

Faith in a world come of age
The exemplary life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Gonzaga University: Religious Studies 350
Florence, Spring Semester 2009

DON DR. ALESSANDRO ANDREINI

PURPOSE

The purpose of the course is to meet the human and spiritual experience of one of the most significant theologians in 20th century in Europe. Born in 1906 and died in 1945, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's life touches many of the critical events of the century: the two world wars, the crisis of the European upper middle class and of its model of life, the spreading of modernity and ideologies, the Hebrew question, the effort in favour of peace.

Since his unexpected choice to study theology and to become a Lutheran minister, Bonhoeffer's life seems to be an exemplar tentative to understand the different challenges of his time and to give a new and free answer to each one of them: above all, to face them as Christian. As he used to say, we live in an age in which it is impossible to elaborate a complete and clear project for our personal existence: our lives seem to be nothing else than a series of failed attempts, so that our inner life remains unaccomplished. The only possibility we have to measure and understand the sense of our life seems to be to measure the value of each fragment of it.

And, effectively, we can look to Bonhoeffer's life as a collection of several precious and prophetic fragments through which we can look to many challenges which still have a deep importance for our time: the importance of theology in our time, the challenge of ecumenism and peace, the experience of Christian life together, the value of friendship, the opposition against Hitler, the future of Christianity in a world come of age.

AIMS

The course hopes to put students in touch with the exemplar and prophetic existence of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, following his attempts in the specific context of his time and reading some of his famous writings. We will be able to discover the astonishing actuality of his thought for our contemporary questions.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Life together by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (selected passages)

Letter and Papers from Prison by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (selected passages)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer. A short life, by Renate Wind

Faith in a world come of age: text by Dr. Don Alessandro Andreini

COLLATERAL TEXTS

Till the Night be Past: The Life and Times of Dietrich Bonhoeffer by Theodore J. Kleinhaus

The Bonhoeffer Phenomenon: Portraits of a Protestant Saint by Stephen R. Haynes

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADE

1. *Class attendance* following Gonzaga University's policy regarding absences
2. *Active participation (20%)* in class discussions, through observations, thoughtful questions, above all offering of one's own insights.
3. Mid-Term (20%) and final essay (30%) *examinations*.
4. *Paper (30%)* on one aspect of the course in the form that will be showed during the course.

OFFICE HOURS

By appointment only. Generally, Dr. Andreini will be available immediately after class on Wednesday and on some afternoons to discuss issues for the position paper and any other aspect of the course.

TENTATIVE PLAN

1. The end of a perfect world: Europe after the first world war
2. Theology at the crossing: how to save theology?
3. Ecumenism, Christianity' future in Europe
4. The challenge of peace: living the Gospel to the letter
5. Life together, training for Christian life
6. To be men in order to be Christian: the value of friendship
7. Who am I? How to give sense to the fragments of our life
8. A theologian fallen in love
9. Sharing the same roots: the Hebrew question
10. To share the destiny of a people: the conspiracy against Hitler
11. Christian faith in a world come of age