COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The issue of wealth, poverty and Christian faith is as ancient as the New Testament and reaches farther back to the Old Testament. As frequently noted, Jesus’ teachings in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) demanded a kind of discipleship that barred any competing commitment to peoples or things other than himself, including money, property, and possessions. From the very beginnings of the Christian movement, how to deal with riches formed an important aspect of Christian discipleship and was thought to express “an essential articulation of our faith in God and of our love for our fellow humans.” Christians claimed that the Christian attitude toward and use of wealth was a critical identity marker that distinguished Christians from non-Christians. Regardless of how one theologized riches and poverty, Christians had to grapple with and respond to the “clear” call of the social (material) responsibilities of the gospel.

This course examines throughout history the ways in which Christians interpreted, applied, communicated, and struggled with what they thought they understood as the Christian principle and mandate regarding wealth and poverty. The issues involving wealth and poverty have presented Christians both a challenge and an opportunity of “being in the world but not of the world.” The course will first proceed with Jewish (OT) and Greco-Roman backgrounds of early Christian teachings on wealth and poverty and focus on the New Testament teachings; it will then treat the subsequent interpretations and applications of those teachings in a broad historical development. Through engaging with primary and secondary source readings, lectures, discussions, journal reflections, and services, students will encounter Christian ambivalence toward and appropriation of wealth, and understanding of poverty in the context of Christian responsibility and discipleship. In examining these topics, this course will introduce and guide students to not only inter-disciplinary thinking and methodologies within RS major (biblical studies, theology, and history) but also those outside major in larger liberal arts curriculum (such as business/economics, anthropology, sociology, and political science). This course

fulfills the GE requirement of Integrating the Major Discipline and Serving Society; Enacting Justice in Competent and Compassionate Action.

Integrating the Major Discipline
Any course or project in the student’s major that has a substantial integrative component may be taken to satisfy this requirement. Such courses involve students in reflection on the discipline – how its diverse parts form a coherent whole and how the discipline interacts with the Christian faith and with the whole of a Liberal Arts education. For purposes of this general education requirement, any senior seminar, capstone course within the major, or upper-division interdisciplinary seminar has the potential to satisfy this option.

Interpretive Statement
The integrative project or the course context should address three goals:

a. Bring together disparate threads of the discipline and provide a unified view of the broad scope of the major.
b. Identify the discipline’s place within the larger educational program.
c. Reflect on the relationship between the discipline and the Christian faith.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES DEPARTMENT PROGRAM GOALS

A. Hermeneutical competence: Our graduates will be able to apply a range of skills in the interpretation of biblical and other religious literature.

- They will employ close reading skills with regard to primary sources: observation; inquiry; attention to genre, context, intertextuality, and literary influence; awareness of their own assumptions and cultural biases; awareness of audience(s) and effect on readers.
- They will display judicious use of scholarly resources (e.g., language tools, commentaries, monographs, journals, dictionaries, encyclopedias, electronic databases, library holdings, inter-library loan, web-based tools). They will acknowledge dependence and influence through appropriate notes and bibliography.
- They will appropriate a range of critical methodologies (e.g., historical, literary, textual, rhetorical, socio-cultural), draw on insights across the range of relevant disciplines (e.g., linguistics; anthropology; sociology; philosophy; archaeology), and recognize the insights and pitfalls of various ideological approaches (e.g., post-colonial, feminist, Marxist).

B. Theological judgment: Our graduates will understand the fundamental claims and logic of the Christian faith, appreciate the development of Christian theological traditions over time, and be able to think theologically.

- They will faithfully interpret texts including the Bible and other primary sources in the worldwide Christian tradition.
• They will fairly evaluate the theological claims of secondary sources and current voices within and outside the Christian tradition.
• They will thoughtfully address intellectual and practical issues involving both narrowly theological matters and concerns in other disciplines.
• They will be acquainted with, and increasingly formed in, the practices that Christian theology serves including worship, fellowship, mission, study (especially of the Bible), and ethical conduct.

C. Ecclesial engagement: Our graduates will be marked by a passionate commitment to the Christian church and its mission.

• They will increasingly recognize connections between personal faith, scholarly inquiry, and the shared life of God’s people in the world past and present.
• They will sense no conflict between rigorous intellectual inquiry, faithful service, and passionate worship.
• They will establish lifelong disciplines marked by theological reflection, Christ-like compassion, and robust engagement in the public square.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Westmont has identified the six learning standards and outcomes as crucial to Christian liberal arts educational vision: Christian Orientation, Critical-Interdisciplinary Thinking, Diversity, Active Societal and Intellectual Engagement, Written and Oral Communication, and Research and Technology. In light of these learning standards and the RS departmental goals, this course seeks to enable students:

1. To acquire a fundamental factual and thematic knowledge of the development of Christian understandings of and dealings with the issues involving wealth and poverty (Christian Orientation; Hermeneutical Competence)
2. To be acquainted with the critical methods of biblical and historical interpretation and contextual thinking (Critical-Interdisciplinary Thinking; Hermeneutical Competence; Theological Judgment).
3. To understand various hermeneutical and theological issues involving wealth and poverty and their development in historical and social contexts and to relate them to the theology and practice of the contemporary church (Critical-Interdisciplinary Thinking; Hermeneutical Competence; Theological Judgment).
4. To grasp and assess the intricate and complex relationships among theological constructions of wealth and poverty, their social constructions and manifestations, and their moral discourses and implications (Active Societal and Intellectual Engagement; Christian Orientation; Theological Judgment).
5. To comprehend tangible and diverse “faces” and causes of poverty and its impact on people’s lives through sustained work with a community-based agency (Active Societal and Intellectual Engagement; Diversity; Ecclesial Engagement).
6. To gain exposure to tangible works and dynamics of charity and philanthropy through sustained work with a community-based agency (Active Societal and Intellectual Engagement; Diversity; Ecclesial Engagement).

7. To develop and articulate informed and sustained reflection on Christian social justice, responsibility and stewardship of wealth (Active Societal and Intellectual Engagement; Written and Oral Communication; Theological Judgment; Ecclesial Engagement).

8. To explore the ways in which we can move toward personal and systemic action and implementation in pursuing Christian social justice and stewardship of wealth (Active Societal and Intellectual Engagement; Christian Orientation; Ecclesial Engagement).

9. To demonstrate the ability to dialogue, discuss, and articulate their learning in speech, writing, and group research with creativity and effectiveness (Written and Oral Communication; Research and Technology)

I consider my classes as “communities of learning.” I will treat each student as a responsible learner who pursues critical thinking, open dialogues and interpretive analysis supported by credible evidences. While I will respect independent thinking as an academic discipline, however, I will encourage interdependence and mutual care for one another as a community. We are in this academic endeavor together as a team. This basic attitude of learning and interdependence is critical and expected in the class. Any classroom behavior that discourages, belittles or disrupts this attitude will not be tolerated (see also Academic Integrity).

REQUIRED TEXTS:


RS 150SS Course Reader
Other supplementary articles and blogs will be announced or distributed in class.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

REFERENCE TEXTS:
ATTENDANCE, ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING:2

1. Attendance: Attendance at all class sessions is required although two unexcused absences may be allowed without penalty (Student Handbook, p. 30). One excused absence will be allowed in case of illness, official college activities (e.g., athletic activities and field trips) or other extenuating circumstances, evaluated by the professor. Students are also expected to arrive on time for each class session. Excessive absences and habitual tardiness will result in the lower course grade at the end of the term.

2. Class Participations and Critical Reading Notes (20%): The course format will be a combination of lecture and seminar. Due to its format, it is crucial that students not only attend the class but also actively participate in class discussions and contribute to each other’s learning. For a class discussion, each student is responsible for having completed the assigned readings, raising one or two key discussion issues and questions, and participating in a thoughtful interaction and dialogue on the given readings. In each class session, a selected student will facilitate a discussion with guidance of the professor. We will do various reading and discussion exercises in class which require each student’s full participation, employing close reading skills; so come prepared! For reading notes, students may use one or two combination of the following examples:
   - Descriptive and Observational (Hermeneutical Competence): what does the text “say?”
   - Interpretive and hermeneutical (Hermeneutical Competence; Theological Judgment): what do you take the text to “mean” then and now? What is a basis of your interpretation?
   - Analytical and integrative (Theological Judgment; Ecclesial Engagement): How do you connect the dot between the text(s), your understanding, and its implication for our context? How do various texts relate to one another?

3. Service Practica and Reflection Journal (20%): Students are required to spend 14-16 hours throughout the semester working for an organization helping the poor and the under-privileged in town. The professor will provide a list of organizations/agencies with contact information. Students are to choose one from the list and contact the agent directly. While conducting a practicum, students are to keep a reflection journal, connecting the course and reading material, and their experiences. The journal entries should include specific tasks/responsibilities, key events or moments of learning, questions/issues/concerns raised, and thoughts processed and progressed in light of the class discussions and readings. The journal is due on the eighth and the sixteenth week.

2 Proviso: The professor reserves the right to change this syllabus when deemed appropriate; changes to the syllabus will be announced in class.
4. **Analysis Paper (15%)**: Students will write a short analysis paper on one of the two main primary sources assigned for the course: Clement of Alexandria’s *Rich Man’s Salvation* (in the Course Reader) or excerpts from papal encyclicals (in the Course Reader and handout). While students are responsible for writing one analysis paper, they are still required to submit substantial reading notes on the other reading on which they do not choose to write (see Class Discussions and Notes). **No late paper will be accepted.**

The purpose of these papers is for the students to develop critical, analytical and historical abilities in engaging with primary texts. Each paper should be about 5 pages in length (1600-1800 words), double-spaced with one inch margin and 12 font type. In writing the analysis papers, students are required to adhere to the following instructions:

1) Provide an analytical and integrated summary of the basic and overall content of the text; that is, identify author’s thesis (or theses) or the main issues/points the text is addressing, including a conclusion (if applicable); basically, what is the point of the author/text? This part should take up a major portion (about four-fifths) of your paper.

2) In a paragraph or two, interact with the document. Assess the argumentation (the way the author argues for his/her thesis/points/arguments) of the author/text and the significance of the text in its historical and theological contexts and then respond to and/or reflect upon them.

In terms of presentation, please include page numbers and staple the pages. The paper should have a title page with your name, course name, due date and a title for the paper. Your paper must be proof-read before your final submission. Chapter, paragraph and verse citations are required for paraphrases and quotes.

**Grading** for the review will be based on the demonstration of: 1) thorough, succinct and accurate summary; 2) thoughtful, insightful and creative analysis and assessment; 3) quality of the presentation, such as grammar, style and spelling.

5. **Group Research and Action Project (20%)**: Towards the end of the course, students will be divided into groups to work on major research and action project for four to five weeks. While the professor will distribute a specific topic list, each group may propose a topic of choice upon initial discussion. Students are to incorporate and interact with the findings from the assigned books, articles, and practica, and also to use further resources from other disciplines (i.e., sociology, anthropology, economics, and political science) for their research and action project. Each group is to submit a preliminary research bibliography/questionnaire by **Thursday, March 25th** and a preliminary outline by **Tuesday, April 6th** and to provide the rest of the class with a final bibliography and presentation outline on the day of presentation. Each group will be allotted twenty minutes (including Q&A) to present their research work and are encouraged to be creative in their presentations (PowerPoint, Poster, Panel, Film, etc.). This project will be peer-evaluated and accompanied by individual self-analysis of the group work (this form will be distributed later).
6. **Comprehensive Final Exam (25%)**: Students will take the final examination on the comprehensive materials covered and discussed in the class; a portion of this final may be a take-home exam. The professor will provide the students with a study guide in advance.

7. **Inclusive Language**: Students are expected to use inclusive language for all assignments whenever appropriate; for example, when referring to a human being in generic sense, use “human being, humanity, or humankind” instead of “man, men, or mankind”; other cases (possessive, objective, or predicate) should follow the practice accordingly. Repeated insensitivity will be noted though without penalty, but consistent use of inclusive language will be rewarded with extra credit at the end of the term.

8. **Laptop Policy**: Students who use laptops to take notes in class are expected to abide by fundamental classroom etiquette (i.e., no multi-tasking in class, such as checking email, browsing the web, playing games, tweeting friends, or updating Facebook, working on assignments for other classes, etc.) and to keep their academic integrity.

**Please note that students need to submit all assignments in order to pass the course and that all assignments must be submitted in hard copy.**

**OFFICE HOURS**: Please visit me during my office hours. I would love to get to know you outside classroom and discuss with you course material or anything else.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

Students are advised and expected to take academic integrity seriously as stated in the *Student Handbook* (p. 30). Any act of cheating (including giving or receiving unauthorized aid in completing any of the class assignments), plagiarism (i.e., using ideas and/or words from (un)published sources as one’s own without proper citations) or falsification will not be tolerated under any circumstance and will automatically result in a failing grade in the work and may result in a failing grade in the course and a report to the Academic Dean.

**DISABILITY SERVICES:**

Students who have been diagnosed with a disability (learning, physical or psychological) are strongly encouraged to contact the Disability Services office as early as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations for this course. Formal accommodations will only be granted for students whose disabilities have been verified by the Disability Services office. These accommodations may be necessary to ensure your full participation and the successful completion of this course.

Please contact the Director of Disability Services, Michelle Hardley (805-565-6159, mhardley@westmont.edu) as soon as possible.
COURSE TOPICS INCLUDE:

Biblical concepts of wealth and poverty
Biblical concepts of the rich and the poor
Social, cultural and historical contexts for the biblical concepts of the rich and the poor
Social and theological contexts of early Christianity: Jewish and Greco-Roman
Salvation of the rich in early Christianity
Development of redemptive almsgiving and charity
Monasticism (asceticism) and poverty
The role of the church as a social welfare organization
Development of medieval theology of poverty
The Reformation initiatives for the poor
Theologies of capitalism and socialism ("Christian" capitalism, "Christian" socialism, "Christian" communism?)
Individual and systemic poverty: diverse faces
The Social Gospel
Liberation Theology
Prosperity Gospel ("Gospel of Health and Wealth")
Evangelical social thoughts
What would Christian stewardship of wealth look like?
Constructing Christian accountability of the rich: “the good of affluence,” simple life or social activism?
Constructing Christian responsibility for the poor
Globalism, wealth and poverty, and international politics and policies

COURSE SCHEDULE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecture/Discussion Topic</th>
<th>Readings/Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week One</strong>&lt;br&gt;1/12 (Tue)</td>
<td>Introduction to the course</td>
<td>Blomberg, 17-32; Schneider, 1-12; Sider, “Preface”</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/14 (Thur)</td>
<td>Wealth and Poverty in OT Narrative, Part 1</td>
<td>Longman, 97-112; Blomberg, 33-56</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week Two</strong>&lt;br&gt;1/19 (Tue)</td>
<td>MLK Holiday Observed: No Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/21 (Thur)</td>
<td>Wealth and Poverty in OT Narrative, Part 2</td>
<td>Schneider, 65-89; Sider, 41-44, 65-75</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week Three</strong>&lt;br&gt;1/26 (Tue)</td>
<td>Wealth and Poverty in OT Law, Part 1</td>
<td>Longman, 113-28; Baker, 1-106</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week Four</strong>&lt;br&gt;2/2 (Tue)</td>
<td>Wealth and Poverty in OT Wisdom, Part 1</td>
<td>Longman, 145-162; Blomberg, 57-85</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/4 (Thur)</td>
<td>Wealth and Poverty in OT Wisdom, Part 2</td>
<td>Schneider, 90-115; Sider, 44-46, 53-55, 107-114</td>
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<td>Week Five</td>
<td>Wealth and Poverty in OT Prophecy</td>
<td>Longman, 163-79</td>
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<td>2/9 (Tue)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week Six</th>
<th>Presidents’ Holiday: No Class</th>
<th>Blomberg, 87-110; Schneider, 116-38; Sider, 46-52; Rhee, “Social, Economic, and Theological World of Early Christianity,”</th>
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<tr>
<td>2/16 (Tue)</td>
<td>Presidents’ Holiday: No Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/18 (Thur)</td>
<td>Jewish view of wealth and poverty: the Second Temple literature</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week Seven</th>
<th>Greco-Roman view of wealth and poverty I: economy and patronage</th>
<th>Blomberg, 111-46; Schneider, 139-66; Sider, 56-63</th>
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<tr>
<td>2/23 (Tue)</td>
<td>Greco-Roman view of wealth and poverty I: economy and patronage</td>
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<td>Greco-Roman view of wealth and poverty II: moral teachings</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week Eight</th>
<th>NT: Jesus and Synoptics on wealth and poverty</th>
<th>Blomberg, 172-212; Schneider, 207-10; Sider, 81-87; Blomberg, 228-53; Reader: Morality and Ethics, “The Shepherd of Hermas” and “The Apologists”</th>
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<tr>
<td>3/2 (Tue)</td>
<td>NT: Synoptics, James, and Acts</td>
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<td>NT: Excurses</td>
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<td>3/4 (Thur)</td>
<td>NT: Paul on wealth and poverty;</td>
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<td>NT and beyond: General Letters, the Revelation, and the Apostolic Fathers</td>
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<td>Week Ten 3/16 (Tue)</td>
<td>Century</td>
<td>Ambrose”; Social Thought, “The Cappadocian Fathers”</td>
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<td>3/18 (Thur)</td>
<td>Spring Recess: No Class</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week Eleven 3/23 (Tue)</strong></td>
<td>Early Christianity: Augustine of Hippo</td>
<td>Reader: Social Thought, “St. Augustine of Hippo”</td>
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<td>Early Christianity: Role of the Bishop and Church as a Social Welfare Organization</td>
<td>Reader: Poverty and Leadership, “Governor of the Poor”</td>
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<td>3/25 (Thur)</td>
<td>Medieval Christianity: Theology of the Poor and Medieval Charities I</td>
<td>Lindberg, 17-43 Reader: Rich and Poor, “St. Gregory the Great” and “St. Bernard of Clairvaux”</td>
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<td>Medieval Christianity: Theology of the Poor and Medieval Charities II</td>
<td>Lindberg, 43-67, 174-77 Reader: Poverty in the Middle Ages, “Evangelical Poverty”; Rich and Poor, “St Thomas Aquinas” and “St. Catherine of Siena”</td>
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<td>Reformation Christianity: Theology of the Reformers and Poor Relief</td>
<td>Lindberg, 95-127, 192-202 Group Research Bibliography/Questionnaire Due</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Handout: Shewring, 205-218
** Group Formation for Research and Presentation |
Handout—Karl Marx, “The Manifesto of the Communist Party”
Reader: *On Moral Business*, “Andrew Carnegie,”
“Reinhold Niebuhr,” and “James Skillen”
Modern World: Responses to Marxism |

** Analysis Paper/Notes Due |
Contemporary World: Capitalism and Oppression—Liberation Theology |
| 4/20 (Tue) | Contemporary World: Perspectives on Capitalism | Schneider, 13-40; Sider, 1-37; Collins & Wright, 33-56; Sider, 119-79
Contemporary World: Causes of Poverty |

| Week Fifteen | Contemporary World: Global Economy and Capitalism | Reader: *Economics in Christian Perspective*; Collins & Wright, 104-131
** Group Research Presentation |
Handout--TBA

Sider, 181-217; Collins & Wright, 160-77
** Group Research Presentation |
| 4/27 (Tue) | Contemporary World: Toward Christian Stewardship and Responsibility III | Sider, 219-70; Collins & Wright, 178-92
** Group Research Presentation |
<p>| 4/29 (Thur) | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conclusion of the Course</th>
<th>Journal Due</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week Seventeen</strong>&lt;br&gt;5/6 (Thu)</td>
<td>FINAL EXAMINATION&lt;br&gt;12:00 – 2:00 p.m.</td>
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