TITLE: TRT 3747H The Liturgical Turn in Philosophy and Theology

PROFESSOR: James K.A. Smith

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will explore the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of a recent renewed interest in liturgical theology, considering figures such as Pierre Bourdieu, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Charles Taylor. Literature review, major paper.

Recent work in philosophy and the social sciences has made us more attuned to the role of practice and ritual in the formation of identity and the generation of action. If 20th century theology witnessed a “linguistic turn,” late 20th century cultural theory witnessed a “ritual turn,” or perhaps even a “liturgical turn”—an appreciation for the formative role of cultural practices in constituting communities of meaning. This can be seen in the philosophical work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Charles Taylor; the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu and Christian Smith; research in social psychology as seen in the work of Timothy D. Wilson and John A. Bargh; and theological developments in the work of Stanley Hauerwas, Graham Ward, and Craig Dykstra.

This has important implications for how we think about religious practice more broadly, and Christian faith in particular. And that, in turn, has implications for several areas of both investigation and practice. For scholars, the “liturgical turn” has implications for how we account for and explain religious phenomena in the social sciences (sociology of religion, political science, and psychology of religion), philosophy of religion, and theology. For practitioners, attention to the “practiced” nature of faith—and hence the religious nature of some cultural practices (“secular liturgies”)—requires renewed intentionality about the shape of worship and spiritual formation.

The goal of this course is to consider some of the primary texts “behind” a liturgical turn in contemporary theory and theology, exploring something like a philosophical analysis of the conditions that prime us to appreciate the nature of human beings as liturgical animals. The hope is that this reflection will serve both a range of theoretical considerations of Christian faith (particularly in theology and the social sciences), as well as provide practitioners with a background that would shape a new intentionality in liturgical practice.
The course will be organized as a seminar, engaging both primary texts and secondary sources through discussion and collaborative learning.

COURSE OUTCOMES:

Students successfully completing this course will be able to:

• demonstrate familiarity with the renewal of liturgical theology in contemporary theology
• demonstrate understanding of the philosophical and psychological underpinnings for this “liturgical turn”
• demonstrate appreciation of the intentional of liturgical forms and formation
• demonstrate developed skills in reading both primary and secondary sources
• demonstrate acquired skills in independent research, expression, and articulation

PREREQUISITES:

None

TEXTS:

• Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*

WRITTEN & ORAL ASSIGNMENTS/TESTS:

1. Presentation: Students will be asked to make an opening presentation on the assigned readings for a given day’s discussion (a sign-up sheet will be circulated on the first day of class; students will be able to select a day for presentation). The presentation should provide a concise summary of the core argument in the assigned reading and critically engage a specific theme in the text, opening up a classwide discussion of the assigned readings. Presentations should be 12-15 minutes. Students are welcome to provide a handout to distribute. [20% of final grade]

2. Research Paper: Students will write a culminating research paper on a theme directly related to texts and issues addressed in the course. A preliminary proposal is due on Thursday, June 16. The proposal should articulate a research question, include a brief abstract of the research project, and provide an initial bibliography of relevant sources. The instructor will then provide feedback on the proposal. Final papers should be submitted by email attachment to jkasmith@calvin.edu and are due July 31, 2011.

CLASSROOM PROCEDURES:

• Seminar with student presentation

GRADING PROCEDURES:

• Student presentation 20%
• Research paper 80%

ATTENDANCE:

• Required

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

• All TST students are subject to U of T’s “Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters.” Copies of the code are available at <www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>. Please take special note of the section on plagiarism. For a helpful set of guidelines on how to avoid plagiarism, see <www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>. This is part of a more general—and equally helpful—website that provides advice on academic writing (<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice>).

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Books


Articles & chapters in a seminar “reader” [provided electronically by the instructor]:


Other Recommended Readings:


• Catherine Pickstock, After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy (Blackwell, 1997).

• Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue, 2nd ed. (University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

• James K.A. Smith, Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation (Baker Academic, 2009).

• -----, Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology (Baker Academic, 2004).


COURSE OUTLINE:

• June 6 Setting the Agenda: The Liturgical Turn in Contemporary Theology and Religious Studies  
Reading: Catherine Pickstock, “Liturgy, Art, and Politics;” Mahmood, “Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire” and “Is Critique Secular?”

• June 7 Faith as Know-How: Wittgenstein and Bourdieu  
Reading: Taylor, Modern Social Imaginaries, pp. 23-30; Taylor, “To Follow a Rule...;” Lyon, “Being Post-Secular in the Social Sciences”

• June 8 Sociological and Theological Anthropology  
Reading: Bourdieu, Logic of Practice, pp. 1-51

• June 9 Bourdieu’s “Critique of Theoretical [Theological?] Reason”  
Reading: Bourdieu, Logic of Practice, pp. 52-79

• June 10 The Logic of Practice and the Sense of Liturgy  
Reading: Bourdieu, Logic of Practice, pp. 80-141

• June 13 From the Logic of Practice to the Sense of the Body: Bourdieu to Merleau-Ponty

- June 14  Erotic Knowledge and Bodily Perception  
  Reading: Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 171-198

- June 15  The Body’s Knowledge: Knowing God through Ritual?  
  Reading: Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 240-282

- June 16  Critiques of the “Liturgical Turn”  