

TH 5XM5 Missional Theology

McMaster Divinity College
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Hybrid, Two-day Campus session Oct 9–13
Office: 216

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Hours: M 11:00am-1:00pm; T Noon-1:00pm

I. Description:

What does it mean to be a missional church in an increasingly post-Christian, secular, and religiously plural culture? This course answers that question with a comprehensive overview of missional theology and examples of its practice, particularly in North American culture. Biblical foundations and historical approaches to embodying the Gospel in cultural context are considered with primary focus on the contemporary “missional” movement (e.g., Newbigin, Bosch, Guder, Frost, Hirsch, Fitch).

II. Course Objectives:

My goal for the course is that you will develop vocational competency as a scholarly researcher in the area of missional theology and in your area of doctoral research. Toward that end this course will serve you in fulfilling your research program at McMaster Divinity College and more broadly your calling as a practical theologian. With this in mind, the knowing, being, and doing learning objectives delineate specific objectives to facilitate achieving the vocational goals of the course.

A. Knowing:

1. Know key areas of missional theology and ways they relate to your doctoral research.
2. Know and be familiar with the contributions of key figures in contemporary theology and their relevance for your research program.
3. Begin to acquire specialist command of a specific area of theology related to your area of research.
4. Deepen your understanding of the approaches/methods appropriate to your research program.

B. Being:

1. Become a critical and constructive leader in practical theology.
2. Appreciate the value of current theological movements for the church and your life.
3. Be a respectable, respectful, and significant practical theologian.

4. Appreciate that theology is a dynamic and contextual effort to discern appropriate ways to embody the redemption revealed in Jesus Christ.

C. Doing:

1. Develop the ability to present informative presentations and facilitate student discussions.
2. Research and present original research on a substantial topic in missional theology and its significance for your research topic.
3. Hone critical reading skills in primary literature.
4. Develop the ability to analyze secondary scholarship in light of primary texts.

III. Required Text(s):

- A. See section V.A. Student Selected Textbook and Blog (pp. 4–5).

- B. Potential Resources for Student Selected Textbook and Blog:

- Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012).
- Ryan K. Bolger, *The Gospel after Christendom: New Voices, New Cultures, New Expressions* (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2012).
- Francis Chan, *Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2013) (<http://www.crazylovebook.com/>).
- Mary Sue Dehmlow Dreier, *Created by the Spirit: Planting Missional Congregations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013).
- Michael Frost & Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003).
- David Fitch, *Faithful Presence: 7 Disciplines That Shape the Church for God's Mission & Prodigal Christianity* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2016) ([Reclaiming the Mission blog](#))
- Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2011).
- Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *Participating in God's Mission: A Theological Missiology for the Church in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018).

- Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emergent Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).
 - Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).
- Darrell L. Guder, *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).
- Roger Helland and Leonard Hjalmanson, *Missional Spirituality* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011).
 - Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).
 - Scott McKnight, *Jesus Creed: Loving God, Loving Others, 10th Anniversary Edition* (Paraclete, 2014) ([Jesus Creed blog](#)).
 - Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).
 - Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).
 - Stefan Paas, *Church Planting in the Secular West: Learning from the European Experience* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).
 - David Platt, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2010) (website: <http://radical.net/>
 - C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison, *Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus* (Downers Grove: 2014). Also see <http://slowchurch.com/>
 - Graham Ward, *The Politics of Discipleship: Becoming Postmaterial Citizens*, The Church and Postmodern Culture series, ser. ed. James K. A. Smith (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009).
 - Gary Tyra, *A Missional Orthodoxy: Theology and Ministry in a Post-Christian Context* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Academic, 2013).
 - Dwight J. Zscheile, *Cultivating Sent Communities: Missional Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).
 - Tyndale Seminary has a list of readings in Missional Church in their Missional Church Reading Room ([link](#)).

C. Additional Resources:

- Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings are shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).
- *Journal of Missional Practice* ([link](#)).
- *Millennial Magazine* ([link](#)).
- Verge Network ([link](#)).

IV. Course Performance Criteria:

Assignment	Percent	Due Date
A. Student Selected Textbook	15%	Day of presentation
B. PLR Topic & Missional Context		
C. Seminar on Missional Theology	25%	Day of presentation
E. Integrative Paper	40%	Paper due three weeks after presentation
E. Integrative Paper Collaboration	20%	Day of presentation
Total: 100%		

V. Assignment Descriptions:

General Guidelines:

- Please submit course work in the appropriate folder on Avenue to Learn (A2L).
- All assignments marked according to the Grading Criteria Form available on A2L.
- All papers and assignments should conform to (and will be marked according to) the MacDiv Style Guide.

A. Student Selected Textbook and Blog:

1. Purpose: This assignment develops analytical, synthetic, and critical skills.
2. Description: Select a book in missional theology that you have not previously read. This assignment takes the place of the “required” text book for the class. Student selection provides the opportunity for you to select a book that relates to your research interest and avoids the potential of redundancy with some students already having read a syllabus

determined book. Prepare a blog of 500 words on your book. This assignment contributes to the reading total of a DPT course—4,000 pages.

3. Elements for a blog:

* Note: Given the book and the nature of your engagement as well as length of the blog, it may not be possible to include all of these elements in your blog. The key for evaluation is thoughtful description and engagement with the book.

- a. Summarize: Present the primary content, arguments, and problems and solutions identified in the book.
- b. Correlate: Based on your observations of contemporary church life, ministry, and the nature of Christian life today, identify correlations with the themes discussed in the book.
- c. Critique: Identify and describe several areas/issues that the book misses about the nature of contemporary Christian life and ministry. Where do you think the book is wrong about contemporary Christian life and ministry? Is its description of the “problem” and its proposed “solution” misguided, blinkered, one-sided? Identify, describe, and make your suggestions for alternative solutions.

4. Collaboration:

The collaboration nature of this assignment has two parts:

- a. Post your blog on the Padlet Blog—see the course outline on A2L.
- b. Post a one paragraph interaction with your class colleagues. Each student will have a Padlet page for posting their blog and on which the responses can be posted.

B. PLR Topic and Missional Context Paper:

1. Purpose:

This assignment gives you the opportunity to investigate a contextual area of contemporary culture and the way/s it relates to your topic of practice led research. Understanding and adapting to cultural context is central to missional church/theology. Thus, by bringing your practice led topic into conversation with an area of contemporary cultural is important for developing skills in missional theology.

2. Description:

Write a short paper that describes and analyzes an area of contemporary culture and suggest ways that it connects with your topic of practice led research.

3. Guidelines for paper:

- a. Research for the seminar will account for part of the supplemental reading for DPT students.
 - b. Documentation of reading:
Please use footnotes and provide a bibliography of resources used in the preparation of the paper.
 - c. The paper should include clear sections that detail. . .
 - 1) Contemporary cultural analysis,
 - 2) Practice led research topic,
 - 3) Conversation between the area of contemporary culture and your PLR topic.
 - c. Length: 10–12 pages. Double spaced, Times New Roman Font, formatted according to MDC Style Guide.
4. In-class (F2F) presentation:
During the in-class part of the course, you will present a *summary* of your PLR Topic and Missional Context paper. The presentation should introduce the three parts of the paper (area of contemporary culture analyzed, your PLR topic, and the conversation between the cultural area and your PLR topic. Length of presentation is 15 to 20 minutes, which includes time for discussion.

C. Seminar on Missional Theology:

- 1. Purpose:
This assignment provides experience *preparing a seminar* for a church OR ministry leadership group. The preparation of the seminar also helps fulfill one of the requirements of the Mastery Checklist.
- 2. Description:
You will prepare a seminar on a topic related to missional theology. The seminar should be geared to address either a church (lay) leadership or ministry leadership group. Thus, the content and the way it is developed should reflect the target audience. You can also use this assignment to investigate an area that will promote your research program. Consequently, the seminar can address the practice led topic that is the focus of your DPT studies. Thus, this assignment can provide the opportunity to investigate an area of missional theology and apply it to your area of practice led research.
- 3. Guidelines:
 - a. Research:
 - 1) Research for the seminar will account for part of the supplemental reading for DPT students.

- 2) Documentation of reading:
Please provide an annotated bibliography of the reading consulted in the preparation of the seminar (the annotations for the texts should be about one paragraph—identify the key thesis and contributions of the text).
- b. Seminar content:
 - 1) The seminar material should present and discuss the primary content points of the topic (or sub-topic).
 - 2) Handouts/outlines and PowerPoint/Prezi are helpful, but not required.
 - 3) Length:
Develop the seminar content for a thirty- to forty-minute presentation.
- c. In-class (F2F) Seminar presentation:
During the in-class part of the course, you will present a *summary* of your seminar. The presentation should introduce the target audience, the topic, why you chose it, and outline topic's development in the seminar. Length of presentation is 15 to 20 minutes, which includes time for discussion.
4. Evaluation:
Grading of the seminar and discussion session will be based on the following . . .
 - a. Please submit to the professor a copy (electronic) of your:
 - Seminar notes and . . .
 - Annotated bibliography used to develop the seminar
 - b. Does the seminar accurately present and discuss the topic for the target audience?
 - c. Does the seminar engage in critical evaluation/discussion of the content?
 - d. Does the seminar facilitate student discussion?
5. Due Date: The day you present your lecture to the class.

D. Integrative Paper and Presentation:

1. Purpose:
This assignment gives you experience writing article, essay, and chapter length papers and presenting research in an oral form similar to that performed at academic conferences.
2. Description:

You will *write* and *present* a thesis paper on a topic related to the topic of the course and your area of DPT practice led topic. I encourage you to investigate the issue from the perspective of your discipline and area(s) of research interest. You are encouraged to use the class as an opportunity to work on papers to:

- 1) Present at academic and/or professional society meetings and/or submit to journals for publication,
- 2) Develop material for presentation/application in your area of professional world,
- 3) Pursue dissertation research.

3. Guidelines for the Paper:

The paper should include (description categories below correspond to those of the grading rubric) . . .

a. Content and argument:

- 1) Detail a clear thesis (the view that your paper supports).
 - Example of a thesis statement: The missional church movement, especially its emphasis on incarnational ministry, provides valuable insight for Christian leadership in a postmodern and post-Christian culture.

Note: The DPT practice led topic in this thesis statement is “Christian leadership in a postmodern and post-Christian culture.”

- 2) Describe your topic.
- 3) Write an essay that coherently demonstrates your view.
- 4) Detail major alternatives and/or criticisms and interact with them vis-à-vis your view, where and when appropriate.

b. Presentation:

- 1) Write a stylistically clean and academic paper—e.g., you should avoid excessive first person discourse, colloquialisms (academic differs from conversational voice), and passive voice (use active).
- 2) Use and document a *minimum* of fifteen scholarly resources.
- 3) Accurately document sources according to the MDC Style Guide
- 4) Paper length: 20–25 pages. Not to exceed 7,000 words.

- 5) Provide a bibliography (list only the books cited in the footnotes of the paper).
 - 6) Use footnotes.
- c. Due Date: One week after your in-class presentation.
4. Sharing for Collaboration:
Post your integrative paper presentation on your Integrative Paper Padlet.
 5. Submission of final draft of Integrative Paper:
The final draft of your integrative paper is due three weeks after the week you post your integrative paper presentation. This provides time for you to include insights that arise from your class colleagues Integrative Paper Collaboration post.
- E. Integrative Paper Collaboration:
1. Purpose:
Provides experience in responding to and contributing to your class colleagues' projects. It provides the opportunity to develop professional skills in academic interaction that takes places at professional and academic conferences.
 2. Description:
Each student prepares a critical evaluation of the integrative papers presented by their class colleagues.
 - a. The critique:
 - 1) Remember to be charitable; not only Christian, but since academia is a small guild, it is self-preservation.
 - 2) Critical (includes highlighting and discussing problems *and* strengths):

The critique should explore the following sorts of issues:
 - Does the paper have a thesis?
 - Does the content develop and support the thesis?
 - Does it use appropriate sources?
 - Does it interact with the relevant secondary literature?
 - b. Post your critical evaluation for each student in their Integrative Paper Padlet—see A2L outline, Integrative Paper Padlet.
Written evaluations are Ok, but I encourage recorded audio-visual responses as well—e.g., converting QuickTime audio-visual recordings to YouTube and posting the YouTube link.

VI. Course Outline (*tentative*):

Part One: Online			
Week	Date	Topic	Assignment
1	Sept 10	Introduction to the Course	
2	Sept 17	History of Missional Theology and Church	
3	Sept 24	Missional Theology and Practice Led Research	
4	Oct 1	Student Text Blogs and Interactions (see syllabus V.A, pp. 4–5)	Post blog on Padlet (on A2L) and post a one paragraph interaction on your colleagues Padlet.
Part Two: Campus Sessions Oct 9–13 Dates TBD			
5 Day 1	9:00- Noon	Presentation & Discussion: PLR Topic & Missional Context (see syllabus V.B, pp. 5–6) Lecture & Discussion: A Missional Theology of Culture	
	Noon- 1:00	Lunch	
	1:00- 4:00	Workshop discussion of Integrative Paper topics & approaches (see syllabus V.D, pp. 7–9) <i>Cont.</i> Lecture & Discussion: A Missional Theology of Culture	
Day 2 Oct 12	9:00- Noon	Guest Presentation & Discussion: TBD Lecture: Cultural Context & Missional Theology	
	Noon- 1:00	Lunch	
	1:00-	Presentation & Discussion: Seminar	

	4:00	Summaries (see syllabus V.C, pp. 6–7)	
Part Three: Online			
6	Oct 15	The Trinity & Missional Theology	
7	Oct 22	One-on-one Discussion with Studebaker on Integrative Project	
8	Oct 29	The Challenge of Missional Theology & Evangelical Identity	
9	Nov 5	Integrative Paper Presentation—Week One	
10	Nov 12	Integrative Paper Presentation—Week Two	
11	Nov 19	Integrative Paper Collaboration—Week One	
12	Nov 26	Integrative Paper Collaboration—Week Two	Integrative Paper Due (from week one)
13	Dec 3	Missional Theology and the Future of the Church	Integrative Paper Due (from week two)
14	Dec 10	Conclusion and Assessment • Course Evaluations	

VII. Policies:

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. 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 ~ <https://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 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).

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 <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdcstyleguide/>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

VIII. Late-Assignment and Exam Policy:

- A. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified in the syllabus.
- B. Students take exams on the date and at the time scheduled in the syllabus.
- C. Late assignments are reduced five percentage points for each day late (e.g., if the grade is 90 and it is one day late [after the beginning of class equals one day late], the grade will be reduced to 85).
- D. Assignments and exams will be accepted without penalty after the specified date in the syllabus **only** in the case of an excused absence. If a student misses an exam or assignment submission due to a reason that he/she believes is excusable, then he/she must notify the instructor and schedule an exam date and/or late-assignment submission date within twenty-four hours of the beginning of the missed class session.
- E. Assignments and exams will not be accepted late on the basis of the student's involvement with school-approved activities. If you are not able to be in class for an exam or assignment submission, then you must pre-arrange with the instructor to take the exam and/or submit the assignment before the scheduled date in the syllabus.

Please Note: 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.