 1st Generation of Latin American Liberation Theologies (15 %):** You will complete a two-part, in-class, open-book exam. In the first section, you will be asked to provide short answers to questions about the emergence of the first generation of Latin American liberation theologies, their prominent proponents and beliefs, their interpretation of the Bible, key critiques of such theologies, and the relationship between Latin American liberation theologies and movements for social change. In the second section, you will write a short essay in which you articulate your own position on early Latin American liberation theologies that focused on economic and political liberation.
 4. **Paper or Creative Project #2 on (15%):** You will write a paper or design a creative project in which you articulate some of the principle ideas and methodologies of Latin American Feminist Theologies, focusing on what makes them distinctive from the first generation of “malestream” liberation theologies.
 5. **Take-Home Exam #2 on Contemporary Latin American Liberation Theologies (15%):** You will complete a two-part, open-book exam on contemporary Latin American liberation theologies. You will be expected to discuss some of the ways in which indigenous, feminist, queer, and postcolonial liberation theologies are responding theologically to specific issues, such as the rights of LGBTQ people, the feminicides, immigration, and the drug war in Mexico. In what ways have Christian theologies traditionally been part of people’s oppression, and in what ways are these contemporary liberation theologies trying to be part of the solution?
 6. **Where Do We Go From Here? Educational Project and Oral Presentation (15%):** Design a project and oral presentation that you will implement back home to help educate people back home about an important topic that you learned about in this course this semester. (See separate handout.)

You will be given more detailed information about each assignment and a schedule of required readings, class discussion topics, and assignments on the first day of class. Email lutterma@augsborg.edu if you would like a draft in advance.

Explanation of Grades

Augsburg College uses a numerical grading system using the following definitions:

Number	Letter Equivalent	Percentage	Augsburg Definition
4.0	A	93-100%	Achieves highest standards of excellence
3.5	A-/B+	88-92%	
3.0	B	83-87%	Achieves above basic course standards
2.5	B-/C+	78-82%	
2.0	C	73-77%	Meets basic standards for the course
1.5	C-/D+	68-72%	
1.0	D	63-67%	Performance below basic course standards
0.5	D-	60-62%	
0.0	F	Under 60%	Unacceptable performance (no credit for the course)

A "Pass" grade is 2.0 or above.

CGE-Mexico Grading Policy and Late Assignments: You must submit assignments on time. If you need an extension, you must talk to us **in advance** to negotiate a new deadline. If you have not been given an extension in advance and you turn in a late assignment, you will be docked half a grade (from a 4.0 to a 3.5 or 3.5 to a 3.0, 3.0 to a 2.5, 2.5 to a 2.0, etc.) If you are more than one week late, you will be docked a full grade. No assignments will be accepted more than two weeks after the original deadline; a "0" will be given after that. Assignments due near the end of the semester will not be accepted after the last day of the semester.

Re-writing Assignments: If you receive a grade of 2.5 or lower, you may revise a paper as long as you resubmit it within one week of the date it was returned to you. Your final grade will be an average of the two grades.

Augsburg Honesty Policy: You are expected to follow the Augsburg Honesty Policy which is printed in the program manual. We assume that you have read the honesty policy, understand it, and are following it. Except when the assignment expressly encourages group work, it is assumed that all course work will be your own. You may not copy other students' work. The first occurrence of plagiarism will result in the failure of the assignment. A student who commits plagiarism a second time will fail the course.

Students' Rights and Responsibilities: Students with formally diagnosed learning or physical differences have legal rights to course modifications. Those who qualify should identify themselves to the instructor as soon as possible in order to obtain extra assistance.