

Creative Ministry
MS 3XM3/6XM6
Winter Semester 2014

Instructor: Dr. Lee Beach
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Class Time: Saturdays 9:00-4:00
Jan 11, Feb 1, Mar 8, Apr 2
Location: MDC (room #TBA)

Course Description

The Canadian church today exists in the midst of a cultural revolution that has dislocated it from its place as a shaper of culture to one on the margins of culture. What impact does that have on the work of Christian Ministry? What is the role of the ministry leader in the contemporary church? What are the key practices of ministry that need to be undertaken? How do we cultivate Christian communities that can effectively engage the realities of our cultural context? This course will explore these questions by inviting students to consider the nature of the church and some of the concrete ministry practices that help the church to live into its identity as a set apart people. Special attention will be paid to the characteristics that are necessary in forming a missional community for 21st century Canada.

Specializations:

Church and Culture
Christian Worldview
Pastoral Studies

Course Objectives

Knowing:

- To help students understand the importance of the identity of the church and the nature of its calling for contemporary ministry.
- To help students learn how to read their context and the importance of that discipline to the work of Christian ministry.
- To help students wrestle with their own philosophy of ministry and what they think is the best approach to making disciples within the realities of the current Canadian context.

Being:

- To develop awareness of spiritual identity and personal spiritual formation as foundational aspects of ministerial leadership.
- To contribute to the students understanding and development of their identity and philosophy of ministry as a ministering person.

Doing:

- Help students develop the ability to lead teams/congregations in the process of defining their corporate identity and ministry calling.
- In association with their current ministry contexts help students identify and begin to acquire foundational skills and vision relevant to pastoral ministry and congregational leadership.

Basic Course Outline:

The overall outline of the course will follow Matthew chapters 3-4 and employ Matthew's description of Jesus' preparation for ministry and the primary contours of his ministry. These will be offered as a paradigm for our own thinking about forming and leading local expressions of Christian ministry in the contemporary context.

Week One: Calling and Preparation (Who are We?) - Matt. 3:1- 4:11

Week Two: Context (Where are we?) - Matt. 4:13-16

Week Three: Content (What are we Doing?) - Matt. 4:17, 23-25

Week Four: Cultivating (How Do We Do It?) - Matt. 4:18-22

Course Textbooks

Diana Butler Bass; *Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening*. New York: Harper One, 2012.

Ruth Haley Barton; *Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice For Leadership Groups*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2012.

Course Requirements

1. Book Response #1

Write a response to Diana Butler Bass's *Christianity After Religion*. The paper should include a brief overview of the book's contents and main ideas, but the primary focus of the paper should be on your interaction with and response to Bass's ideas. How does what she writes resonate with your own impressions of the current Canadian context? Where does your experience differ from what she presents in the book? How do you feel about her overall conclusions about the direction of Christianity? What suggestions or corrections would you offer that may enhance or correct her presentation? Your paper should demonstrate engagement with some (but not necessarily all) of Bass's ideas in the book and also offer reflection on how the book may be helpful in assessing the current cultural context that we do Christian ministry in.

The paper will be due at the beginning of the second class (Feb 1). It should be 8-10 double spaced pages and will constitute 25% of the course grade.

2. Contextual Assessment

Prepare a contextual assessment of a specific ministry context that you have some participation in. This could be your home church, your para-church ministry, your placement context or some other context that you frequent. The goal of this assignment is to help you develop the skill of reading and discerning a ministry context and understanding the implications of this context on your own development as well as how you do ministry. The assignment should address (but is not limited to) the following questions:

- describe the people in this context (age, income, education, tastes, habits, etc.)
- what are the challenges of this context?
- what are the surroundings and environment like?
- what is the predominant worldview of the people in this context?
- what kind of opportunities for ministry does this context offer?
- how does this context influence you in your own thinking and person?

This assignment will be presented orally to the instructor outside of class time (for students only able to come to campus on Saturdays accommodation will be made). The presentation should include some visual aids that help depict the context, and any other creative methods that help to communicate the context effectively. A short written summary (1-3 pages) should also be submitted at the end of the presentation. The presentation will be graded according to its thoroughness, thoughtfulness, and effectiveness of presentation.

The Presentation can be made at any time throughout the semester but it must be made on or before the last day of class by making an appointment with the instructor at a time that works for both of us. This assignment will constitute 20% of the course grade.

3. Book Response #2

Write a response to Ruth Haley Barton's *Pursuing God's Will Together*. The paper should include a brief overview of the book's contents and main ideas, but the primary focus of the paper should be on your interaction with and response to Barton's ideas. How does what she writes resonate with you? Where does your experience differ from what she presents in the book? How do you feel about the overall direction and content of the book? What suggestions or corrections would you offer that may enhance or correct her presentation? Your paper should demonstrate engagement with some (but not necessarily all) of Barton's ideas in the book and also offer reflection on how the book may be helpful in your current or future work in ministry.

The paper will be due at the beginning of the fourth class (Apr 2). It should be 8-10 double spaced pages and will constitute 25% of the course grade.

4. Summary Paper

This paper should offer a reflection on the primary contours of the course and interact closely with your own ideas on the four primary questions that the course will cover; who/what is the church? What is our context in Canada today (and perhaps more specifically what is your own context?), What is the church called to do? How can the church accomplish its calling

effectively? The paper should include interaction with course texts, course content and several other sources that address these particular issues. This assignment is designed to give you opportunity to synthesize your own thinking about the ideas that we have discussed in class and offer your own reflection on how they relate to your ministry in whatever shape that it takes both now and in the future.

The paper should be 12 pages (double spaced) and is due on the Wednesday of exam week (Apr 16). This assignment will constitute 30% of the course grade.

Additional notes:

Academic Dishonesty – Academic dishonesty is a serious offence in the academic world 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 the transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the McMaster Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty located at <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

Inclusive Language ~ McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language 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 is a good example of the use of inclusive language. It is expected that all students will use inclusive language in all MDC assignments.

Sexual Harassment ~ Sexual harassment is a violation of the integrity of persons in the form of unsolicited, unwelcome, verbal or physical behavior, which discriminates on the basis of gender about a person’s body, attire, gender, marital status or economic status. Among faculty, staff, and students, sexual harassment of any kind will not be tolerated.

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 until the first day of class.