

NEW MOVEMENTS IN THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH (MS 3XN3)

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Course Times: Winter Semester, 2019, Tuesdays 9:00 – 10:50 AM.

Course Description: This course is designed to help students wrestle with the nature and purposes of the church, as well as with the dynamics of contemporary Western culture and its impact upon ecclesiology and the practice of Christian ministry in that context. We will explore emerging theological trends and various recent and current attempts to develop approaches to ministry that meet the challenges of being biblically faithful to the purposes of the church and are relevant in the current Canadian cultural context (i.e. Emerging church, missional church, internet church, house church, new monasticism, etc.). Students will be invited to think critically about these trends and begin to construct their own philosophy of church ministry within current North American culture.

Course Objectives:

Knowing

1. To deepen students understanding of the nature and purposes of the church.
2. To broaden the students understanding of contemporary culture and its implications for Christian ministry.
3. To deepen the students understanding of recent theological trends in the contemporary church.
4. To enhance the students understanding of emerging approaches to ministry in the post-modern milieu.

Being

1. To inspire students to identify ways in which their own lives and ministries can respond to the realities and challenges of the post-Christian Canadian context.

2. To help students discern ways in which their own theology is evolving and responding to their changing context and experience.

Doing

1. To give students the opportunity for critical engagement with the issues of contextualization as it relates to contemporary church ministry.
2. To give students the opportunity to develop their own philosophy of contextualization and church ministry.
3. To give students the opportunity to develop their own views on the emerging trends in theological thought and ministry praxis.

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 week we are together. This means that in our class interactions you endeavour 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 2% for each day (including weekends) that it is late. Assignments should be submitted electronically via, email.

I am not only available but welcome and enjoy connections with each of you outside class time. I would love to meet with each of you at some point if at all possible. Please feel free to make an appointment with me for a time that works for both of us if you think that I can be of any help to you.

Required Texts:

- Corcoran, Kevin, et. al. *Church in the Present Tense: A Candid look at What is Emerging*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011.
- Gay, Doug. *Remixing the Church: Toward and Emerging Ecclesiology*. London: SCM, 2011.
- Bowen, John P. (editor). *Green Shoots out of Dry Ground: Growing a New Future for the Church in Canada*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013.

- Smith, Gordon. *Evangelical, Sacramental and Pentecostal: Why the Church Should be all Three*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2017.

Recommended Reading:

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

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. Other book services may also carry the texts.

Course Requirements:

1. Site Interaction and Evaluation:

Each student is required to visit, at a church that can be considered a "fresh expression" of church in contemporary Canadian culture. Potential sites will be offered and discussed on the first day of class, although students can identify a site of their own and get approval from the instructor for it as a suitable place for them to accomplish the assignment. Students will:

- a. Identify a site and get approval from the instructor to use it as their "site" for the assignment.
- b. Attend at least one gathering sponsored by the church (site) as a part of their ministry.
- c. Interview at least one person who is identified as a leader in the church. The Interview will include, but is not limited to, the following questions;
 - i. How would you describe the church?
 - ii. What are the churches goals or hopes in terms of its mission and ministry in the community?
 - iii. Who attends the church? (i.e. what kind of people? Are they predominantly churched, un-churched, older, younger, what is the ethnicity?) What reasons do people give for wanting to attend and be involved in this church?
 - iv. What is the churches stance on leadership as a whole? What qualifies someone to be a leader in the church?
 - v. Why are you involved in this ministry?

- vi. What are your impressions of the state of the church in Canada and what are your concerns? Where does its hope lay?

Write an evaluation paper that offers your overall impressions on the life and ministry of the church. Describe what the church does, how it seeks to fulfill the purposes of the church and who is involved in the ministry. Reflect on the ethos and practices of the church compared to your own church and/or past experience that you have had in the local church. Further your paper should offer an evaluation of the church and an analysis of it in light of course material, the interview and your own thinking about how the church needs to respond to the current Canadian context. Positive impressions and areas of critique

The paper should be 8-10 pages (double spaced). This assignment is **due Feb. 12th, 2019**. It will constitute **30% of the final course grade**.

2. **Reading Response:**

This paper is a reflection on and synthesis of the course texts. After reading the four required course textbooks write a paper that seeks to answer the following questions.

- a. What are some of the “new” theological and/or biblical ideas that seem to be emerging?
- b. What is the vision (or visions) of the church that seem to be presented?
- c. What is the vision of Christian faith in the postmodern age that seems to prevail?
- d. Are there any ideas that might be considered “non-traditional” or even potentially controversial by some (or many) evangelical Christians?
- e. What are your points of connection with the overall ideas presented in the texts? What are your concerns? Does anything in these books inspire you in any way? Is there anything that makes you fearful in any way? If so how and why?

The paper should make clear reference to all four texts, but is not expected to be comprehensive in terms of its interaction with all the material presented in the books. Try and discern key ideas, or at least ideas that are key for you. Spot similarities and also identify differences. The goal is to offer an overview of these readings and some personal reflection on a few ideas that you think deserve attention and analysis.

The paper should be 10-12 pages (double spaced); **it is due Mar. 12th, 2019** and will constitute **30% of the final grade** for the course.

iii. **Research and Reflection Paper:**

Students will write a paper that offers a foundational vision for how the church can be effective in Canadian culture today. The paper should move in three distinct directions. First, it should offer a basic, but comprehensive theology of the church (i.e. what is the church and what are its functions?) Second, the paper should offer a basic, but comprehensive understanding of the particular challenges that the church is facing in contemporary Canadian culture today> Third, the paper should offer a clear direction for the best way for the church to understand itself and do ministry in Canada today. For the final part you may choose a particular model to follow or an example of an existing church you think is provides an example, or you may cast a vision for some ways you think a congregation needs to be formed in order to serve God's mission effectively. The paper should draw from a number of resources (books, articles, other resources) and should demonstrate an understanding of contemporary models of ministry, an interaction with biblical and secondary sources and your own reflection on how to integrate a faithful, biblical ecclesiology with the realities of ministry in the post-modern milieu.

- The paper should be 12-15 pages (double spaced) and is **due Apr. 9th, 2019**. It will constitute **40% of the final course grade**.

Course Overview:

1. Recent Trends in Contemporary Church Ministry

Recent Contemporary Models

- i. The Church Growth Movement
- ii. The Mega- Church Movement
- iii. The Meta-Church Movement
- iv. Traditional Approaches

2. What is the Church?

- A. What is the Church?
- B. Biblical Images of the church
- C. Some Traditional Models of the Church
- D. The church in culture (contextualization)

3. Contemporary Culture

- A. What is the impact of Post-modern thought on contemporary Western Culture?
- B. What are the specific challenges and opportunities of contemporary culture for the church?
- C. Implications for church ministry

4. Current Trends in Contemporary Evangelical Theology

- A. Mission
- B. An Eclectic Theology
- C. An Eclectic Worship
- D. Scripture as story
- E. The Merging of Culture and the Sacred
- F. Social Justice
- G. Eco-Theology

5. Current Trends in Contemporary Church Ministry

Emerging Trends in Contemporary Church Ministry

- i. The Emergent Church Movement
- ii. The Missional Church Movement
- iii. Ancient/Future faith Churches
- iv. The new Monasticism
- v. Internet Based Churches
- vi. The House Church Movement
- vii. Fragmentation

6. Assessing Current Trends in Contemporary Church Ministry

- i. How do established churches respond?
- ii. Implications for new initiatives

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

Inclusive Language ~ McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as the following: NRSV (1989), NCV

(1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

Sexual Harassment ~ Sexual harassment is a violation of the integrity of persons in the form of unsolicited, unwelcome, verbal or physical behaviour, 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.