

**Course Syllabus**  
**TRP2661 – The Church of the Margins: Ministering to Christ in the Poor,  
the Sick, the Alienated, and the Imprisoned**  
**Trinity College**  
**Toronto School of Theology**  
**January to April (Winter/Spring) 2019**

***Instructor Information***

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Instructor: Fr Geoffrey Ready  
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***Course Identification***

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Course Number: TRP2661  
Course Format: *In-class and Online*  
Course Name: The Church of the Margins: Ministering to Christ in the Poor,  
the Sick, the Alienated, and the Imprisoned  
Course Location: Larkin Building, Room LA213 (*and online section*)  
Class Times: Tuesdays, 7.15pm to 9.30pm  
Prerequisites: None

***Course Description***

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The biblical and patristic tradition of the Orthodox Church is clear that the church is to advocate for the poor and the marginalised in the world, caring for their needs and pursuing justice on their behalf. We are not to neglect spiritual needs for social ones, nor social needs for those that are spiritual. This course will explore how the church, as the ongoing body of Christ in the world, should follow Christ in his self-sacrificing identification with all who are cast out or suffering, and care for the whole person, body and spirit. It will explore the theological significance of suffering and illness, and develop a holistic and pastoral understanding of mission that situates the church in the margins of this present age, ministering to Christ in the poor, the sick, the alienated and the imprisoned.

Students will be evaluated on their class participation, a seminar presentation, a critical book review, and an oral final exam.

## ***Course Resources***

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### **Required Course Texts/Bibliography**

The following works should be acquired by the student as they will be read in their entirety. Copies will be placed on short-term loan at the Graham Library.

- Basil the Great. *On Social Justice*, Popular Patristics Series volume 38 (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2011)
- Hinshaw, Daniel. *Suffering and the Nature of Healing* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2013)
- Larchet, Jean-Claude. *The Theology of Illness* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2002)
- Skobtsova, Mother Maria. *Essential Writings* (Orbis Books, 2003)
- Vanier, Jean. *Befriending the Stranger* (Grand Rapids, MI: WB Eerdmans, 2001)

### **Recommended Books**

- Rommen, Edward. *Come and See: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective on Contextualization* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2013)

### **Other Required Readings**

Any other articles and book excerpts will be made available via the course portal.

### **Course Website(s)**

- Quercus: <https://q.utoronto.ca/>

This course uses Quercus for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT Quercus login page at <https://q.utoronto.ca/> and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to Quercus using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you'll find the link to the website for all your Quercus-based courses. (Your course registration with ACORN gives you access to the course website in Quercus.) Information for students about using Quercus can be found at: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701>.

## ***Course Learning Objectives/Outcomes***

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Students successfully completing this course will be able to demonstrate the following learning outcomes.

### **(A) IN RESPECT OF GENERAL ACADEMIC SKILLS**

- to work with both primary and secondary sources and to gather, analyse and prepare materials for reflection and engaged class discussion
- to prepare and deliver a seminar presentation and lead a class discussion
- to write a critical book review

### **(B) IN RESPECT OF THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONTENT OF ONE OR MORE THEOLOGICAL DISCIPLINES**

- to describe the biblical and patristic foundations of the Orthodox Church's ministry to the poor, the sick, the alienated and the imprisoned
- having studied practical modern and contemporary examples of ministry to the marginalised, to assess and argue how their spirit and methods can be applied in a more holistic Orthodox mission today
- to explain the significance of suffering and illness in Orthodox Christian perspective and combine theological reflection on suffering into practical pastoral care in the local context

#### **(C) IN RESPECT OF PERSONAL AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

- to manage his or her own learning
- to demonstrate behaviour consistent with academic integrity and social responsibility

#### **(D) IN RESPECT OF MINISTERIAL AND PUBLIC LEADERSHIP**

- to demonstrate qualities and skills necessary for ministry, further study, and community involvement
- to exercise initiative, personal responsibility, and accountability in both personal and group contexts
- to work effectively with others

### ***Evaluation***

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#### **Requirements**

The final grade for the course will be based on evaluations in four areas:

1. *Class Participation (15%)*: overall class attendance and participation in class discussions on the weekly required readings. *Online students who are not able to participate in real time will be given opportunities to participate via online discussion forums or other means.*
2. *Seminar Presentation (25%)*: The student will be assigned a chapter from Maria Skobtsova's *Essential Writings* to present during one of the classes. The 20 to 25-minute presentation should consist of a summary of and commentary on Skobtsova's thought, along with 2-3 good questions to stimulate class discussion. A 1-2 page handout (or short PowerPoint presentation) should be submitted at least one day in advance of the class. Presentations by online students may be done in real time or prerecorded and shared with the class. Depending on the number of students in the class, it may be necessary to include more topics or for students to work collaboratively in pairs.
3. *Critical Book Review (30%)*: The student will complete a 1,000 to 1,250-word critical review of *On Social Justice* by St Basil the Great. Drawing on the other authors and theological models discussed in the course, the student will reflect on the lessons of provided by this patristic author for ministering to Christ at the margins of contemporary North American society.
4. *Final Oral Exam (30%)*: The half-hour exam will consist of a discussion of one chapter of Jean Vanier's *Befriending the Stranger* (selected at random). During the exam, the student should relate Vanier's writing to the reflection of the other authors read during the course, analysing and synthesising them into a creative articulation of the overall themes of the course.

## Grading System

Letter Grade	Numerical Equivalents	Grade Point	Grasp of Subject Matter	Other qualities expected of students
<b>A RANGE: Excellent: Student shows original thinking, analytic and synthetic ability, critical evaluations, and broad knowledge base.</b>				
A+	90-100	4.0	Profound and Creative	Strong evidence of original thought, of analytic and synthetic ability; sound and penetrating critical evaluations which identify assumptions of those they study as well as their own; mastery of an extensive knowledge base
A	85-89	4.0	Outstanding	
A-	80-84	3.7	Excellent	Clear evidence of original thinking, of analytic and synthetic ability; sound critical evaluations; broad knowledge base
<b>B RANGE: Good: Student shows critical capacity and analytic ability, understanding of relevant issues, familiarity with the literature.</b>				
B+	77-79	3.3	Very Good	Good critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; good familiarity with the literature
B	73-76	3.0	Good	
B-	70-72	2.7	Satisfactory at a post-baccalaureate level.	Adequate critical capacity and analytic ability; some understanding of relevant issues; some familiarity with the literature
FZ	0-69	0	Failure	Failure to meet the above criteria

Please see the appropriate handbook for more details about the grading scale and non-numerical grades (e.g. SDF, INC, etc).

**Late work.** Basic Degree students are expected to hand in assignments by the date given in the course outline. [The instructor should stipulate the penalty for late work.] This penalty is not applied to students with medical or compassionate difficulties; students facing such difficulties are kindly requested to consult with their faculty adviser or basic degree director, who should make a recommendation on the matter to the instructor. The absolute deadline for the course is the examination day scheduled for the course. Students who for exceptional reasons (e.g., a death in the family or a serious illness) are unable to complete work by this date may request an extension (SDF = “standing deferred”) beyond the term. An SDF must be requested from the registrar’s office in the student’s college of registration no later than the last day of classes in which the course is taken. The SDF, when approved, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond the conclusion of the following term. If a student has not completed work but has not been granted an SDF, a final mark will be submitted calculating a zero for work not submitted.

**Course grades.** Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor’s college before being posted. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University grading policy (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/grading.htm>) or college grading policy.

## **Policies**

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**Accessibility.** Students with a disability or health consideration, whether temporary or permanent, are entitled to accommodation. Students in conjoint degree programs must register at the University of Toronto's Accessibility Services offices; information is available at <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/>. The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

**Plagiarism.** Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to his or her head of college or delegate according to the TST *Basic Degree Handbook* and the Graduate program Handbooks (linked from <http://www.tst.edu/academic/resources-forms/handbooks> and the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=4871>). A student who plagiarizes in this course will be assumed to have read the document "Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing" published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges [http://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/Library\\_Archives/Theological\\_Resources/Tools/Guides/plag.htm](http://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/Library_Archives/Theological_Resources/Tools/Guides/plag.htm).

**Other academic offences.** TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>.

**Back-up copies.** Please make back-up copies of essays before handing them in.

**Obligation to check email.** At times, the course instructor may decide to send out important course information by email. To that end, all students in conjoint programs are required to have a valid utoronto email address. Students must have set up their utoronto email address which is entered in the ACORN system. Information is available at [www.utorid.utoronto.ca](http://www.utorid.utoronto.ca). The course instructor will not be able to help you with this. 416-978-HELP and the Help Desk at the Information Commons can answer questions you may have about your UTORid and password. *Students should check utoronto email regularly* for messages about the course. **Forwarding** your utoronto.ca email to a Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Hotmail, Gmail or Yahoo accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that emails from your course instructor may end up in your spam or junk mail folder. Students in non-conjoint programs should contact the Registrar of their college of registration.

**Email communication with the course instructor.** The instructor aims to respond to email communications from students in a timely manner. *All email communications from students in conjoint programs should be sent from a utoronto email address.* Email communications from other email addresses are not secure, and also the instructor cannot readily identify them as being legitimate emails from students. The instructor is not obliged to respond to email from non-utoronto addresses for students in conjoint programs. Students in non-conjoint programs should only use the email address they have provided to their college of registration.

## ***Course Schedule***

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### **Week 1 – Introduction to the Course and Themes**

- Review syllabus and expectations
- Different approaches to Orthodox Christian missiology and the contextualisation of the gospel
- Biblical foundations of the 'Church of the margins'
- The challenge of the 'gospel-as-person'

#### ***Further Reading***

The material from Rommen in the first two weeks will be covered in the class lectures, but students may read the text to supplement their learning.

- Rommen, *Come and See*, pp 1-56

### **Week 2 – The Role of the Church as the Place of Divine Presence and Communion**

- The place of divine presence
- Conditions of communion
- Engaging fields of personal presence
- Reversal of perspective

#### ***Further Reading***

- Rommen, *Come and See*, pp 57-196

### **Week 3 – The Origins of Illness and Suffering**

- Original 'perfection' and the Fall as cause of illness
- Suffering and the human condition
- Healing of human nature by the Incarnate Word
- Why does illness persist?
- Illnesses of the body and illnesses of the soul
- Precariousness of health

#### ***Readings***

- Larchet, *The Theology of Illness*, pp 17-53
- Hinshaw, *Suffering and the Nature of Healing*, pp 9-104

#### **Week 4 – The Spiritual Meaning of Illness and Suffering**

- Ambivalence of health and illness
- Positive meaning of sickness and suffering
- Opportunity of spiritual progress
- Synergy of God and the human being
- The therapeutic encounter: healer, healing modalities, patient
- Patience, prayer, holiness

#### **Readings**

- Larchet, *The Theology of Illness*, pp 55-77
- Hinshaw, *Suffering and the Nature of Healing*, pp 105-204

#### **Week 5 – Christian Paths Towards Healing**

- Seeking healing to glorify God
- Christ the Physician and the saints
- Spiritual understanding of secular means of healing
- Limitations of medical science
- Healing of the soul
- Spirituality at the end of life / suffering and death
- Promise of future incorruptibility and immortality

#### **Readings**

- Larchet, *The Theology of Illness*, pp 79-131
- Hinshaw, *Suffering and the Nature of Healing*, pp 205-262

#### **Week 6 – The Gospel Mandate: Love of God and Love of Neighbour**

- Practical examples from Orthodox Church history demonstrating the church's gospel mandate
- The 20th century example of Mother Maria of Paris
- Discussion of Vanier: 'I want to stay in your home today'
- Guidelines on how to prepare and present a seminar (presentations to begin the following week)

#### **Readings**

- Skobtsova, *Essential Writings*, pp 13-44
- Vanier, *Befriending the Stranger*, pp 1-24

#### **Week 7 – Ministering to Christ at the Margins - I**

- Seminar: 'The second gospel commandment'
- Seminar: 'On the imitation of the Mother of God'

- Seminar: 'The mysticism of human communion'
- Discussion of Vanier: 'You are precious in my eyes and honoured and I love you'

### **Readings**

- Skobtsova, *Essential Writings*, pp 45-83
- Vanier, *Befriending the Stranger*, pp 25-48

### **Week 8 – Ministering to Christ at the Margins - II**

- Seminar: 'The cross and the hammer-and-sickle'
- Seminar: 'Towards a new monasticism'
- Seminar: 'Love without limits'
- Discussion of Vanier: 'If you but knew the gift of God'

### **Readings**

- Skobtsova, *Essential Writings*, pp 84-103
- Vanier, *Befriending the Stranger*, pp 49-66

### **Week 9 – Ministering to Christ at the Margins - III**

- Seminar: 'The poor in spirit'
- Seminar: 'Under the sign of our time'
- Seminar: 'A justification of pharisaism'
- Discussion of Vanier: 'Love one another as I have loved you'

### **Readings**

- Skobtsova, *Essential Writings*, pp 104-128
- Vanier, *Befriending the Stranger*, pp 67-82

### **Week 10 – A Contemporary Model of Church at the Margins: St John the Compassionate Mission**

- Overview of the work of St John the Compassionate Mission in Toronto (NB: if possible, a visit to the community will be organised for those in Toronto)
- Rediscovering the Orthodox parish as a community that has at its heart 'The poor, our masters'
- How to prepare a critical book review
- Discussion of themes from St Basil's *On Social Justice* and how to relate them to course themes and models within the book review
- Discussion of Vanier: 'O God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

### **Readings**

- Vanier, *Befriending the Stranger*, pp 83-101

### **Week 11 – Holistic Orthodox Mission and Pastoral Care Today**

- Further discussion of the model provided by St John the Compassionate Mission
- Overview of contemporary Orthodox prison ministry and the work of the St Silas Orthodox Prison Fellowship
- Overview of St Hermione Lay Pastoral Visitors programme
- Drawing it all together into a holistic approach to Orthodox mission and spiritual care for all
- Discussion of Vanier: 'Blessed are the gentle of heart'

#### ***Readings***

- Vanier, *Befriending the Stranger*, pp 103-131

### **Week 12 – Course Review**

- **CRITICAL BOOK REVIEWS DUE ON THIS DATE**
- Review of key course themes and preparation for the oral final exam (to be scheduled during the TST exam week)

**Please note that this syllabus is subject to change in accordance with the regulations in the TST *Basic Degree Handbook*.**