

**Christian Mission and Culture**  
**MS 3XC3**  
**Winter 2020**

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Class Begins Online Jan. 6, Meets on campus Feb, 21-22.

## **Course Description**

The mission of the church is always done in a context. The context is inevitably entwined with a culture. Thus, as the church engages in its mission it must understand its relationship with culture. This course is designed to help students consider the relationship between the church and culture and how to think effectively about how to do ministry in a contextualized way that aids its effectiveness. The course will consider topics like; the nature of culture, how culture is formed, a theology and philosophy of contextualization and some of the cultural issues that the church is, and will face as it seeks to do mission in a Canadian and North American context.

As a hybrid course we will be using a course shell provided by McMaster Universities Avenue to Learn (A2L) as well as other online technology. Information about accessing and using these sites will be provided prior to the beginning of the course and as needed. If you have questions about the technological aspects of the course, or have any problems with the technology please contact the instructor. I will do my best to help and if I am not able to answer your questions I will work with our IT support team to get an answer for you as soon as possible.

The course is a combination of online and face to face meetings. One online class gathering will take place using the online meeting platform Webex on Monday Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 – 8:15 pm ET. This gathering will provide a place for personal introductions and an overview of the course including course requirements and expectations. Students are encouraged to join this gathering if at all possible. An invitation to join the meeting with instructions on how to use webex will be sent out to students several days before the gathering

## **Learning Goals:**

### **Knowing:**

1. As a result of this course students will be able to articulate what culture, as a concept, is.
  
- 2.. As a result of this course students will be able to identify and explain key trends that are shaping the contour of Western culture today.

3. Upon completion of this course students will be able to articulate a coherent philosophy of contextualization based on biblical, historical and theoretical practices.
4. As a result of this course students will be able to identify several major cultural issues facing the church as it moves into the mid-late 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Being**

1. Upon completion of this course students will have had the opportunity to reflect on the impact of culture on their own lives and ministries.

### **Doing**

1. Upon completion of this course students will have a foundational philosophy for contextualizing their ministry in a mid-late 21<sup>st</sup> century cultural context.
2. As a result of this course students will have a foundational ability to anticipate the future of Canadian culture and its implications for ministry in the next 50 years.

### **Working together as a learning community**

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 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 presence is necessary for our community (that is our class) to function at an optimal level, therefore it is expected that each student will be “present” in the online aspect of the course and in attendance for the face to face aspect of the course Feb, 21-22. Specific expectations for online interaction can be found in the “course assignments” section of this syllabus (below). Assignments should be handed in on time and in good order as an attachment to an email to the professor. Assignments should be sent in on or before the due date specified in this syllabus. All assignments handed in after the due date will be subject to a penalty of 3% for each day (including weekends) that they are late.

### **Instructor’s role and availability**

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 in our discussions and through written work so that your growth through this class can be maximized as a result of our collaboration.

I will do my best to answer any email enquiries within 24 hours during week days (Mon.-Fri). I do not generally answer emails Saturdays or Sunday during the day. If an email is sent later in the afternoon on a Friday it will probably not be answered until Sunday evening or Monday morning. I will do my very best to grade assignments within three weeks of submission.

I am not only available but also welcome and enjoy connections with each of you outside class time. If you would like to meet together in person or via Skype/Webex please feel free to make an appointment with me for a time that works for both of us.

## **Required Reading**

Crouch, Andy. *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*. Downers Grove, IN: Intervarsity, 2008.

Fleming, Dean. *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission*. Downers Grove, IN: Intervarsity, 2005.

Harari, Noah Yuval. *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*. New York, NY: Signal, 2016.

## **Assignments**

### **1. Book Discussions**

A guided discussion on each book will be hosted on our class A2L site at various times throughout the semester. Several questions will be posted on each book and you will be required to pick one of the questions and offer a 250-300 word response. You will also be required to offer a 100-150 word response to at least two of your classmates posts. A rubric for how the student's contribution to the discussion will be evaluated is provided in an appendix below. The discussion questions will be posted on Monday by 12:00 Noon ET and discussion closes Friday at 5:00 pm ET of the same week. Late responses (after the 5:00 Friday deadline) are welcome but will not be considered eligible for evaluation. The following are the dates for each book discussion.

Jan. 27 – 31: *Culture Making*

Feb. 24 – 28: *Contextualization in the New Testament*

Mar. 23 – 27: *Homo Deus*

**Each discussion will be worth 10% of the overall course grade (for a total of 30%) and are due according to the schedule outlined above.**

## 2. Contextualization Paper

Students will write a paper that seeks to offer a clear theology and philosophy of contextualization. That is, an answer to the question how does the church proclaim its message effectively in various cultural contexts? Special attention should be given to the current Canadian context. The paper should answer questions like; how does scripture help us reflect on the work of contextualization? How does the history of the church help us think about contextualization? What other resources are necessary for doing contextualization well? What are some of the challenges in doing contextualization faithfully? What is your current approach to and/or philosophy of how the local church in Canada should approach the work of contextualizing the Christian gospel in Canada today?

The paper should draw from Biblical and secondary resources (10 credible sources at minimum. Course texts included) and demonstrate a robust research agenda in its final presentation. A rubric will be provided at the beginning of the course with information on how the paper will be evaluated.

**The paper should be 10-12 pages in length and will constitute 30% of the course grade. It is due Mar. 2, 2020.**

## 3. Addressing the Mission of the church in the mid-late 21<sup>st</sup> Century

This paper is designed to help students think about how our current cultural context is evolving and what effect that will have on the mission of the church. Each student will choose a topic that represents a cultural issue/trend that the church is facing as we move into the middle to late 21<sup>st</sup> century. Students can pick a topic from the list below or one of their own. The paper should offer an introduction of the topic, why it is an important issue for the church to consider in the mid-late part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? What does the Christian narrative say to this issue? How can the church constructively engage the issue as part of its mission and how does your specialization (cc/cw/ps) play a role in helping the church respond? Prior to writing the paper each student must submit a brief written proposal (100-150 words) to the instructor no later than **Mar. 15**. The proposal should name the topic you intend to write about, why you think it is important and how it relates to your specialization. Please send it via. email to the instructor by the due date. If you have questions about potential topics please feel free to contact the instructor for any help needed.

The paper is a research paper and should reflect an in-depth engagement with multiple sources (10 as a minimum).

The topics listed below offer broad categories for consideration. In some cases you may need to narrow the focus of the topic to a more specific issue related to the broad topic offered here.

### Possible Topics Include:

Technology and its uses

Medical discoveries and their application

Evangelism in a Post-Religious culture

Immigration

Climate Change

Inter-faith dialogue in a Post-Religious world

Authority

Sexual ethics

Other possibilities?

**The paper should be approximately 10-12 pages and will constitute 30% of the course grade. It is due Apr. 6, 2020.**

#### **4. Participation**

Throughout the semester there will be three discussion forums that will take place on our A2L site. Each student is required to respond to the discussion question that is posted with a 200-250 word response. Questions will be posted on a Monday and responses must be posted by Friday of the same week by 5:00 pm, ET. No posts after that deadline will be considered for evaluation. Grading will be based on the rubric found as an appendix at the end of this syllabus. The evaluation will be cumulative, based on all three responses. The dates of these discussions are as follows:

Culture and Cultural Formation: Week of Jan. 20 – 24

Contextualization: Challenges and Theology: Week of Feb. 10 – 14

Mission of the Church in the mid-late 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Week of Mar. 16 – 20

**Participation in these discussions is worth 10% of the course grade. Posts are due no later than the Friday of each discussion week at 5:00 pm ET.**

#### **Course Outline and Expectations**

**\*\* A more detailed outline will be provided prior to the start of the first week.**

**Course Introduction: WebEx class meeting (online), Jan. 6<sup>th</sup> 7:00 – 8:15 pm ET** (*week One*) *\*details will be provided but please plan to attend this gathering via. Computer.*

- Course overview, introductions.

- Student Responsibilities: Please review the course syllabus before this meeting and come prepared to offer a brief (1-2 minute) introduction of yourself (occupation, professional background, personal/family situation, your hopes for the course).

**Section One: Culture and Cultural Formation** (*Week one – Four*)

- Weeks of Jan. 6 -24 : Online Presentations: Lectures and Links for you to explore
- Week of Jan.20 – 24: Discussion Forum: Class responses to lecture and links content
- Week of Jan. 27 -31: Book Discussion: *Culture Making*
- Student Responsibilities: Engage with the lectures and links provided each week. Read the book *Culture Making*. During the week of Jan. 20-24 participate in the on- line discussion forum. Please post your response to the discussion prompts provided by the instructor by Friday Jan. 24<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 pm ET. The week of Jan. 27-31 participate in the online book discussion forum according to the guidelines provided in the syllabus.

**Section Two (A): Contextualization: Challenges, Theology and approaches** (*Weeks five - six*)

- Weeks of Feb. 3 -14. Lectures and Links for you to explore
- Week of Feb. 10 – 14: Discussion Forum: Class responses to lecture and links content
- Student Responsibilities: Engage with the lectures and links provided. Post your response to the questions provided by the instructor on the online discussion forum by Friday Feb. 14, 5:00 pm ET. Read the book *Contextualization in the New Testament*.

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**Section Three: In Class Session (Feb. 21-22)** (*Week seven*)

Our in class sessions will include consideration of some of the material we have already covered in the course (culture, culture formation and an overview of contextualization) and move into topics such as a theology of contextualization and the practice of contextualization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Canadian context. We will also begin to explore issues facing the church and its mission as we move into the decades ahead and how the work of contextualization is crucial to the effectiveness of that mission.

Student Responsibilities: Come to class and engage the discussion. Your participation is welcome and needed! Continue reading the book *Contextualization in the New Testament*.

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**Section Two (B): Book Discussion** (*Week eight*)

- The week of Feb. 24 – 28: Book Discussion: *Contextualization in the New Testament*
- Student Responsibilities: Participate in the online book discussion forum according to the guidelines provided in the syllabus. Hand in your paper on Contextualization by Mar. 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- **Section Four: The Mission of the Church in the mid-late 21<sup>st</sup> Century** (*Weeks nine - twelve*)
  - Weeks of Mar. 2 - 20: Online Presentations: Lectures and Links for you to explore
  - Week of Mar. 16 – 20: Discussion Forum: Class responses to lecture and links content
  - Week of Mar. 23 – Mar. 27: Book Discussion: *Homo Deus*
- Student Responsibilities: Engage with the lectures and links provided each week. Read the book *Homo Deus*. During the week of Mar. 16-20 participate in the on- line discussion forum. Please post your response to the discussion prompts provided by the instructor by Friday Mar. 27<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 pm ET. The week of Mar. 23-27 participate in the online book discussion forum according to the guidelines provided in the syllabus.

### **Week of Mar. 30 – Apr. 3: Writing Week**

Student Responsibilities: Finish Writing your final paper and submit it to the instructor by Monday Apr. 6.

### **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, 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://mcmasterdivinity.ca/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, <http://mcmasterdivinity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/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.

## **Appendix One: Online Discussion Rubric**

### A-LEVEL PARTICIPATION (9-10 Points)

- The participant integrated evidence from the reading, lecture, or past experience in supporting their argument.
- The participant consistently posted insightful comments and questions that prompted on the topic discussion.
- The participant consistently helped clarify or synthesize other class members' ideas. If disagreeing with other class members' ideas, the participant stated his or her disagreement or objections clearly, yet politely.

### B-LEVEL PARTICIPATION (8 Points)

- The participant was notably lacking in one or two of the items listed for A-level participation.
- The participant consistently had to be prompted or coaxed to participate.
- The participant usually, but not always, expressed herself or himself clearly.



#### C-LEVEL PARTICIPATION (7 Points)

- The participant was consistently lacking in two or more of the items listed for A-level participation.
- The participant was extremely reluctant to participate, even when prompted.
- The participant rarely expressed himself or herself clearly.

#### D-LEVEL PARTICIPATION (6 Points)

- The participant frequently attempted (success is irrelevant) to draw the discussion off-topic, even if the participant's participation otherwise conforms to a higher level on the rubric

#### F-LEVEL PARTICIPATION (0-5 Points)

- The participant was rude or abusive to other course participants.
- The participant consistently failed or refused to participate at all, even when specifically prompted or questioned, even if the participant's participation otherwise conforms to a higher level on the rubric.