

T 2040: Heaven, Hell, and Last Things

Working Syllabus
Episcopal Divinity School, Spring Term 2013
Wednesdays, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon
Sherrill 250

The Rev. Patrick S. Cheng, Ph.D.
Episcopal Divinity School
Email: pcheng@eds.edu
Office: Sherrill 241
Phone: 617-682-1538
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

This course will explore the doctrine of eschatology, or last things. Topics to be covered will include heaven, hell, purgatory, limbo, angels, demons, eternal punishment, and the Last Judgment. We will examine the biblical, historical, and theological foundations of this doctrine, as well as how contemporary reconstructions of these topics might speak to progressive Christians today. Interfaith perspectives, both East and West, will also be considered.

Specific Learning Goals

- Demonstrate a critical understanding of the theological doctrine of eschatology.
- Understand the historically-situated nature of Christian and interfaith notions of the afterlife.
- Engage with embodied categories such as race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, and national origin with respect to theological reflection on last things.
- Reflect growth in vocation and formation by reflecting upon the goals and ends of Christian discipleship.
- Develop a sense of mission and as agent for transformation and change with respect to how issues of last things are discussed in congregational settings.
- Demonstrate competence in pastoral care as well as professional ethics with respect to issues relating to death, heaven, hell, and last things.
- Show improvement in written and oral communications, including facilitation, teaching, and collaborative skills.
- This course will honor multicultural worldviews, respect the contributions of multiple voices, and be taught with a commitment to anti-racism and anti-oppression.

Course Requirements

This course will have both lecture and discussion components. All students are expected to come prepared to participate actively in class discussions and in weekly online postings. Please note that this syllabus is a work-in-progress, and the content of the course may change during the term. Any student who requires reasonable accommodation with respect to the course requirements as a

result of disability must notify the instructor and academic dean, and also provide written documentation of such disability. Specific requirements for full course credit include:

- 30% Attendance and active participation in class;
- 30% Weekly online posts no later than 11:59 p.m. of the night (Tuesday) before each class meeting;
- 10% In-class teaching presentation during one week of the course;
- 10% Short paper, due via email to pcheng@eds.edu prior to class on March 27; and
- 20% Take-home, self-timed, two-hour final exam, due via email to pcheng@eds.edu no later than 5:00 p.m. ET on May 8 for graduating students and May 14 for all other students.

Weekly Posts

By 11:59 p.m. of the night (Tuesday) before each class meeting, post one paragraph for each of the following three questions on SurveyMonkey. Please include citations to page numbers from the readings, and be sure that you answer all three questions.

- What in the readings surprised and/or excited you the most and why?
- What in the readings troubled and/or upset you the most and why?
- What in the readings would you like covered in class for clarification or further discussion and why?

You may wish to draft your posts in a word processing document so that you will have a copy of them for your records.

In-Class Teaching Presentation

Each person will make a 15-minute in-class teaching presentation (either alone or with another person) during one week of the course. The presentation should present the readings for that week in a creative manner and include a 2-3 page handout. For example, you may choose to prepare PowerPoint slides, put together a short video, create a liturgical reflection, etc. The presentation will be graded on the basis of creativity, the effort put into the assignment, and how well it conveys the substance of the readings. Outside research is encouraged but not required.

Short Paper

A short paper of 5-6 double-spaced pages will be due via email to pcheng@eds.edu in Word format prior to class on Wednesday, March 27. For the paper, select three of the topics listed below and provide for each topic: (1) a brief overview of the key issues; (2) what you found most surprising about the topic; (3) the topic's relevance to your current life as well as your future vocational plans; and (4) how you might present that topic in an exciting way to individuals in a future ministry context (e.g., in a pastoral setting).

- Christian Hope
- Biblical Eschatologies
- Death and Dying
- Second Coming
- Last Judgment
- Heaven

- Saints
- Angels
- Purgatory
- Limbo

Final Exam

The final exam will be a take-home, self-timed, open-book, two-hour exam of no more than 5-6 double-spaced pages. The questions will be in essay format, and you will have a choice of questions (e.g., 3 out of 4) to answer. The questions will be emailed to students immediately following the final class. The exam will be due via email to pcheng@eds.edu in Word format no later than Wednesday, May 8, at 5:00 p.m. ET for graduating students, and Tuesday, May 14, at 5:00 p.m. ET for all other students. Any requests for extensions must be directed to the Registrar at ccull@eds.edu. More information about the final exam will be provided during class.

Note for D.Min. and Other Advanced Students

Course work for all Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) students must demonstrate an advanced understanding of the nature and purposes of ministry, enhanced competencies in pastoral analysis and ministerial skills, and the integration of these dimensions into the theologically reflective practice of ministry. D.Min. students are encouraged to focus their course work on a particular subject germane to their anticipated thesis/project. D.Min. students are expected to submit a significant research paper of at least 20 pages on a topic relating to their program goals in lieu of the short paper and the final exam. Please discuss the topic of your paper in advance with the instructor.

Course Grading Criteria

A level – Submits work on time; proposes creative ideas in class sessions and online posts; demonstrates critical and creative thinking in the teaching presentation, short paper, and final exam. No unexcused absences.

B level – Submits work on time; shows enthusiasm in class session and online posts; demonstrates cogent thinking in the teaching presentation, short paper, and final exam. No more than one unexcused absence.

C level – Does not submit work on time; shows minimal engagement with the class sessions, online posts, teaching presentation, short paper, and/or final exam; or more than one unexcused absence.

No credit will be given for the class for anyone with three or more absences, whether or not such absences are excused.

Pass/Fail Option

Student must let the instructor know that they are electing this option by the end of class on Wednesday, February 6. The grading will be as follows:

- Pass: B or better (required of D.Min. students)
- Marginal Pass: B-

- Fail: Lower than B-

Extensions

Students who cannot finish the course requirements by May 14 must send a petition for an extension to Cecelia Cull in the Registrar's Office. She can be reached via email at ccull@eds.edu.

Required Texts

The following required texts may be purchased at the Harvard Coop or online. These texts are also available on reserve at the Sherrill Library.

- William Crockett, ed., *Four Views on Hell*, ISBN 978-0310212683, \$16.99
- Margaret A. Farley and Serene Jones, eds., *Liberating Eschatology: Essays in Honor of Letty M. Russell*, ISBN 978-0664257880, \$30.00
- David H. Jensen, *Living Hope: The Future and Christian Faith*, ISBN 978-0664233143, \$15.00
- Anthony Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, ISBN 978-1570756511, \$26.00
- Darren Oldridge, *The Devil: A Very Short Introduction*, ISBN 978-0199580996, \$11.95
- Jerry L. Walls, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ISBN 978-0199735884, \$55.00

Other Texts

The other required readings for the course will be available in PDF format through the Sherrill Library online reserves. Such readings are marked with “†” in the schedule below.

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Weekly Class Schedule

Classes will meet on the Wednesdays specified below from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon ET.

January 30 – Week 1 Introduction; Christian Hope

Before our first class meeting, please: (1) read these materials; (2) post a brief introduction of yourself on Canvas; and (3) submit your first weekly post on SurveyMonkey no later than 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday evening.

- Kelly, “The World of Hope,” *Eschatology and Hope*, pp. 1-20
- † Nicene Creed, BCP, pp. 358-59
- † “The Christian Hope,” BCP, pp. 861-62
- † Romans 5:1-5 (Greek/English interlinear)
- † Hoffman, “*elpis*,” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, pp. 2:238-44
- † Coleman, “Losing Faith, Finding Hope: A Journey with

Depression,” *Huffington Post* (October 13, 2012)
† Oden, “Last Things,” *Life in the Spirit*, pp. 367-77

February 6 – Week 2

Biblical Eschatologies

- Daniel 7-8, 11-12
- Matthew 25:31-46
- Mark 13
- Luke 14:15-24
- 2 Peter 3:1-10
- Revelation 19-22
- Arnold, “Old Testament Eschatology and the Rise of Apocalypticism,” *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 23-39
- Rowland, “The Eschatology of the New Testament Church,” *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 56-72
- Jensen, “The Bible Tells Me So?: Scripture and Christian Hope,” *Living Hope*, pp. 7-16
- Jensen, “The Kingdom of God,” *Living Hope*, pp. 19-26
- † Pagels, “Conclusion,” *Revelations*, pp. 171-77

February 13 – No Class (Quiet Day)

February 20 – Week 3

Death and Dying

- Hart, “Death, Final Judgment, and the Meaning of Life,” *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 476-89
- Zaleski, “Near-Death Experiences,” *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 614-28
- Kelly, “Death: Threat or Gift?,” *Eschatology and Hope*, pp. 95-113
- † Alexander, “Prologue,” *Proof of Heaven*, pp. 1-10
- † McNeill, “Reflections on Mourning,” *Taking a Chance on God*, pp. 168-75
- † Oden, “Death and Personal Survival,” *Life in the Spirit*, pp. 377-97

February 27 – Week 4

Second Coming; Last Judgment

- Weber, “Millennialism,” *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 365-83
- Davis, “Eschatology and Resurrection,” *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 384-98
- Jensen, “The Resurrection of the Body,” *Living Hope*, pp. 27-37
- Jensen, “A Second Coming in Judgment and Grace,” *Living Hope*, pp. 38-49
- Jensen, “The New Creation,” *Living Hope*, pp. 50-60
- † Oden, “The End of Human History,” *Life in the Spirit*, pp. 397-444

March 6 – Week 5

Heaven; Saints

- Walls, "Heaven," *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 399-412
- Kelly, "Heaven: The Homing of Hope," *Eschatology and Hope*, pp. 159-80
- † Cone, "Church, World, and Eschatology in Black Theology," *A Black Theology of Liberation*, pp. 135-42
- † Morse, "The Ethics of Heaven," *The Difference Heaven Makes*, pp. 75-98
- † Wright, "Rethinking Salvation: Heaven, Earth, and the Kingdom of God," *Surprised by Hope*, pp. 189-205
- † Oden, "The Communion of Saints," *Life in the Spirit*, pp. 444-50

March 13 – No Class (Spring Break)

March 20 – Week 6

Angels; Purgatory; Limbo

- Griffiths, "Purgatory," *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 427-45
- Kelly, "Purgatory: The Realism of Hope," *Eschatology and Hope*, pp. 114-37
- † Jones, "A Brief History of Angels," pp. 1-13
- † Nkansah-Obrempong, "Angels," *Global Dictionary of Theology*, pp. 35-39
- † Osborn, "Entertaining Angels: Their Place in Contemporary Theology" pp. 273-96
- † International Theological Commission, "The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptised," pp. 1-28

March 27 – Week 7

Hell: Literal and Metaphorical Views

Short paper due, prior to class, in Word format via email to pcheng@eds.edu

- Kvanvig, "Hell," *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 413-26
- Kelly, "Hell: The Defeat of Hope?," *Eschatology and Hope*, pp. 138-58.
- Crockett, *Four Views on Hell*, pp. 11-88 (focus on pp. 11-28, 43-76; skim responses)

April 3 – Week 8

Hell: Purgatorial and Conditional Views

- Pinnock, "Annihilationism," *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 462-75
- Crockett, *Four Views on Hell*, pp. 91-178 (focus on pp. 91-118, 135-66; skim responses)
- † Oden, "The Final State of the Unjust," *Life in the Spirit*, pp. 450-59

April 10 – Week 9

Satan; Demons; Universalism

- Oldridge, *The Devil* (focus on pp. 1-45; skim rest)
- Talbott, "Universalism," *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 446-61

- † Scott, “Guarding the Mysteries of Salvation: The Pastoral Pedagogy of Origen’s Universalism,” pp. 347-68
- † Oden, “Life Everlasting,” *Life in the Spirit*, pp. 456-68

April 17 – Week 10

Liberative Eschatologies

- Ruether, “Eschatology in Christian Feminist Theologies,” *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 328-42
- Oduyoye, “A Coming Home to Myself,” *Liberating Eschatology*, pp. 105-20
- Kwok, “Mending of Creation: Women, Nature, and Eschatological Hope,” *Liberating Eschatology*, pp. 144-55
- Martin, “A Sacred Hope and Social Goal: Womanist Eschatology,” *Liberating Eschatology*, pp. 209-226
- Isasi-Díaz, “Mujerista Narratives: Creating a New Heaven and a New Earth,” *Liberating Eschatology*, pp. 227-43

April 24 – Week 11

Queer Eschatologies

- † Cheng, “Last Things: Horizon of Radical Love,” *Radical Love*, pp. 131-37
- † Beattie, “Queen of Heaven,” *Queer Theology*, pp. 293-304
- † Boisvert, “Gay Saints,” *Sanctity and Male Desire*, pp. 183-97
- † Clark, “Undermining the Theological Ground,” *Defying the Darkness*, pp. 15-19
- † Glaser, “Death by Plague,” *The Final Deadline*, pp. 79-95
- † McNeill, “The Christian Understanding of Death, Resurrection, and Time,” *Taking a Chance on God*, pp. 148-58
- † McNeill, “Reflections on Judgment,” *Taking a Chance on God*, pp. 159-67

May 1 – Week 12

Interfaith Eschatologies; Conclusion

- Novak, “Jewish Eschatology,” *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 113-31
- Chittick, “Muslim Eschatology,” *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 132-50
- Natter, “Buddhist Eschatology,” *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 151-69
- Knipe, “Hindu Eschatology,” *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 170-90
- Bauckham, “Conclusion: Emerging Issues in Eschatology in the Twenty-First Century,” *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 671-89

May 8

Final exam for graduating students due by 5:00 p.m. ET in Word format via email to pcheng@eds.edu.

May 14

Final exam for all other students due by 5:00 p.m. ET. Any requests for extensions must be directed to the Registrar at ccull@eds.edu.