

**MS/TH 3XB3**  
**The Life and Thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer**  
**McMaster Divinity College**  
**Summer School, 2014**  
June 16-20

Instructor: David Courey  
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

With 77% of Canadian young adults and teens who have been part of the church questioning its relevance and purpose, a study of Bonhoeffer's thought and ministry is remarkably timely. This course will survey the development of Bonhoeffer's theology around the notion that the church is Christ in community. Few other theologians have contributed to and shaped such a broad spectrum of theological reflection, and few can be placed so dramatically within their historical context. In Bonhoeffer's case this makes his worldview and critique of culture even more compelling. Examining Bonhoeffer as pastor, theologian, social critic, and activist, this course offers several fascinating perspectives for students searching for insights to the current conundrum of the contemporary church.

**Specializations:**

Christian Thought and History, Pastoral Studies, Christian Worldview, Church and Culture

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

**Knowing**

- To appreciate the significant interplay of theology and historical context.
- To place Bonhoeffer within the spectrum of modern theology.
- To grasp the fundamental outline of Bonhoeffer's theology against the challenges of contemporary church life.

**Being**

- To be challenged to a greater social conscience by Bonhoeffer's example.
- To allow the incarnational and social dimensions of Bonhoeffer's thought to impassion one's notion of the church.
- To develop a theological lens for evaluating the world in which we live.

**Doing**

- To integrate insights from Bonhoeffer into one's own emerging theology.
- To engage culture in the process of constructive theological reflection.
- To pursue just causes from a theological rationale.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

- Schlingensiepen, Ferdinand. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer 1906-1945: Martyr, Thinker, Man of Resistance*. London: Continuum, 2010.
- Green, Clifford. *Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Green, Clifford and Michael DeJonge. *The Bonhoeffer Reader*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2013.

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstores, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9B 6E2: phone 416-620-2934; fax 416-622-2308; e-mail books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

One-week courses take place from 11:30 am to 4:00 pm Monday, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm Tuesday to Thursday (lunch from 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm), and 9:00 am to 12:00 pm Friday. A free lunch is included on Monday and a short chapel will take place on Wednesday.

**Monday**

**Introducing Bonhoeffer: Christ, the Church and the World**

*The Weimar Republic:*

**Theology is Autobiography: Bonhoeffer's Historical Context**

Cultural Forces

Historical Context

Theological Influences

**Tuesday**

*Berlin 1924-1930:*

**Sociality as a Key to Decoding Bonhoeffer**

*Sanctorum Communio*—The Fundamental Categories of Bonhoeffer's Theology

*Act and Being*—The Essential Problem in Soteriology

*New York 1930-1931*

**"From the Phraseological to the Real"**

The American Encounter

*Discipleship* (1937) as the Expression of Bonhoeffer's Faith

## Wednesday

*Berlin, 1932-1933:*

**Bonhoeffer as Theologian:**

*Creation and Fall: Sin and Sociality*

*Christology: Christ the True Centre*

*Finkenwalde, 1935-1937:*

**Bonhoeffer as Pastor**

*Life Together/Prayerbook of the Bible: Practicing Christ in Community*

## Thursday

*Munich 1938-1942*

**Bonhoeffer as Activist**

*Writings, 1932-1942: A Spoke in the Wheel*

*Ethics: Bonhoeffer's Apologetic*

*Tegel Prison 1943-1944*

**Bonhoeffer as Social Critic**

*Letters and Papers from Prison: A World Come of Age*

## Friday

*Flossenburg 1944*

**Bonhoeffer's Legacy**

### LEARNING EXPERIENCES

All documents must be handed in by e-mail to [dcourey56@hotmail](mailto:dcourey56@hotmail) in either Word or .pdf format. You should expect a response to your e-mail noting that I have received it. If you do not receive this response, please get in touch with me.

Late assignments will lose 2% per day (not including weekends). **No assignments will be accepted after the cut-off day of July 18.**

There are no course extensions for summer courses. In case of a genuine emergency, please contact the Registrar's Office: [thomn@mcmaster.ca](mailto:thomn@mcmaster.ca)

• **Quotations**

**20%**

**Due: July 4 @11:59 PM**

Assemble a journal of 25 quotations from Bonhoeffer that speak to you, personally, or to your particular specialization. For your five favourites, offer a paragraph describing the meaning, and value of these specific words of Bonhoeffer's. Make sure you provide

appropriate bibliography (your quotes may be taken from the *Bonhoeffer Reader*, though not necessarily).

- **Bonhoeffer: A Close Reading**                      **15%**                      **Due: June 16-20**  
Prepare a close reading of a 10 page passage from one of the texts we are considering. You will offer a 15 minute description of the context and significance of your passage. We'll use your reading to launch discussion. The passages will be assigned on Monday. By the end of the week you will hand in a one page précis of your presentation.
  
- **Book Review**    **25%**                      **Due: July 11 @11:59 PM**  
Choose one of the many Bonhoeffer monographs, or books of essays that have been printed in the last 15 years or so, and write a five page review of it. Bonhoeffer has been considered from so many angles, that you may be able to find a book that treats him from a perspective related to your area of specialization. Here are a few examples among many.
  - Roland C. Arnett, *Dialogic Confession: Bonhoeffer's Rhetoric of Responsibility*, 2005.
  - Keith L. Johnson and Timothy Larsen, *Bonhoeffer, Christ and Culture*, 2012,
  - Willis Jenkins and Jennifer McBride, *Bonhoeffer and King: Their Legacies and Import for Christian Social Thought*, 2010.
  - Geffrey B. Kelley, and F. Burton Nelson, *The Cost of Moral Leadership*, 2003.
  - Joel Lawrence, *Bonhoeffer: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 2010.
  - Larry L. Rasmussen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Reality and Resistance*, 2005.
  - J. DeOtis Roberts, *Speaking Truth to Power: Bonhoeffer and King*, 2005.
  
- **Paper**    **40%**                      **Due: July 18 @11:59 PM**  
Propose an essay topic that falls within your field of specialization by the end of the week. Write a 10-12 page paper that engages Bonhoeffer, and some of the relevant scholarship on Bonhoeffer. The paper should include at least ten legitimate sources.

#### GENERAL COMMENTS:

- Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

- McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.
- Unless noted otherwise, all written work must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses. For the PDF click here: <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/MDCStyleGuideMarch0413.pdf>

#### Disclaimer

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.