

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.

Textbooks are available from READ On Bookstore, Room 218 at MDC. Books may also be ordered from other sources such as READ On Bookstore, Email: books@readon.ca

Course Requirements:

1. Personal Reflection Paper:

Students will prepare a personal reflection paper that offers three distinct points of consideration;

1. What is your experience with Christianity and the church (both local and universal)?
 - How has the church formed you? How has it frustrated you? How has your relationship to the church changed over the years? In what ways has your faith evolved, shifted or changed?
2. How would you describe the place and role of the church in Canadian culture today?
 - Is there a particular motif or metaphor that you find helpful in describing the place of the church and/or Christianity in culture today? Are there any examples of people, ministries or churches that you think are positive responses to culture today? Are there ways that you think the church misses the mark in terms of its relationship to today's cultural realities?
3. What are some ways that you think the church needs to evolve and/or change today?
 - This may include things that the church needs to recover from its past as well as ways it needs to change or rethink how it understands the Christian faith and does ministry in today's Canadian context.

The paper is not a research paper, although you may want to include some important sources if they help you express your

thinking, it is primarily a personal reflection on your own experience with the church and the Christian faith in the past and today. Grades will be based on the depth of reflection offered, engagement with the three-part format outlined above and the level of insight offered on the place of the church in Canada today and the future of the church.

The paper should be 8-10 pages (double spaced). This assignment is **due Feb. 5th, 2019**. It will constitute **20% 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 **40% 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 that you think 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 *at least* ten 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 10-12 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://mcmasterdivinity.ca/rules-regulations/>

Inclusive Language ~ McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language in worship services, student written materials, and all 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 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.