

St. Olaf College OLE Core Curriculum Christian Theology in Dialogue Requirement

Description:

This course focuses on the dialogue between Christian theology and the theology (or its equivalent) of another religious tradition or between Christian theology and another form of inquiry. For example, this course could pair Christian theology with science or with American politics.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

1. Identify the central concerns of the dialogue partners.
2. Identify the contexts of the dialogue.
3. Formulate theological claims in response to the dialogue.
4. Evaluate the consequences for the communities involved in the dialogue.

Course Guidelines:

- 1. Identify the central concerns of the dialogue partners.**
 - a. Students should understand the relevant underlying claims, influences, and what is at stake for both dialogue partners. These claims show students the who, what, when, where, how, and why particular to each dialogue partner as they approached the dialogue.
 - b. Course content, focus, and emphasis should be divided equitably between the dialogue partners.
 - c. Christian theological knowledge most often is expressed in the form of intellectual claims or propositions. However, this does not exclude a dialogue rooted in other kinds of inquiry. In these cases, the dialogue might develop in terms of both implicit and explicit claims of various kinds. For example, a dialogue could concern works of fine art, which make more implicit claims. Or it might center upon forms of affective experience, as is common in indigenous spiritualities and many new religious movements.
- 2. Identify the contexts of the dialogue.**

The relevant contexts leading to initiation of the dialogue must also be examined. These contexts include at least one particular problem, debate, or conflict that makes dialogue important as well as other factors influencing the partners' ability to engage in and sustain dialogue. These factors may be persistent and contemporary, historical, or even hypotheticals proposed by the instructor. Perhaps there was a missed opportunity for a dialogue in the past that the course can now explore, like that between views of the natural world from pre-modern Christian theologians and neo-Darwinian theorists. Or perhaps a dialogue needs to be revisited or continued, such as the history and contemporary problem of Christian anti-Judaism. Or the problem may be that another discipline or method could benefit from a dialogue with some

aspect of Christian theology. The problem does not have to originate within Christian tradition but can be an occasion of any sort so long as it is made explicit.

3. Formulate theological claims in response to the dialogue.

Formulating claims in response to dialogue necessitates self-examination of theological knowledge, which may in turn result in revising some claims and recommitting to others, as well as developing new claims or abandoning some entirely. For example, engagement with neo-Darwinian accounts of life and its emergence may first result in revision of theological claims about the creation of life. It may then instigate further self-examination focused on God's actions and power, perhaps resulting in revisions to pre-dialogue pictures of God.

4. Evaluate the consequences for the communities involved in the dialogue.