“Christian Faith and Economic Justice: Biblical Themes, Current Realities, and Ethical Choices”

Mondays 7:00–9:00 p.m.
February 17, 24, March 3, 10, 17 (snow day March 24)

Both as individuals and as a nation, we face a range of economic challenges. As a way to think more deeply about relationships between Christian faith and current economic realities, the sessions in this series explore the following questions:

- What does the Bible specifically say about financial responsibility and economic justice? What are some of the central biblical texts that speak to contemporary questions about money, wealth, and justice to the poor? What wisdom does the Bible offer us in today’s hard times?
- During the Reformation, when the economic landscape was rapidly changing and capitalism was emerging, what did Martin Luther and other reformers say about economic justice? How did they respond to the needs of the poor, unjust economic structures, and rising interest rates? How might their ideas and strategies help Christians today reflect on their personal finances and our country’s economic policies?
- What ethical issues are capturing the most attention of leading economists today? What are they saying about poverty, sources of the current economic crisis, and local and global socio-economic inequalities? What solutions and notions of justice are economists proposing? How might their theories inform or resonate with Christian perspectives?
- What insights Christian theologians and ethicists today offering about the economic crisis, economic justice, and how best to make ethical and theologically informed financial choices as individuals and as a nation? What economic policies are Lutherans, Roman Catholics, and other church bodies proposing in their social teachings and statements? How can faith be active in love as we seek economic justice and make difficult financial and political choices?

By exploring these and other questions, and by mining resources from the Bible, Economics, and Theology, this series aims to help all participants reflect on ways they might best live out their faith in a complex global economy.

The five sessions will be led by scholars in the areas of Bible, Economics, and Christian Ethics.
Session I: “‘No One in Need Among You’ (Deut 15:4): Economic Justice in the Torah and Prophets” by J. Blake Couey, Assistant Professor of Religion at Gustavus Adolphus College. Couey received his B.A. From Mercer University in Macon, GA, and his M.Div. and Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary. He teaches a variety of courses on the Bible, including Prophets, Women and the Bible, and Biblical Hebrew. His research focuses on the book of Isaiah.

Session II: “In the Shadows of the Empire: Economic Justice and the Early Church” by Casey Elledge, Associate Professor of New Testament. Elledge received his M.Div. and Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary. His teaching and research interests include Jesus and the Gospels, Early Judaism, Archaeology, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Before coming to Gustavus, Elledge served as a Fulbright Scholar at the Hebrew University Institute for Archaeology in 2002. His research incorporates historical, textual, and theological studies of both Early Christian and Jewish literature.

Session III: “Wealth, Poverty, and Economic Justice: Wisdom from the Reformation” by Mary Gaebler, Associate Professor of Theological Ethics. Gaebler earned her B.A. from the University of Wisconsin; M.Div. from Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia; and her Ph.D. from Yale. Her teaching and research interests include theological anthropology and related issues of human agency. In her work, she also addresses theological issues related to consumerism, environmental degradation, and globalization of corporations.

Session IV: “Seeking Economic Justice in the Light of Local and Global Inequalities: Perspectives from the Fields of Business and Economics” by Kristian Braekkan, Assistant Professor of Economics and Management. Braekkan was born and raised in Norway and received his Ph.D. at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech). He teaches various courses on strategic management, international organizations, and workplace justice. His research explores the impact of social and economic inequalities on economic and political systems and on non-economic outcomes such as quality of life and health.

Session V: “Faith Active in Love: Theologically Informed Financial and Political Choices Today” by Mary Gaebler, Associate Professor of Theological Ethics.

To register, please contact Sara Masters at smasters@gustavus.edu or 507-933-7001. Cost is $35 per person and checks can be made payable to Gustavus and sent to Church Relations, 800 West College Ave, St. Peter, MN 56082.

Organized and sponsored by Gustavus Adolphus College Church Relations and the Bernhardson Chair.