

Christology and Culture: Insights and Imperatives for Ministry
Theological Reflection, Social Analysis, and Ministerial Engagement
with and about Immigrants, Refugees and People on the Move

Background:

Over the course of the past fifteen years, I have had occasion to teach two distinct yet inter-related courses: (1) *Christology & Culture* and (2) *Immigrants, Migrants and Refugees: Theological Reflection and Pastoral Practice*.¹ I now would like to propose a project that integrates the theological and ministerial dimensions of these two courses in ways that are more *theologically constructive* and *socially engaged*.

Rationale for Project:

Despite ongoing curricular efforts to bridge the horizons of theological discourse and social engagement, many graduate students preparing for ministry continue to internalize the theory/practice split. As issues and concerns related to immigration and immigration reform command increasingly more socio-political attention nationally and internationally, I would like to combine the study of contextual christologies with immigration-related social analysis as a means of intensifying a sense of accountability on the part of Roman Catholic theologians and ministers for *how we listen to what is being said about Jesus Christ* throughout the world and *how such listening informs and influences (or not) our way of proceeding* in terms of the concrete particulars of a ‘faith that does justice’.

Aim of Project:

The objective of this project is to fuse the horizons of theological discourse and social engagement through a variety of processes of consciousness-raising that lead to the recognition of imperatives for action within the academy, the church and society.

Primary Audience:

The audience includes students enrolled in master-level degree programs in theology and ministry at the Weston Jesuit School of Theology (and eventually the School of Theology and Ministry of Boston College)² as well as other member schools of the Boston Theological Institute. While the general orientation of the course is broadly ecumenical, the course takes as its focus issues and concerns (theological, ecclesial, socio-cultural and political) that have particular bearing on the Roman Catholic church – locally *and* globally - in terms of adaptation, reform, innovation, and renewal.

Primary Partners in Teaching & Learning:

¹ Over the years, I have team taught ‘versions’ of these courses with Professors Harvey Cox of Harvard Divinity School and Ian Douglas of Episcopal Divinity School.

² Weston Jesuit School of Theology will be re-affiliating with Boston College over the course of the next two years. WJST, along with the Institute for Religious Education & Pastoral Ministry as well as the Church in the 21st Century initiative, will form a new entity currently identified in legal documentation as the School of Theology and Ministry (STM).

Leaders, participants, and representatives of faith-based communities and organizations, resource centers, urban neighborhoods and work places, detention centers, health care clinics, schools, archives and research centers, etc. in the Boston area

Secondary Audiences and Partners:

Inevitably, the boundaries of the course will extend beyond the *primary* audience and partners in teaching & learning. The very design of the course elicits and promotes this kind of exchange, while cultivating an openness to and desire for broader connections.

Proposal:

The project involves:

- a. the reading of christologies from a variety of countries and cultural contexts,
- b. the viewing of selected films that disclose contextual realities as well as the *locus theologicus* of people in *diaspora*,
- c. the visiting of selected faith-based communities and organizations, resource centers, neighborhoods and work places, detention centers, health care clinics, schools, archives, etc. in the Boston area,
- d. the partnering with representatives of such networking opportunities for the purposes of social analysis, theological reflection, and possible collaboration,
- e. the analyzing of social issues and warrants for engaged social action with an eye to creating and/or furthering relationships between the Weston Jesuit School of Theology [soon to be consolidated into the School of Theology & Ministry of Boston College] and agencies serving specific groups of immigrants, refugees and/or people on the move,
- f. the reassessing of the adequacy and appropriateness of methods and approaches used to study christology and culture in an urban microcosm of the world and the world church .

A tentative selection of countries of origin pertaining to immigrants, refugees and people on the move include: Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Uganda, China, Korea, Viet Nam, Philippines, Lebanon, Russia, Ireland, and Armenia.

A variety of approaches to and methods of Social Analysis include: Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Class, Social Status/Nationality, Ability, Sexual Identity, Religion, Family of Origin, Educational Background, Occupation, Geographic Location.

Some particular interests include: human trafficking, ‘international ministers’, infant and child welfare, racism and racialization, ‘national parishes’, ‘world church consciousness’.

Initial Evaluation: Curricular development, student satisfaction, networking metrics on social change and institutional relationships, published contributions to the disciplines of theology (esp. christology, ecclesiology), social ethics, and contextual/field education.