Syllabus

TITLE OF THE COURSE: Troubling Parables for Today
COURSE NUMBER: SPRS-4260
Fall Semester, 2014
Tuesday, 2:10-5:00 PM
Dorsey O. Blake, Instructor
Location – Starr King School for the Ministry, Fireside Room
E-mail: dblake@sksm.edu
Phone: (510) 549-4710

Brief course description:

The course will engage the life and works of Clarence Jordan, scientific farmer and New Testament Greek scholar. In 1942, he co-founded the interracial farming community “Koinonia” in Americus, Georgia. It was an example of his commitment to seeing the Word made flesh even though Koinonia was riddled with bullets fired by the Ku Klux Klan and boycotted by local merchants and residents. Jordan is the author of the Cotton Patch Series of Versions of New Testament texts. We will focus on his parables of liberation. Jordan felt that it was imperative to contextualize the parables of Jesus as narratives speaking directly to conditions in the United States: Jerusalem became Atlanta; crucifixion became lynching. His texts audaciously and brilliantly address racism, militarism, economic justice, sustainability, the nonviolent revolution beckoning to be born and the spirituality underlying all of this. The course will also examine his work: The Substance of Faith. In this profoundly engaging book Jordan explores the God Movement idea with great precision, wit, earthiness, irony, passion, faith, scholarship, practicality, commitment, and accountability. It’s an extraordinary resource for sermons.

Learning objectives:

1. Comprehend the motivation behind the founding of Koinonia Farm
2. Analyze historical and contemporary use of the liberation parables of Jesus
3. Explore various contexts for Biblical Hermeneutics as exemplified in the liberation parables.
4. Discover the power of parables and why Jesus used them.
5. Facilitate confidence in creating new versions of parables for today’s usage.
6. Demonstrate an ability to relate parables to current personal, societal, and systemic issues.
7. Develop an appreciation of the revolutionary nature of the Sermon on the Mount
8. Understand the context and players for which and whom the Sermon was addressed

Learning Activities:

1. lecture, discussion
2. working in teams
3. audio presentations
4. writing
5. oral presentations (to be determined based upon the number of students in the class)

Requirements:

1. Full participation in the class including discussion, writing assignments, oral presentations, and team work
2. Weekly reflection papers (2-3 pages).
3. Final paper (5-7 pages) in which the student writes a parable or explores one of the many themes presented by Jordan

Grading Policy:

Full classroom participation counts for 50% of the grade. Full classroom participation includes discussion, team work, and oral presentations. Weekly reflection papers count for 25%. The final paper also counts for 25% of the grade.

Attendance at each class session is essential. Two excused absences are allowed. The second unexcused absence will necessitate a discussion with the instructor.

Calendar of Assignments

September 2
Introduction of each other and Clarence Jordan/Audio Interview

September 9
DVD Briars in the Cotton Patch: The Story of Koinonia Farm
Dean Arthur Holder, Guest Scholar

September 16
Audio Disk 1 The Cotton Patch Parables
Cotton Patch Parables of Liberation, pp. 11-34
   Foreword
   Preface
   Introduction
   Shattering the Status Quo
   Overcoming Old Allegiance

September 23
Cotton Patch Parables of Liberation, pp. 35-70
   Reaching Out for Liberation
   God Against the Church!
   God Against the Rich

September 30
   Audio Disk 2
   Cotton Patch Parables of Liberation, pp. 71-93
   Disturbing the Peace
   Children of Arrogance

October 7
   Audio Disk 3 The Cotton Patch Parables
   Cotton Patch Parables of Liberation, 94-125
   Children of Grace
   Counting the Cost
   Trade with These Ideas

October 14
   Audio Disk 4 The Cotton Patch Parables
   Cotton Patch Parables of Liberation, pp. 126-147
   The Works of Mercy
   The Parabolic Life

October 20-24 Reading Week, No class

October 28
   Introduction and I. Incarnational Evangelism
   The Substance of Faith, pp. 7-37
      Introduction
      The Womb of God
      The Sons of God
      The Humanity of God
      Incarnational Evangelism

November 4
   II. The Substance of Faith
   The Substance of Faith, pp. 38-54
      The Substance of Faith
      The Adventure of Three Students in a Fiery Furnace

November 11
   III. The God Movement
   The Substance of Faith, pp. 55-92
      The Demonstration Plot
      The Lesson on the Mount – I
      The Lesson on the Mount – II
      Was Jesus Really Poor?
      The Currency of the Kingdom
November 18
IV. The Distinct Identity
The Substance of Faith, pp. 93-118
Metamorphosis
Jesus Christ Revealed
The Mind of Christ in the Racial Conflict
Making a Habit of Love

November 25
V. Persisting Threats to Authentic Faith
The Substance of Faith, pp. 119-142
An Ancient Heresy Incarnate
Judas
Taking the Name in Vain

December 2
VI. God’s Destination for Man (Humanity)
The Substance of Faith, pp. 143-160
The Meaning of the Sabbath
The Father’s Pursuing Love
The Death of Jesus
Persisting in Love
A Spirit of Partnership

December 9
Final Presentations and Reflections

Textbooks:
Required:

Reference:
Weiner, Kay, Koinonia Remembered: The First Fifty Years (Americus, GA: Koinonio Partners, INC., 1992), $10.00