

Exile: A Motif for Post-Christendom Ministry
MS 3XD3
Winter Semester 2015
(CC/CW/PS)

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Class Dates: Jan. 17, Jan. 31, Mar. 7, Mar. 28
Time: Saturday 9:00 am - 4:00 pm
Room #: TBA

Course Description: The Canadian church today exists in the midst of a cultural revolution. Its once firm place as a shaper of culture is gone. Having held a central place of influence for over one hundred years, today the Church increasingly finds itself on the margins of society. How did we get here and how do we function in this new reality? Some are suggesting that the motif of exile may be the most appropriate way for the church in Canada to understand itself in this postmodern, post-Christian era. This course will explore the changing place of the church in Canadian society, the experience of exile, specifically as it pertained to the nation of Israel and the early church, and how the contemporary church can best live as an exilic people while still remaining faithful to its calling to be God's missional people.

Course Objectives:

Knowing:

1. To help students understand basic realities of contemporary Canadian culture and the changing place of the church in it.
2. To understand key theological responses to exile in Old Testament, Second Temple and New Testament Literature.
3. To become conversant with exile as a concept and as a potential motif for helping the Canadian Church understand itself in the 21st century.

Being:

4. To encourage reflection and integration in terms of personal, congregational, and political aspects of Christian identity in Canada today.
5. To help students develop their own ability to integrate the motif of exile into their own spirituality and leadership in their congregations.

Doing:

6. To help students develop their ability to draw from biblical theology to do practical theology and vice-versa.
7. Equip students with the ability to use the Biblical resources that emerge from an exilic context in a way that informs their own lives and ministries.
8. To give students resources for applying contextually relevant ministry strategies in their current and future ministry contexts.

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 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 attendance is required as your presence is necessary for our community (that is our class) to function at an optimal level. Assignments should be handed in on time and in good order. All late assignments will be docked at the rate of 1% for each day (including weekends) late. Assignments can be submitted in hard copy on standardized paper or electronically in a word document (pdf's are discouraged).

I am available and would welcome making connections with each of you outside class time. I would love to meet with you at some point if you think that I can be helpful to you in any way. Please feel free to make an appointment with me for a time that works for both of us.

Required Texts:

- *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture*. Michael Frost (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2006).
- *The Templeless Age: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the “Exile.”* Jill Middlemas (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007).
- *Living in Exile: Living in Hope After Christendom*. Lee Beach (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2015) [Forthcoming-available Jan. 2015]

Course Schedule (subject to adjustment as necessary):

Week One- Jan. 17

- i. Understanding and Exploring the Concept of Exile
- ii. The Canadian Church in Canadian History: A Shifting Position
- iii. Postmodern Canada: Its Contours and Realities
- iv. An Old Testament Theology of Exile

Week Two- Jan. 31

- i. Esther, Daniel and Jonah: Advice for Living in Exile
- ii. Jesus and Exile
- iii. 1 Peter and Exile

Week Three- Mar. 7

- i. 1 Peter as a Paradigm for an Exilic Church
 - 1 Peter and an O.T./2nd Temple Theology
 - 1 Peter as Theological Reflection on Incarnational Ministry
 - 1 Peter and a Theology of the Church
- ii. Leading the Church in Exile
- iii. Thinking Like Exiles

Week Four- Mar. 28

- i. The Church as a Holy Community
- ii. The Church as a Missional Community
- iii. The Church as an Eschatological Community

Course Requirements

i. Paper One

Prepare a paper on the Topic *A Biblical Theology of Exile*. This paper should introduce some of the key theological themes and biblical texts that emerge in the literature of the Old and New Testaments around the theme of exile. This paper should also trace how connections can be made between a New Testament theology of exile and an Old Testament theology of exile. Also brief discussion of some Second Temple themes would also be valuable. The paper should draw from course texts as well as other relevant sources.

This paper should be approximately 10 pages, double spaced in length and is due Jan. 31, 2015. It is worth 35% of the final course grade.

ii. Paper Two

Prepare a paper on the Topic "*A Biblical Model for the Church in Exile.*" This paper should explore a key biblical book (or books) and present some of the key themes that the book sets forth as it addresses its audience as a people in exile. For example you may want to work with the Major Prophets, or the book of Esther, 1 Peter, etc. Choose one (or maybe two) biblical books and identify some of its primary ideas about life in exile. From here the paper should make connections between the ancient text and the contemporary Canadian setting. How can the biblical book be applied in a contemporary ministry setting? The paper does not have to be exhaustive in its reflection on how the book applies to the church today, but it should demonstrate some thorough consideration of how one or two points can be applied practically in ministry today. The paper should draw from course texts and other relevant sources.

This project should be approximately 10 pages, double spaced in length and is due March 14, 2015* (This is not a scheduled class day; as noted in the syllabus email submission is very acceptable). It is worth 35% of the final course grade.

iii. Take Home Exam

At the final class a handout with four questions asking students to reflect on course themes, content and reading will be distributed. Students will be asked to write 3 brief essays (aprox. 3-4 pages, double spaced) in response to three of the four questions. Everyone will be asked to respond to one particular question and then choose two of the remaining three questions to write on. Essays should include attention to material covered in the class, and discovered through personal reading and research.

This project should be aprox. 9-12 pages (double spaced) in length and is due April 10, 2015. It is worth 30% of the final course grade.

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, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9C 5K1: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email 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.