



# McMaster Divinity College

## **Critical Understandings in Ministry Leadership** Hybrid DPT Course Fall 2017

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Class Begins Online Sept. 11, Meets on campus Oct. 10-11<sup>th</sup>. The class will also meet once via the online meeting system Webex. The dates for this meeting will be Monday Sept. 10 at 3:30 ET (this will be confirmed as it is subject to change).

### **Biography**

Dr. Lee Beach is the Associate Professor of Christian Ministry, the Garbutt F. Smith Chair in Ministry Formation and the Director of Ministry Formation at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario. He teaches courses on the church in culture, pastoral ministry and Christian spirituality. Prior to coming to MDC Lee pastored for over 20 years with the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada serving churches in Peterborough, Cobourg and Scarborough, Ontario. He is currently involved in a new church initiative in Ancaster, Ontario where he lives with his family. He is the author of the book, *The Church in Exile: Living in Hope after Christendom* (IVP) and co-author (With Dr. Franklin Pyles) of the book *The Whole Gospel for the Whole World: Experiencing the Four-Fold Gospel Today* (Wipf and Stock).

### **Course Description**

Defining effective leadership in ministry is ever evolving as contexts and expectations constantly change. However, are there critical/foundational perspectives that define Christian ministry? Further, how do we identify and define what the critical understandings of ministry leadership are in our own ministry context? Also, how do foundational perspectives and contextual issues inform one another? This course will address the need to understand the foundational and contextual issues that inform effective ministry leadership. By understanding historical models as well as reflecting on our own contextual challenges the course will explore ways in which we can develop an understanding of what it means to lead effectively in the particular ministry context that we find ourselves in.

As a hybrid course we will be using a course shell provided by McMaster Universities, Avenue to Learn as well as other online technology. Information about accessing and using these sites will be provided prior to the beginning of the course and/or as needed.

## **Learning Goals:**

### **Knowing:**

1. Students will gain an initial knowledge of the practice - led research method.
2. Students will gain understanding of the contextual nature of ministry, both locally and globally, and how the work of ministry is to respond to and work within a particular context.
3. Students will develop a deeper understanding of specific challenges in contemporary ministry and how reflective leadership is crucial to addressing these challenges.

### **Being**

1. Students will have the opportunity to evaluate their own cultural situatedness and how their own understanding of the world is influenced by it.
2. Students will gain insight into how their work in ministry is a response to the questions and needs of their time and context and how living into this reality is part of the ministerial calling.

### **Doing**

1. Students will grow in their ability to present their ideas to a group of peers and receive critical feedback from that group.
2. Students will develop a practical response to a leadership challenge within their own ministry context.
3. Students will identify specific cultural and contextual issues that affect their practice of ministry and develop effective responses to them.

A core value of our class is that it is a “learning community,” designed to be a place where each member of the community can grow through positive affirmation and constructive input. We should all come to the community as people in process, open to be deconstructed and formed through our mutual learning experience.

As professor it is my responsibility to empower each class member as a learner by treating each student with respect and dignity. I come to position myself as a fellow learner in the community and to offer information, reflection, experience and questions for us to reflect on

together. Further, it is my responsibility to give good evaluation and feedback to your thinking, both as you offer it to the class in our discussions and through written work so that your growth through this class can be maximized as a result of our collaboration.

As a responsible member of our learning community you will be expected to commit yourself to the class throughout the semester that we are together. This means that in our class interactions you will endeavor to treat all members of our class with respect and dignity. Your presence is necessary for our community (that is our class) to function at an optimal level, therefore it is expected that each student will be “present” in the online aspect of the course and in attendance for the face to face aspect of the course Oct. 10 & 11. Assignments should be handed in on time and in good order, ideally on or before the due date specified in this syllabus. All assignments handed in after the due date will be subject to a penalty of 2% for each day (including weekends) late. Assignments can be submitted via. Email to the instructor’s email address as provided at the top of this syllabus. (please use word formatting).

I am not only available but also welcome and enjoy connections with each of you outside class time. If you would like to meet together in person or via Skype please feel free to make an appointment with me for a time that works for both of us.

## **Required Reading**

Bowen, John P. (editor). *The Missionary Letters of Vincent Donovan, 1957-1973*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011.

Reimer, Sam and Wilkinson, Michael. *A Culture of Faith: Evangelical Congregations in Canada*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens, 2015.

Thiessen, Joel. *The Meaning of Sunday: The Practice of Belief in a Secular Age*. Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queens, 2015.

Marti, Gerardo and Ganiel, Gladys. *The Deconstructed Church: Understanding Emerging Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

## **Suggested Text**

Miller-McLemore, Bonnie (editor). *The Wiley Companion to Practical Theology*. West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2014.

\*A bibliography with resources for further reading and research will be provided on the class site the first week of class.

## Assignments

### 1. Practice Led- Research Description Paper

Foundational to the Doctor of Practical Theology Degree is the discipline of practice led research (PLR). As a core course in the DPT this class will help students develop an initial understanding of this unique approach to research. Students will write an introductory understanding of practice led research that covers the philosophy behind and the unique features of this approach to research. The paper should offer a definition of PLR, demonstrate an acquaintance with some of the literature on the subject by noting how various sources contribute to the field, and provide an overview of some of the key features that are part of a practice led research project.

**The paper will be due Oct. 10, 2017. This paper should be approximately 2000 words and will constitute 20% of the overall course grade.**

### 2. Class Presentation: Contextual Analysis

Students will choose a cultural artefact that provides insight into the place of Christianity and/or the church in contemporary North American culture and present it to the class for discussion during our face to face class meeting on Oct. 11<sup>th</sup>. Examples of an artefact could be a current news story, an article, a scene from a movie or t.v. show, lyrics from a song, or even a personal encounter of some sort. The presentation should offer an analysis of how the artefact represents the place of Christian faith in contemporary culture and should include at least two questions for the class that will help to provide a springboard for class discussion.

**Class presentations will take place on Oct. 11th They should be approx. 20 minutes in length and will constitute 10% of the course grade.**

### 3. Learning from the Practices of a Historic Christian Leader: Paper and Presentation

All theology is contextual and all effective ministry must be a response to the context in which it happens. This is true today and has been true in the church since its inception. This assignment will ask each student to choose a historic Christian leader from the past and write a paper that reflects on how that leader was shaped by and was responsive to their ministry context. The paper should offer a brief overview of the leader's work, describe the external factors that drove their work, how their work was influenced by their context, how their work was a response to the needs of the church and society in their time and what lessons contemporary leaders can learn from them. The student will also "present" the paper in a one on one meeting with the instructor (via. Skype, or another online meeting system). This "presentation" will largely be an interaction with the instructor where the main findings of your paper will be discussed. The goal of this assignment is to help you understand how these important figures in Christian history were all "practice - led" researchers. That is, they were

people whose larger theological interests and contributions were all directed by their engagement in ministry and their experience within a particular social and ecclesial context.

**The paper should be approximately 4000 words, it is due Oct. 31, 2016 and will constitute 25% of the course grade. The one on one discussion with the instructor can occur anytime after the paper has been submitted. Your grade will not be finalized until the meeting has taken place. Please contact the instructor to arrange a time that is convenient for both of us.**

#### **4. Understanding the Challenge of Contemporary Ministry Leadership**

For this paper the student will choose a specific challenge or question that you have regarding contemporary Christian ministry that is connected to your own practice of ministry. Ideally the question will have a connection to your overall dissertation research project. The paper will address this topic by exploring the questions that it raises and challenges it presents both theologically and practically. The paper should move in four distinct stages; first, it should explain the practice - led methodology that you will use in the paper. Second, the paper should provide an in-depth exploration of the problem/question as it pertains to the practice of ministry in the particular context that it is situated in. Third an engagement with the question/problem from both theoretical and practical perspectives should be provided, this includes offering analysis that emanates from both secondary analysis (i.e. literature based research) as well as primary analysis (i.e. reflection on your own experience). These two research components should be brought into conversation with each other so that they provide a seamless, rigorous response to the problem/question under consideration in the paper. Fourth, the paper should move to response, providing insight into how the problem/question can be adequately addressed within a contemporary ministry context. The paper will also form the basis for a class presentation as it will be posted in an online forum and the class will interact with the paper by posting responses, constructive critiques and questions. You will be expected to interact with the comments for one week after the paper is posted.

**A presentation schedule (including due dates for each paper) will be determined during the first week of the semester. Depending on the size of the class, one or two papers a week will be posted for discussion beginning the week of Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>.**

**The paper should be approximately 5000 words in length and will constitute 30% of the course grade.**

#### **5. Participation**

As a doctoral level course it is expected that students will make engagement with peers a high priority in their learning. As an online/hybrid class this kind of commitment to participation is absolutely essential to the ethos and overall quality of the course. Thus, students will be graded on their participation based on the quality and frequency of their online participation.

**Class participation will constitute 15% of the course grade.**

## Course Outline

**Course Introduction: WebEx class meeting, Sept. 10 3:30 pm ET (week One) \*details will be provided**

- Course overview, introductions

### **Section One: Introducing Practice - Led Research (Week one - two)**

- Online Presentation: Introducing Practice-Led Research and its relationship to Practical Theology (2 parts)
- Online Presentation: Research approaches and options in PLR (w/ Dr. Kelvin Mutter)
- On line discussion forum based on these two presentations (week two).

### **Section Two: Reading our Context, Global Perspectives and Contemporary Leadership in Ministry (Week three - eight)**

- Online Presentation: The Shape of Ministry leadership: Context and Content (Post-Christendom and the Challenge of Contemporary Ministry) (2 Parts).
- Online discussion forum based on these presentations (Week three)
- Online discussion forum on the book *The Missionary Letters of Vincent Donovan 1957-1973*. (week four)

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- In class Lecture: Ministry as Theological Leadership: Embodying the Gospel through Practice (Oct. 10)
- In class Lecture: Global Christianity: Understanding the shape of Christianity in the 21st Century and its impact on Contemporary ministry (Oct. 10)
- In class book discussion on *The Meaning of Sunday* and *A Culture of Faith* (Oct. 10 or 11)
- In class student presentations of the assignment *Contextual Analysis* (Oct. 11)

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- Week 6 (Oct. 16 – 20) will be our “reading week” (no class content)
- On line Presentation: Critical Understandings in Ministry Leadership: The Future of Evangelical Theology and Ministry (Week 7)
- On line discussion forum on the book *The Deconstructed Church*

### **Section Three: Class Presentations** (*Week nine - fourteen*)

The presentation schedule will be determined the first week of class. One or two papers will be posted each week and the class will interact with them for the balance of the week.

#### **Additional notes:**

##### A. Textbook Purchase

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3 : phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). Other book services may also carry the texts.

##### B. Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

##### C. Gender Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

##### D. Style

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for

Essays and Theses

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/mdcstyleguide.pdf>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

Disclaimer

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.