**Syllabus**

**06HT6335R: Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

**Dr. Sean Michael Lucas**

Office: Independent Presbyterian Church, Memphis TN

Office hours: By appointment.

Office phone: 901-685-8206

E-mail: [slucas@rts.edu](mailto:slucas@rts.edu) [slucas@ipcmemphis.org](mailto:slucas@ipcmemphis.org)

**Dates and Meeting Times:**

This class will meet via Zoom each Thursday from 2p-4p Central Time, from August 26 through November 18. I will post the Zoom link each week in our class announcements no later than the Wednesday prior to our class meeting. Please make sure that Canvas Announcements go to your regularly-checked email for all course communications from the instructor.

**Course Description**

 An introduction to the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, focused particularly on primary sources. Students should expect to engage primary sources in a seminar format with a desire to understand Bonhoeffer's theology in its historical, philosophical, and theological contexts and to apply that theology to contemporary life and culture.

**Goals:**

1. The student will be *introduced* to the life and thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Disclaimer: this class is not an exhaustive survey of his thought nor will you read all of Bonhoeffer in a semester.
2. Through the lectures, the student will be *exposed* to the context of Bonhoeffer’s thought and *develop* a greater critical appreciation for modern theology in the twentieth century and for Bonhoeffer’s contribution to that theology.
3. Through the critical reading and discussion of key texts, the student will *reflect* meaningfully on Bonhoeffer’s theology and *apply* those reflections to contemporary life and ministry.
4. Through engagement with Bonhoeffer’s writing on spiritual formation, students will consider what faithful Christian discipleship looks like in our present time.
5. Through engagement with Bonhoeffer’s later writing on ethics—whether in his Ethics or his Letters and Papers from Prison—students will wrestle with particular trajectories in modern theological ethics and how they might apply in their own theologies.

**Required texts (Everyone will read):**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Bonhoeffer Reader*, ed. Clifford J. Green and Michael P. DeJonge (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013); ISBN: 978-0800699451

Charles Marsh, *Strange Glory: A Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (New York: Vintage, 2015); ISBN: 978-0307390387

**Required texts (You choose; see instructions below):**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: Reader’s Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015); ISBN: 9781506402765

OR

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship: Reader’s Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015); ISBN: 9781506402703

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics: Reader’s Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015); ISBN: 9781506402727

OR

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison: Reader’s Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015); ISBN: 9781506402741

**Requirements and Grading:**

1. *Regular class attendance and online discussion participation* (20%). There will be two weeks where we will meet in online discussion and not via Zoom. On Monday of that week, I will post a discussion question for the readings (see the schedule for which readings will be discussed each week). The student will post **twice** each week in order to receive full weekly points.
2. *Reading* (30%). You will be required to read 100% of the assigned readings from the three other required texts. You will turn a reading report on Thursday, December 9, 2021, in which you will be asked how much of the assigned readings you have read.
3. *Spiritual formation paper* (20%).You will choose either *Discipleship* or *Life Together* and write a five-page response paper (see instructions below). This paper will be **due no later than Thursday, October 21, 2021**.
4. *Theological ethics paper* (30%). You will choose either Ethics or Letters and Papers from Prison and write a ten-page paper (see instructions below). This paper will be **due no later than Thursday, December 9, 2021**.

**Before Class Begins**

**Prior to our first class meeting on August 26, 2021, you must watch the syllabus video in its entirety**. You will find the Syllabus Video on Canvas in the “Files” section.

Prior to Thursday, September 9, 2021, I would strongly urge you to have read Charles Marsh’s *Strange Glory* in its entirety, which will orient you to the individual weekly Bonhoeffer readings we will be doing. In the weekly schedule, I note how sections of Marsh’s biography relate to the readings if you desire to refer to that book as you read Bonhoeffer.

**Instructions on particular assignments:**

1. *Online discussion*
2. On two separate weeks (see the syllabus schedule for dates), there will be a discussion question related to course reading. Please see the course schedule for the particular reading for the week.
3. You will need to post twice during the week: your first post will be a response to the discussion question and your second post will be a response to someone else’s comment—whether a fellow classmate or the instructor.
4. In order to receive full points for the week, you will need to post twice. If you post once, you will receive half points; if you don’t post at all, you receive no points.
5. You will only be able to post in the week for the discussion—from Monday to Sunday. No late posts will be accepted.
6. Your posts will need to be relatively substantive—while it is in the judgment of the instructor what “substantive” looks like, it certainly looks like a good faith effort to interact with the discussion question and with your classmates.
7. *Spiritual Formation Paper (5-7 pages)*
   1. You will need to choose either Bonhoeffer’s *Life Together* or his *Discipleship* (you **must** use the Fortress edition of the book you choose):
   2. As you read, have in mind the two engagement questions below.
   3. In writing your spiritual formation paper, you will divide the paper in the following manner:
8. Introduction, summarizing the editor’s information and the two questions which are (1/2 page):
   1. *What were two insights into the spiritual formation of Christian pastors and their congregants that you gained from this book?*
   2. *In what ways might you reshape the way you think about pastoral ministry in the light of this book?*
9. Summary, answering question a (2-3 pages)—as you write this section, be sure to orient your thoughts to the historical context in which Bonhoeffer wrote.
10. Response, answering question b (2-3 pages)—as you write this section, be sure to orient to the specific ecclesial and ministry context in which you find yourself.
11. Conclusion

Do not write less than 5 pages; do not exceed 7 pages.

* 1. Please write your paper using 12-point, Times Roman font, double-spaced with one-inch margins.
  2. **This paper will be due on October 21, 2021**. No late papers will be accepted. Please email this paper with the reading report to both [slucas@ipcmemphis.org](mailto:slucas@ipcmemphis.org) and [slucas@rts.edu](mailto:slucas@rts.edu).

1. *Theological Ethics Paper (10-12 pages)*
   1. You will need to choose either Bonhoeffer’s *Ethics* or his *Letters and Papers from Prison* (you **must** use the Fortress edition of the book you choose):
   2. As you read, have in mind the two engagement questions below.
   3. In writing your theological ethics paper, you will divide the paper in the following manner:
2. Introduction, summarizing the editor’s information and the two questions which are (1/2 page):
   1. *What was the unique theological or ethical contribution that Bonhoeffer made in this book?*
   2. *In what ways does this theological or ethical contribution provide wisdom and insight for contemporary pastoral ministry?*
3. Summary, answering question a (6-8 pages)—as you write this section, be sure to orient your thoughts to the historical context in which Bonhoeffer wrote.
4. Response, answering question b (2-4 pages)—as you write this section, be sure to orient to the specific ecclesial context in which you find yourself.
5. Conclusion

Do not write less than 10 pages; do not exceed 12 pages.

* 1. Please write your paper using 12-point, Times Roman font, double-spaced with one-inch margins.
  2. **This paper will be due on December 9, 2021**. No late papers will be accepted. Please email this paper with the reading report to both [slucas@ipcmemphis.org](mailto:slucas@ipcmemphis.org) and [slucas@rts.edu](mailto:slucas@rts.edu).

1. *Reading*
2. With your theological reflection paper, you will turn in a reading report, which will estimate how much of the reading you completed. I will also provide a form on Canvas, which will be posted two weeks prior to our final class time. You must use the provided form; failure to do so will result in a point deduction.
3. If you do not turn in a completed reading report, you will receive no points for reading. It is **due on December 9, 2021**; no late reports are accepted.

**Schedule of Assignments   
and Probable Lecture Schedule**

**Prior to class beginning:**

Watch the Syllabus Video located on Canvas in “Files”

**August 26**

The Battle for Bonhoeffer

Assignments:

Watch the interview with Dr. Stephen Haynes (author, *The Battle for Bonhoeffer*) on Canvas prior to class

Charles Marsh, *Strange Glory* (hereafter, SG), pp. 1-40

**September 2**

Early Bonhoeffer: *Sancto Communio*

Assignments:

*Bonhoeffer Reader* (hereafter, BR), pp. 3-56

SG, pp. 41-87

**September 9**

Early Bonhoeffer: Act and Being

Assignments:

BR, pp. 92-127

SG, pp. 88-135

**September 16**

Early Bonhoeffer: Creation and Fall

Assignments:

BR, pp. 210-260

SG, pp. 136-156

**September 23**

Central Concern: Christology

Assignments:

BR, pp. 261-313

**September 30**

Confessing Church I

Assignments:

BR, pp. 340-388

SG, pp. 157-194

**October 7**

Confessing Church II

Assignments:

BR, pp. 389-451

SG, pp. 194-226

**October 14**

Discipleship

Assignments:

Watch the video of Dr. Lucas’s overview of Discipleship posted in Canvas under “Files”

Participate in online discussion #1 between Monday, October 11 and Sunday, October 17

BR, pp. 455-513

SG, pp. 227-262

**October 21**

Life Together

Assignments:

**Spiritual Formation Paper Due today!**

Watch the video of Dr. Lucas’s overview of Life Together posted in Canvas under “Files”

Participate in online discussion #2 between Monday, October 18 and Sunday, October 24

BR, pp. 514-567

SG, pp. 263-290

**October 28**

Ethics I

Assignments:

BR, pp. 594-666

SG, pp. 294-318

**November 4**

Ethics II

Assignments:

BR, pp. 667-746

SG, pp. 319-347

**November 11**

Life and Letters from Prison I

Assignments:

BR, pp. 568-591, 749-60

SG, pp. 348-376

**November 18**

Life and Letters from Prison II

Assignments:

BR, pp. 761-815

SG, pp. 376-394

**December 9**

**Theological Ethics paper due today!**

**Reading Report due today!**