

Due to the uncertainty of the extent of the ongoing COVID-19 situation, McMaster Divinity College is transferring all Spring 2020 courses ONLINE. Current syllabi will be modified regarding delivery model and timelines. However, you can consult the syllabi for content. Updated, revised ONLINE syllabi will be posted as soon as possible. We will notify students when the final syllabi have been posted. Your patience is greatly appreciated.

WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING: LEADERSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND TODAY

NT 3XA3
BS/CC/CW/PS

McMaster Divinity College
Dr. Christopher D. Land
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Spring 2020
Tuesday & Thursday, 6:00–9:00pm
May 5, 7, 12, 14, 26, 28

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Throughout history, many Christian leaders have inflicted tremendous pain on others, discredited their work, and even ruined their own lives by failing to heed biblical messages about leadership or by failing to respond wisely to social and cultural forces that complicate Christian leadership. In this course, we will examine New Testament passages that address the topic of leadership, exploring how they can inform and transform both our self-perceptions as leaders and the ways in which we lead others. Also, by considering contemporary case studies, we will practice confronting the complex problems of actual leadership with a biblically-informed imagination.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Through your active participation in this course, you will:

KNOWING

- Understand the social contexts within which early Christian leaders operated;
- Be critical of common leadership ideals both in the New Testament period and today;
- Develop informed positions with regard to important issues pertaining to leadership.

BEING

- Move beyond idealized portrayals in order to perceive early Christian leaders as historical people navigating complex and uncertain issues;
- Be self-critical with respect to matters of personal power and/or weakness;
- Develop a theological perspective in which leadership is a response to divine initiative.

DOING

- Be able to carefully exegete New Testament passages related to leadership;
- Be able to assess contemporary leadership in the light of the New Testament.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Note: Students are required to complete all of the following assignments. No unfinished assignments are permitted. *A penalty of 2% per day will be applied to all late assignments, including assignments submitted in incorrect file formats. Assignments cannot be submitted after June 23rd without written permission from the Office of the Registrar (strickpd@mcmaster.ca).*

IN-CLASS DISCUSSIONS (10%)

Each class session will be oriented towards a specific leadership topic, with the lecture focusing on how the New Testament addresses it. Each session will also provide time for in-class discussions, with approx. 4–5 students working together to answer a specific question. Over the course of the semester, students will take turns “chairing” their group and then sharing the highlights of their discussion with the class, being careful to draw connections between the group’s insights and specific New Testament passages. Then, during the final class session, students will assess the other members of their group as regards their level of participation in these discussions, with the peer reviews being factored into the final grade along with the student’s performance as group chair.

READING REPORTS (2 x 5% = 10%)

Class readings will be distributed electronically, and you will report your completion of the reading using quizzes on Avenue to Learn (A2L). These A2L quizzes will ask you to report both the quantity of reading you completed and the quality of your completed reading. The first reading report must be completed by **May 21st at 11:59pm**, and the second reading report must be completed by **June 4th at 11:59pm**. See the schedule below for the readings relevant to each report.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES (6 x 7½% = 45%)

Following each class session, you will complete a brief follow-up activity (resulting in no more than 500 words) and then post it to an Avenue to Learn (A2L) discussion forum. While you are encouraged to incorporate insights from the assigned reading (or from additional resources you find useful), there is no requirement to do additional research and you are not required to include a title page or bibliography. The goal is to stimulate your thinking and to encourage connections between your knowledge of the New Testament and your thoughts about leadership. You should compose your response somewhere where it will not be accidentally deleted, and then you should copy/paste it as a new post on the relevant A2L forum. There is no requirement to read other posts or to respond to them, but the opportunity is there should you wish to do so.

The first three activities are due on **May 21st at 11:59pm**.

1. Self-Reflection. Briefly reflect on your own experience as regards the biblical notion of a “call” or “invitation” to leadership. Do you find this to be a helpful way of interpreting your own experience? Why or why not? Should it be an expectation placed on all Christian leaders? Why or why not?
2. Leadership Bios. Look online at the leadership bios of famous Christian leaders. Then read Christianity Today’s [guide to writing a bio](#). Finally, write two bios (approx. 200 words each) for

yourself or some other contemporary Christian leader. One of them should reflect what people today typically want from leaders (i.e. contemporary cultural expectations); the other should reflect biblical concerns regarding leaders (i.e. NT expectations).

3. Self-Critique. Drawing on the content of the class lecture, briefly reflect on incarnation and cruciformity with respect to either yourself or some other Christian leader whose leadership you have directly observed (you may be anonymous or use a pseudonym, if you wish to obscure the person's identity). In particular, where do you see this leader *leading among* and *working with*, and where do you see them *leading ahead* and *working over*? Which way do you think this leader needs to grow: (a) greater humility and more authentic participation in the community; or (b) greater boldness and more forceful direction of the community?

The remaining three activities are due on **June 4th at 11:59pm**.

4. Pros and Cons. Do one of the following: (a) weigh the pros and cons of Christian leaders being “family men” and/or “family women”; or (b) weigh the pros and cons of Christian leaders receiving direct financial remuneration. Your points need not be full sentences; you can list bullet points under “Pros” and “Cons” headings.
5. Changing Times. Choose some belief or practice with respect to which Christian leaders are often expected to offer some judgement—and with respect to which the Christian community is currently experiencing some measure of uncertainty or debate. Explain what you think good leadership means amidst this uncertainty or debate. Pay particular attention to the active role that leaders play in negotiating what faithfulness to scripture/tradition looks like.
6. Performance Review. Imagine that you are a first-century Christian Jew newly arrived in Corinth around the time that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, and that you have just become acquainted with the Christian community there—i.e. the one founded by the Apostle Paul. Write a “performance review” back to “denominational headquarters” in Jerusalem, assessing Paul's leadership of the Corinthian church by drawing upon the evidence of 1 & 2 Corinthians. As you write your review, seek to imitate either the best or the worst assessment tendencies that you have observed (i.e. model either how a review should be done or how it should not be done).

FINAL ASSIGNMENT (35%)

In the final written assignment for the course, you will produce between 3,000 and 4,000 words that explore a leadership topic in relation to the New Testament. The topic can be one that has already been explored in the course, or something else of your own choosing. Your submission can take the form of an essay, but it can also be some other genre of your own choosing. Possible formats include (but are not limited to):

- an argumentative essay supporting a specific position;
- a series of blog posts;
- a set of devotions for leaders;
- a proposal to a church board regarding changes to leadership practices;
- a sermon;
- a self-reflection essay assessing your own leadership;

- a brilliant idea that you come up with all on your own.

In keeping with the course objectives, the grading of your submission will assess how well you accomplish the following three things, with half of your grade determined by the task associated with your specialization and the other half divided between the remaining two tasks (a detailed rubric on A2L will explain in detail what exactly is expected):

1. How effectively do you employ biblical scholarship in order to develop responsible interpretations of the NT? (BS)
2. How thoughtful and insightful are your NT-inspired observations regarding contemporary leadership, and how aware are you of the various influences that shape someone's understanding of leadership? (CW/CC)
3. How effectively do you draw upon the New Testament so as to facilitate real change in a specific contemporary context of leadership? (PS)

I strongly suggest emailing me in advance in order to confirm the suitability of your specific project. In your email, state your proposed topic, tell me the format in which you will produce 3,000–4,000 words, and explain how the project will contribute to your specialization (i.e. BS, CC, CW, or PS).

The final written assignment must be uploaded to Avenue to Learn either as a Word document (.doc, .docx) or in Rich Text Format (.rtf) by **June 23rd at 11:59pm**.

GRADING SUMMARY

Discussions	10%
Reading	10%
Responses	45%
<u>Final Assignment</u>	<u>35%</u>
Total	100%

TEXTBOOKS

All students are required to possess an English translation of the Bible. All other course readings will be distributed electronically, in advance, via Avenue to Learn (A2L).

SEMINAR SCHEDULE

Dates	Lectures	Discussion Questions	Reading	Activities
May 5	Invited to Lead: Leadership as Response	"Are reluctant leaders better leaders?"	1: tbd	1: Self-Reflection
May 7	Expected to Lead: Cultural Assumptions about Leadership	"Is a well-educated man the most qualified leader?"	2: tbd	2: Leadership Bios
May 12	Incarnation & Cruciformity: Imitating the Way of Jesus	"Can leaders participate authentically in the communities they lead?"	3: tbd	3: Self-Critique

May 14	Paying the Price: Leadership Takes Its Toll	"Should churches demand celibacy? Should they pay salaries?"	4: tbd	4: Pros and Cons
May 21	Readings 1–3 and Activities 1–3 Due			
May 26	Follow the Spirit's Lead: Navigating Change and Conflict	"How does a good leader know when following the Spirit requires new ways of observing tradition?"	5: tbd	5: Changing Times
May 28	Success and Failure: How to Deal with (Being a) Disappointment	"Is popularity a good indicator of a leader's effectiveness? Does unpopularity indicate faithfulness?"	6: tbd	6: Performance Review
June 4	Readings 4–6 and Activities 4–6 Due			
June 23	Final Assignment Due			

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STATEMENT ON 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 at:

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

In this course, we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) for plagiarism detection and the student's continuation in the course represents his or her consent to the use of this service. If a student has objections to the use of this service, alternate arrangements for assignment submission must be made with the professor in advance of the assignment deadlines.

A useful guide to avoiding plagiarism is the Harvard Guide to Using Sources:

<http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do>

STYLE

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the latest edition of the McMaster Divinity College *Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses*, which is available on the MDC website.

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

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).

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.