

**LITURGY COMES ALIVE:
RENEWING LITURGY IN THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH
COURSE CODE MS 3XC3/6XC6
MCMaster DIVINITY COLLEGE**

Instructor: Wendy J. Porter, Ph.D.

Term: Fall, Term 1, September–December, 2014

Location: Room (TBA)

Time: Tuesdays 3:30-5:20 p.m.

Credit Units: 3

Class Commences: Tuesday, September 9, 2014

Contact Information:

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Course Description:

You may have heard, or even made, statements like the following: “My church doesn’t have a liturgy.” “You can’t really worship in a church that has liturgy.” “Liturgy is boring and irrelevant.” “Liturgy is just old and outdated.” These kinds of statements are common, but are unfounded and ungrounded. Your church *does* have a liturgy—whether formal or informal. You *can* worship in a church that has liturgy, even very formal liturgy. Liturgy does not need to be boring or irrelevant, or even just old and outdated. Liturgy is how Christians worship together (words, prayers, actions, symbols, etc.). Some details of vibrant worship are communicated from one generation to the next through the elements that can be written down (prayers, texts, music, procedures) and some through the oral passing on of traditions or texts or music. Liturgy captures the transferrable information of Christian worship so that the next generation can work with it to understand it, to interpret and reinterpret it, to give it voice and action, to instill it with heart and soul, and to give it colour, fragrance, sound, and artistry. This course takes the student on a journey of discovery and rediscovery of the liturgy of Christian worshipers in the past and in the present, and even plays a role in how you will shape it, or how you will determine to pass it down as is, to the worshippers who follow after you.

Specializations:

CT = Christian Thought and History – all forms of ministry emphasizing Christian theology and history, including preaching and teaching pastors.

CW = Christian Worldview – para-church ministries, lay ministry leadership, general theological studies for developing advanced theological competence.

PS = Pastoral Studies – senior/associate pastors, lead pastors, other full-time vocational ministers with primarily leadership responsibilities.

[**SS = Specialized Studies** – for students addressing particular and specialized ministry needs, such as worship pastor.]

Full engagement in and completion of this course will assist the student in three important areas:

Knowing:

The student will understand more about

- what liturgy is, and what it means
- how liturgy has developed, and why
- how every church, even the “non-liturgical” church, has a liturgy
- how liturgy shapes the church, and how liturgy shapes us
- how history, culture and the church—past and present—shape liturgy; how *we* shape liturgy
- the components of liturgy, the progression of liturgy, and the overall shape of liturgy
- exploring where God is in our liturgy

Being:

The student will be challenged

- to explore how they have been shaped and formed by liturgy, regardless of background
- to develop greater understanding of themselves as worshiping persons in the context of their formal or informal liturgy
- to pursue greater appreciation of who they are becoming in the context of their liturgy
- to become more conscious of others in the context of their or others’ liturgy
- to develop greater awareness of God’s presence—or absence—in the midst of the liturgy

Doing:

This class will assist the student

- to develop tools to explore liturgy more deeply
- to have greater facility to contribute to contemporary liturgy
- to practice planning and leading components of liturgy in-class
- to evaluate liturgy in the church, whether current practice, or historically

Course Textbooks:

Required textbooks for this course include:

Frank C. Senn. *Introduction to Christian Liturgy*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2012.

plus the choice of *two* of the following for assignment #2:

- a. Ronald P. Byars. *What Language Shall I Borrow? The Bible and Christian Worship*. Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Liturgical Studies. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.
- b. Don Saliers. *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994.
- c. Simon Chan. *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006.
- d. Nathan D. Mitchell. *Meeting Mystery: Liturgy, Worship, Sacraments*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006.
- e. Gordon W. Lathrop. *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993.

Other Resource Textbooks – The following are further resource books that could be helpful for this class and ongoing ministry. They can be found in most good theological libraries, and also

are worth including in personal libraries:

- Bradshaw, Paul, ed. *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002.
- Jones, Cheslyn, Edward Yarnold, SJ, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Paul Bradshaw. *The Study of Liturgy*. Rev. edn. London: SPCK; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Senn, Frank C. *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997.

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.

You are also encouraged to read other materials according to your interests and needs in this subject, and a list of possible books of interest is provided in class.

Successful Completion of this Class for Credit requires that each of the assignments be attempted. Failure to make a valid attempt to complete each of these requirements may constitute grounds for failure of the course.

Tentative Class Schedule

(All classes are on Tuesdays, 3:30 – 5:20 p.m.)

1.	September 9	What Is Liturgy and How Do We Do It?
2.	September 16	Liturgy Shaped by History and Culture Due: Assignment #2
3.	September 23	How Does Liturgy Work?
4.	September 30	What Time Is It? – Liturgy by the Clock Due: Decisions for (November) Class Presentation
5.	October 7	What Day Is It? – Liturgy by the Seasons Due: Assignment #3
6.	October 14	Beginning at the End: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany and Lent
7.	October 21	Leading up to the End: What Is Holy Week?
8.	October 28	The End is Really the Beginning: Easter Shapes the Year
9.	November 4	Creative Liturgy 1 – Class Presentations
10.	November 11	Creative Liturgy 2 – Class Presentations
11.	November 18	Special Topics 1
12.	November 25	Special Topics 2
13.	December 2	Liturgy Comes Alive Due: Final Paper or Project

Assignments

1. Weekly Reports. 10%.

Each week, you will present one new, interesting, or challenging discovery or accomplishment in the area of liturgy in the previous week. This can be historical, theological, or practical. It can be related to ancient liturgy or be as current as your own participation in leading liturgy in your own

church in the past week. It should be related to your specialization (CT, CW, PS, or SS). The “Report” will consist of a brief written summary to be submitted at the beginning of each class (2–3 sentences, hard copy or electronic) and your spoken contribution to a brief weekly in-class survey of the previous week’s learnings. (Suggestions for ideas can be gleaned from the main text book, Senn, *Introduction to Christian Liturgy*, chapter 2, sections 1–3, but the student is by no means limited to these.)

2. Personal Observation of Liturgy. 1500 words. 20%.

Due: Week of September 16 (up until Friday, September 19, at 1:00 p.m.)

Choose a church that you know well or have observed at least a few times, and that will assist you in your goals for your specialization (CT, CW, PS, SS). This paper does not require formal resources apart from your own observations and reflection, although you may wish to engage in a few conversations with participants in your selected church.

Basic Description: How would you describe the liturgy of this church? What are the formal components of this liturgy and where do they occur in the service? Can you identify the functions that they fulfill? What are the elements that someone who has worshipped in this church for a long time would expect?

New Details or Experiments: Are there any parts of this church’s liturgy that are more recent? Have there been any experiments in the liturgy in this church?

Communion: What is the liturgy of Communion (Eucharist, Lord’s Supper, etc.) in this church?

Texts: What main formal texts are used, if any? What books are used?

Symbols: What symbols or visual components are included in this liturgy?

Ministers: What are the formal ministerial roles in this church?

Congregational Involvement: What are the congregational roles in this liturgy?

Fixed or Flexible: On a scale of 1 – 10 (1 = most flexible, 10 = most fixed), where would you place this church’s liturgy?

Personal Learning: What have you have learned about liturgy in making these observations?

3. Book Interaction. 1500 words. 20%.

Due: Week of October 7 (up until Friday, October 10, 1:00 p.m.)

Take the two books you selected from the secondary list of five, and compare and contrast the kinds of learning that you gain from each. Evaluate, critique, and describe how you are challenged by the authors (this does not constitute necessarily agreeing with them), perhaps in understanding your own liturgy more, or in understanding how the authors perceive liturgy. For instance, what is the perspective from which each of your two authors write? Engage and interact with these authors in an interesting way (note that simple agreement or disagreement with the authors is insufficient).

4. Class Presentation. 20%.

Preliminary Decisions Due: in consultation with professor, by September 30.

Presentation Due: In-Class November 4 (and November 11, to be determined by class size).

Either using pre-existing materials, or writing your own, prepare a 5–7 minute liturgy that includes active congregational involvement, uses symbols or objects, as well as actions or other engagement, and is specifically designed for one (or more) of the groups listed below:

- a group of children
- a group from a Christian tradition other than your own
- a group that has developmental challenges
- a group that has physical challenges

- a group that is not fluent in your language
- a youth group
- a seniors group
- a group that is largely unchurched
- a specific group that is marginalized
- some other group with special interests or challenges (e.g. moms with pre-schoolers, etc.)

Think through the issues that you would face in leading your focus group in a meaningful component of liturgy, and write or prepare accordingly. Prepare all materials that would be required to facilitate this. The class will function (as much as possible) as your focus group, and will try to receive your leadership through the perspective of your focus group. Prior to leading your liturgical piece, articulate clearly to the class who your focus group is, outline the context for the segment of liturgy that you are leading/presenting (where it fits in a service, what precedes or follows it), and describe to the class how your presentation ties in with your specialization (CT, CW, PS, SS). Then lead the class in the liturgical piece that you have prepared. Evaluation for this assignment will include peer assessment.

Liturgical events may include (but are not limited to): a corporate call to worship; corporate confession; offering / collection; intercessions; lament; alternating lament-and-praise; congregational prayer; dedication or commissioning; healing; anointing.

Seasons or events within the Christian Calendar may include: Advent; Christmas; Epiphany; Lent; Palm Sunday; Holy Week; Maundy Thursday / Tenebrae; Good Friday / the Passion; Easter sunrise service; Easter; Ascension; Pentecost; Trinity; Christ the King.

Choose your focus group and liturgical piece in consultation with the professor by September 30 (email correspondence is fine). Presentations will take place on November 4 and possibly also on November 11, depending on class size – to be determined on the first day of class.

5. Final Paper or Project. 30%.

Due: Week of December 2 (up until Friday, December 5, at 1:00 p.m.)

Choose either a final paper or a final project, as outlined below:

a. Final Paper. 2000 words, using a minimum of 10 reputable sources. Choose and explore a specific topic of liturgy that is of interest to you and relevant to your specialization (CT, CW, PS, SS) from a historical, theological, artistic, or practical (historical or current) perspective. Content will be evaluated on depth of insight, level of writing, and quality of research.

b. Final Project + 1000 word accompanying explanatory paper. Create an artistic exploration of a historical, theological, artistic, or practical aspect of liturgy that could be used in your own church's liturgy or could be used to introduce others to some aspect of liturgy that you think is important and that advances your interests and requirements for your specialization (CT, CW, PS, SS). Submit a brief paper with this project to explain your project and the historical, theological, artistic and/or practical ideas that lay behind it. The project will be evaluated on depth of insight, quality of artistic design, and potential functionality.

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### **A Learning Community**

This class is designed to be a learning community, a place where each member of the community can grow through positive affirmation, constructive input and active engagement with one another, with Scripture, with ideas, and in the ongoing development and strengthening of our faith and ministries. We should all come to the community as people in process, open to being challenged, deconstructed and formed, or re-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 am a fellow learner in the community and wish to offer information, reflection, experience and questions for us to reflect on together. I welcome the responsibility and opportunity to give thoughtful 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 not only that in our class interactions you will endeavor to treat all members of our class with respect and dignity, but that you will come prepared to be fully engaged in and with the class. Your attendance is required as your presence is necessary for our community (i.e. class) to function at an optimal level.

Assignments are to be handed in on time and in good order. Late assignments will be docked at the rate of 1% for each day late (with each assignment counted as 100%). Assignments should be submitted in hard copy on standardized paper.

Connections with each of you outside class time are welcome. Please feel free to make an appointment if you think this would aid your learning experience in any way.

### **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>

### **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.

### **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.