STMA 593
Mercy of God

Course Information

Course Number:	STMA 593	Instructor:	Mary Rose Bumpus, RSM, Ph.D.
Units:	3	Office:	Hunthausen #129
Prerequisites:	See Below	Office Hours:	By Appointment (see below)
		Phone:	206-296-6958
		Email:	bumpusm@seattleu.edu

Auditors: Must commit to doing all the assigned readings for the class. Thanks.

Recommended Prerequisites: STMM 526, Hebrew Scriptures; STMM 527, Christian Scriptures; or STMM 500, Christian Anthropology

Time and Place

Day:	Monday
Time:	9:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.
Place:	Hunthausen Hall #100
First Day of Class:	March 26, 2012
Holiday:	May 28, 2012 Memorial Day
Last Day of Class:	June 4, 2012

*****Note: This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor**

Course Description

In this course, participants will explore the mercy of God as it is proclaimed, exemplified, and espoused in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures and as it is described by contemporary theologians and scholars. Several dimensions of mercy will be discussed and pondered. Forgiveness, compassion, deliverance/liberation, the relationship between justice and mercy, and the preferential option for the poor will be studied and discussed. The relationship between the attitude of mercy and action that flows from and fosters mercy will be highlighted. Participants will apply their knowledge of various aspects of the mercy of God by studying a local situation and group of people who embody the need for mercy and by suggesting appropriate action in this situation in light of the characteristics of mercy studied.

Learning Outcomes

This course is an elective course open to all students at STM. Students will be more successful in this course if they have had the *Recommended* Prerequisites: STMM 526, Hebrew Scriptures;

STMM 527, Christian Scriptures; or STMM 500, Christian Anthropology. Background in social analysis will also be helpful. The course is designed to assist students in acquiring the following:

- ability to reflect theologically on the central themes of the Christian tradition
- ability to read scriptural texts critically
- ability to draw critically and constructively on Christian moral traditions to lead toward a more just and sustainable world
- ability to articulate one's relationship with God, as it is informed by theological reflection in one's social context

Objectives

- to get to know and interact with major biblical texts dealing with the mercy of God
- to reflect theologically on aspects of God's mercy including loving kindness, compassion, forgiveness, deliverance/liberation, solidarity
- to explore the relationship between justice and mercy
- to understand what is meant by "the preferential option for the poor"
- to do a social analysis of an issue involving the most vulnerable members of the participant's neighborhood
- to determine authentic actions indicative of the mercy of God

Class Procedures

Class procedures will vary from class to class and depend upon the nature of the material to be discussed during each class. In general, classes will contain lecture, discussion (in small and large groups), exercises, and time for personal engagement with the material. There will be two short breaks during the class period of ten minutes each. Please respect this time and limit the break to ten minutes.

Requirements

1. Attendance at all classes and participation in small and large group discussions and exercises.
2. Critical engagement with the required readings listed below.
3. Constructive paper on the Mercy of God: 5-6 pages. **Due Monday, April 23** (See below)
4. Two minutes of prayer each day for the vulnerable people you want to get to know more concretely through this course.
5. Outline of Class Presentation: 1 Page. **Due Monday, May 7** (see below)
6. Class Presentation based on a process of theological reflection that relates the mercy of God to certain weakest members of our society. Presentations will be given on either **Monday, May 21 or Monday, June 4.** (see below)
7. Constructive/Summarizing paper on the Mercy of God: 5-6 pages. **Due Monday, June 4** (see below)

Papers and Presentations

I. Paper I – Constructive Paper – **Due Monday, April 23**

A) Choose and describe one event, person, place, or time in which you have encountered or experienced the "Mercy of God."
B) Put this experience into dialogue with the biblical texts and readings we have studied to date in order to shed light on your particular experience of God's mercy. (References to biblical texts and course readings should be cited appropriately).
C) In light of this dialogue, what claims would you make about the mercy of God?

You might focus on one aspect of the mercy of God, e.g., "compassion," "forgiveness," "option for people who are poor." Or you might speak to several dimensions of the mercy of God manifested in your experience. This paper is to be **5-6 pages** in length with a font size of 12. For proper format for citations, see below. Papers are to be submitted on time. *Please speak with me if you need a time adjustment for serious reason.*

II. Outline of Class Presentation – **Due Monday, May 7**

This outline needs to include:
a. Choice and rationale for the group of people in your neighborhood you consider most vulnerable in our society
b. Resources/Bibliography you plan to use for your social analysis and theological reflection
c. Significant points you want to consider in your presentation

III. Class Presentation – Due **Monday, May 21 or Monday, June 4** (participants will sign up for a given date)

Prepare and offer a 15-20 minute presentation on how the mercy of God is being made manifest, and might be manifest more fully, among the weakest or most vulnerable members of the human community in closest proximity to your residence.

This presentation needs to include:

A. Choice of the group of people you decided to encounter/the issue you decided to study, and the rationale for your choice. For example, you might live in an area where people who are homeless walk the streets. You might live in an area in which immigrants work as domestic servants. You might live in an area in which orphaned children share a home.

B. Research based social analysis of the situation/structures in which this group of people finds themselves.

C. Theological Reflection: Description of how your study of God's mercy sheds light on the people and structures you have chosen to study. How is mercy being made manifest? Where might mercy need to be made more fully manifest?

D. Statement about how praying for this group of people daily affected you or changed your understanding of the group's life situation.

E. What action might you take to respond authentically in order to affect the structures supporting the situation or to meet unrecognized need?

(See more detailed description of the process of theological reflection governing this paper on pages 6-7 of this syllabus)

You may present your work in as creative a manner as you like as long as it covers the areas listed above.

IV. Paper II – Constructive/Summarizing Paper – Due **Monday, June 4**

Briefly summarize your work surrounding the group of vulnerable people and structures in your neighborhood you chose to encounter. In light of your work, the readings, and class discussions, what insights have you gained about the "mercy of God" and its incarnation? What do you want to remember from this course? This paper is to be **5-6 pages** in length with a font size of 12. Papers are to be submitted on time. *Please speak with me if you need a time adjustment for serious reason.*

V. Format for Papers

Students in the Pastoral Counseling degree submit papers with citations in APA (American Psychological Association) format delineated by the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. All other students submit papers with citations in CMS (Chicago Manual of Style) format delineated by *The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers.* The basic rules for these style formats may be found at the following websites:
APA: http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/ (Diana Hacker website/social sciences)
CMS http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/ (Diana Hacker website/history)
or http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html (CMS website)

At times students need assistance with the writing process itself. In addition to face-to-face assistance offered by Seattle University's Writing Center (McGoldrick Learning Commons 2nd Floor), two websites offer online assistance with writing.
Seattle University Writing Center: http://www.seattleu.edu/writingcenter/, under "Resources."
Purdue Writing Center: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/.

Grading

Class Attendance, Participation, and Outline of Presentation = 15%
Paper I = 25%

Presentation = 35%
Paper II = 25%

Your participation contributes to the life of the class. **Do not** plan to enroll in the class if you will miss the first class or if you will be absent for more than one three-hour period. More than one excused absence will result in the lowering of the final grade. Please be on time for class.

Academic Honesty

The School of Theology and Ministry strictly adheres to the Academic Policy concerning Academic Honesty as published in the Seattle University Student Handbook (see the Seattle University website).

Special Needs

If you have or think you may have a disability (including an "invisible disability" such as a learning disability, a chronic health problem, or a mental health condition) that interferes with your performance as a student in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs and arrange support services and/or accommodations through Disabilities Services staff in the Learning Center, Loyola 100, 206-296-5740.

Appointments

Please call or email for a specific appointment time. The office phone number is206-296-6958. I can also be reached by email: bumpusm@seattleu.edu. I am most often available on Monday afternoon, Tuesday morning, and Thursday morning.

Theological Reflection Process*

This theological reflection process governs the work required in the class presentation and final paper.

A. Experience

1. Identify your own experience of the group and issue: describe it, draw it, image it; name your feelings about it; describe how you initially see it/think about it.

2. Describe the group/issue in your neighborhood, parish, or congregation: figuratively and or literally "walk the neighborhood" and describe what you see, hear, or encounter. For example, how many hookers are walking the street? Who is sleeping in doorways? How many homes employee domestic immigrant workers?

B. Social Analysis

Social analysis is "the effort to obtain a more complete picture of a social situation by exploring its historical and structural relationships" (Holland and Henriot, p. 14).

1. History: What is the history of this situation? What key events have made a difference in this situation? What was it like before this situation existed? How has this situation changed or not changed over time? What is causing me/us to notice this now?

2. Structures: What are the major structures influencing this situation?
   a. Economic structures: How does this society organize its resources? For example, pay, exchange, distribution, consumption, labor, production, technology, tax policies, interest rates, etc.
   b. Political structures: How does this society organize power? Who has power, and how did they get it? Who does not have power? Who makes decisions? Who gets into conversations? Who does not get into conversations? How is power used? What happens to those who can't affect the system? How would you invite people to the table?
   c. Social structures: How does this society organize relationships outside the political? What is the demographic character of the locality? What is its *racial/ethnic* character? What is the class structure in the locality? What are the dominant social problems in the area? How are relationships organized in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, family, neighborhood, extended family, and so forth?
   d. Cultural structures: How does this society organize meaning? How is it shaped by religion; by churches, synagogues, and mosques; by customs, symbols, and myths; by lifestyles and "we've always done it this way!"; by art, music, and folk-lore; by media.

3. Values: What are the key values operative in this structure? What are the moral norms, the social emphases that are acceptable or unacceptable? For example, individualism/community; competition/cooperation; freedom/law and order; justice; security, etc.

4. Direction: What is the future direction of this situation? What are the most significant trends revealed in the current situation? The scenarios that are predictable in the next ten years?

5. Conclusions: What are the conclusions we can draw from the situation? What are the root causes? The important causes we are looking at? The implications of the data?

C. Specific Theological Reflection

How do you see the Mercy of God related to your social analysis?

1. Where do you see the mercy of God being made manifest within the structures you elicited in your study and/or among the people being affected by the structures you analyzed?

2. Where is the mercy of God ostensibly absent within the structures you elicited in your study and/or among the people being affected by the structures you analyzed?

3. What aspects of the mercy of God are most prevalent or most missing within the structures and/or among the people affected by the structures you analyzed?

4. What other light do the biblical texts and theological treatises on the mercy of God shed upon your social analysis?

D. Prayer

What has it been like for you to pray for this group of people daily? How has this prayer affected you or changed your understanding of the structures or life situation of the group of people you encountered?

E. Action

What action might you take to respond authentically in order to affect the structures supporting the situation or to meet unrecognized need? Identify something concrete to act upon as a result of your theological reflection process.

* Process based on the work of Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith with Justice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983) and further refined by Sharon Callahan and Elizabeth Liebert.

Schedule of Class Sessions and Assignments

March 26 *Hesed*: God's Steadfast Love

Explanation of Course Requirements
Overview of Course
God's Mercy rooted in *Hesed*

April 2 *Rahamim*: God's Compassionate Mercy

Quality of Mercy as Compassion
Compassion as Disposition of God
Compassion in Human Relationships
Universal and Particular Character of God's Compassionate Mercy

Required Reading: Norbert Lohfink, *Option for the Poor*

April 9 Mercy as Forgiveness: Interpersonal

Forgiveness in Scripture
Interpersonal Forgiveness Today

Required Reading: Avis Clendenen, "Accidental Killers and Their Long Lament," (In course reader)
Clendenen and Martin, *Forgiveness: Finding Freedom through Reconciliation*

April 16 Mercy and Justice: Communal and Political Forgiveness

Justice as Mercy's Companion
Political Forgiveness in South Africa

Required Reading: Daye, *Political Forgiveness: Lessons from South Africa*, pp. 37-165

April 23 Mercy as Reconciliation

Reconciliation in Christ

Required Reading: Schreiter, *Reconciliation: Mission & Ministry in a Changing Social Order*
Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, Ch. 6, pp. 83-104

Paper I Due Today

April 30 Mercy in the Gospel of Luke: Sight, Compassion, and Action

Mercy as Sight, Compassion, and Action in Luke
Nussbaum on Compassion
Nouwen, McNeill, and Morrison on Compassion

Required Reading: Nouwen, McNeill, and Morrison, *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*, pp. xi-xii, 3-85, 101-142

May 7 Mercy as Deliverance/Liberation

Mercy Frees from Suffering
Providing Life and Safety for Those Afflicted

Required Reading: Elisa Estévez López, "Transformative Spirituality and Mission as Healing and Reconciliation (In course reader)
Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, preface, introduction, Chs. 1, 3, 4, 5, pp. vii-viii, 1-11, 15-26, 49-82

Outline of Presentation Due Today

May 14 Mercy in Solidarity

Bearing with One Another in Faith
The Incarnation which Humanizes

Required Reading: Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, preface, introduction, Chs. 2, 8, 9, epilogue, pp. 27-46, 144-190

May 21 Contemporary Need for and Response in Mercy: Part I

Class Presentations Given Today

May 28 Holiday Memorial Day

June 4 Contemporary Need for and Response in Mercy: Part II

Class Presentations Given Today

Student Evaluations
Final Summary of Mercy

Final Paper Due Today

Required Reading – Books

Clendenen, Avis and Troy Martin. *Forgiveness: Finding Freedom Through Reconciliation*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002.
978-0-8245-1964-3

Daye, Russell. *Political Forgiveness: Lessons from South Africa*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 2004.
978-1570754906

Lohfink, Norbert F. *Option for the Poor: The Basic Principle of Liberation Theology in the Light of the Bible*. Translated by Linda M. Maloney. Edited by Duane L. Christensen. Berkeley Lecture Series 1. N. Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 1987.
978-0941037389

Nouwen, Henri J. M., Donald P. McNeill, and Douglas A. Morrison. *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*, **revised edition**. Drawings by Joel Filártiga. New York: Images Books, Doubleday, 1983.
978-0385517522

Schreiter, Robert J. *Reconciliation: Mission & Ministry in a Changing Social Order*. The Boston Theological Institute Series, vol. 3. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992.
978-0-88344-809-0

Sobrino, Jon. *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994.
978-0-88344-986-8

Required Reading – Reader

Clendenen, Avis. "Accidental Killers and Their Long Lament." *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 64, no. 3 (2010): 1-9.

López, Elisa Estévez. "Transformative Spirituality and Mission as Healing and Reconciliation." *International Review of Mission* 98, no. 2 (November 2009): 283-301.

Select Bibliography on Mercy and Related Topics

Barnett, Paul. *Romans: The Revelation of God's Righteousness*. Scotland, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2003.

Beentjes, Pancratius C. "God's Mercy: 'Racham' (pi), 'Rachum', and 'Rachami' in the Book of Ben Sira." In *Ben Sira's God*. Proceedings of the International Ben Sira Conference, Durham – Ushaw College 2001. Edited by Renate Egger-Wenzel. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002, 101-117.

Browning, Robert L. and Roy A. Reed. *Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Moral Courage: Motives and Designs for Ministry in a Troubled World*. Studies in Practical Theology. Edited by Don S. Browning, James W. Fowler, Friedrich Schweitzer, and Johannes A. van der Ven. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdman's Publishing Co., 2004.

Callahan, Sidney. *With All Our Heart & Mind: The Spiritual Works of Mercy in a Psychological Age*. New York: Crossroad, 1988.

Chittister, Joan. *God's Tender Mercy: Reflections on Forgiveness*. New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2010.

Clendenen, Avis and Troy Martin. *Forgiveness: Finding Freedom Through Reconciliation*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002.

Coffey, Kathy. *Women of Mercy*. With art by Michael O'Neill McGrath. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006.

_____. "The Quality of Mercy." *Human Development* 27, no. 2 (2006): 22-24.

Day, Dorothy. "Poor for the right reasons." *Commonweal* 121, no. 20 (November 18, 1994): 46.

Daye, Russell. *Political Forgiveness: Lessons from South Africa*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 2004.

Donahue, John R. "What Does the Lord Require?: A Bibliographical Essay on the Bible and Social Justice." *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 25/2 (March 1993): 1-75.

Eigo, Francis A., ed. *Rethinking the Spiritual Works of Mercy*. Proceedings of the Theology Institute of Villanova University. Villanova, PA: The University of Villanova Press, 1993.

Eichenberg, Fritz. *Works of Mercy*. Edited by Robert Ellsberg. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1992.

Enright, Robert D. and Joanna North, eds. *Exploring Forgiveness*. Foreword by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998.

God, the Father of Mercy. Prepared by the Theological-Historical Commission for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. Translated by Robert R. Barr. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998.

Hays, Richard B. "The God of Mercy Who Rescues Us from the Present Evil Age." In *The Forgotten God: Perspectives in Biblical Theology*. Essays in Honor of Paul J. Achtemeier on the Occasion of his Seventy-fifth Birthday. Edited by A. Andrew Das and Frank J. Matera. Louisville: John Knox Press, 2002.

Jones, L. Gregory. *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdman's Publishing Co., 1995.

Kennan, James F. *The Works of Mercy: The Heart of Catholicism*, 2nd ed. Lanham, MD: A Sheed & Ward Book, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008.

Lazare, Aaron. *On Apology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

López, Elisa Estévez. "Transformative Spirituality and Mission as Healing and Reconciliation." *International Review of Mission* 98, no. 389 (2009): 283-301.

Moloney, Daniel P. "The Tribunal of Mercy." *First Things* no. 131(2003): 34-40.

Mays, James L. *Preaching and Teaching the Psalms*. Edited by Patrick D. Miller and Gene M. Tucker. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.

Macdonald, Nathan. "Listening to Abraham--Listening to Yhwh: Divine Justice and Mercy in Genesis 18:16-33." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (January 2004): 25-43.

Müller-Fahrenholz, Geiko. "Turn to the God of Mercy: New Perspectives on Reconciliation and Forgiveness." *Ecumenical Review* 50, no. 2 (1998): 196-204.

Nouwen, Henri J. M., Donald P. McNeill, and Douglas A. Morrison. *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*. Drawings by Joel Filártiga. New York: Images Books, Doubleday, 1983.

Nowell, Irene. "Sinfulness and Divine Mercy." *Bible Today* 47, no. 3 (2009): 193-197.

Pelton, Leroy H. "Biblical Justice." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71, no. 4 (December 2003): 737-65.

Philpott, Daniel. "Lessons in Mercy." *America* 200, no. 14: (May 4, 2009): 10-14.

Pope John Paul II. "*Dives in Misericordia*." Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30111980_dives-in-misericordia_en.html. Promulgated1980.11.30.

Race, Marianne. "Forgiveness : An Invitation to a New Beginning." *Bible Today* 46, no. 6 (2008): 365-370.

Sakenfeld, Katherine Doob. *The Meaning of* Hesed *in the Hebrew Bible: A New Inquiry*. Harvard Semitic Monographs. Edited by Frank Moore Cross. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1978.

Schoenfeld, Eugene and Stjepan G. Mestrovic. "With Justice and Mercy : Instrumental-Masculine and Expressive-Feminine Elements in Religion." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30, no. 4 (1991): 363-380.

Scholl, Edith. "Mercy within Mercy: *Misericordia* and *Miseria*." *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (2007): 63-82.

Schreiter, Robert J. *Reconciliation: Mission & Ministry in a Changing Social Order*. The Boston Theological Institute Series, vol. 3. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992.

Shellrude, Glen. "The freedom of God in mercy and judgment: a libertarian reading of Romans 9:6-29." *Evangelical Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (2009): 306-318.

Snaith, Norman. *Mercy and Sacrifice: A Study of the Book of Hosea*. London: SCM Press LTD, 1953.

Sobrino, Jon. *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994.

Topel, L. John. *Children of a Compassionate God: A Theological Exegesis of Luke 6:20-49*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, A Michael Glazier Book, 2001.

Weinandy, Thomas G. "Does God Suffer?" *First Things 117* (November 2001): 35-41.

Worthington, Everett L., Constance B. Sharp, Andrea J. Lerner, and Jeffrey R. Sharp. "Interpersonal Forgiveness as an Example of Loving One's Enemies." *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 34, no. 1 (2006): 32-42.