

**TH 3XA3 - Missional Theology (CC/CT/CW/PS)
MDiv & MTS (3-Level)**

**McMaster Divinity College
Spring 2020, April 20–June 17
Online**

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I. Description:

What does it mean to be a missional church in an increasingly post-Christian, secular, and religiously plural culture? This course explores 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., Newbiggin, Bosch, Guder, Frost, Hirsch, Fitch).

II. Course Objectives:

A. Knowing:

1. Learn and expand key areas of your understanding of missional theology.
2. Become familiar with the contributions of key figures in missional theology and their relevance for your vocational venue and aspirations.
3. Begin to develop expertise in an area of missional theology.

B. Being:

1. Develop skills in critical and constructive 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 and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

C. Doing:

1. Develop the ability to present informative presentations and facilitate student discussions through online and digital avenues.
2. Conduct research and present that research on a substantial topic in missional theology that is significant for your current vocational venue and/or aspiration.

3. Hone critical reading skills in primary literature.
4. Develop the ability to discuss and present your research in missional theology in ways accessible to a popular/lay audience.

III. Course Text(s):

* Required reading includes *two* books.

* Submit statement of reading completed by June 17.

A. Book One:

Darrell L. Guder, *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015). If you have read this book, you can select an alternative.

B. Book Two:

* Select *one book* from this list or propose an alternative for your second required reading textbook.

* This book will be the basis for the Textbook Blog (see VI.A. below).

- 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).
- Roger Helland and Leonard Hjalmarson, *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 Research Resources:

- Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings are shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

- *International Journal of Practical Theology*
- *Journal of Pastoral Theology*
- *Journal of Practical Theology*
- *Journal of Missional Practice* ([link](#)).
- *Millennial Magazine* ([link](#)).
- *Verge Network* ([link](#)).

IV. Overview of Course Assignments:

Assignments	Percent	Due
A. Textbook Blog (Padlet)	10%	
1. Blog post		May 6
2. Blog interaction		May 9
B. Missional Person/Movement Blog (Padlet)	15%	
1. Blog post		May 13
2. Blog interaction		May 16
C. Missional Context Paper (A2L assignment folder)	20%	May 22
D. Paper Presentation (video Padlet post)	10%	June 10
E. Paper Collaboration (post on Padlet)	10%	June 13
F. Final Paper/Project (A2L assignment folder)	35%	June 17
	Total: 100%	

V. Course Outline (*tentative*):

Week	Date	Topic	Due Dates
1	Apr 20	Introduction to the Course (A2L Video) Personal Introductions (Zoom, TBD) History of Missional Theology and Church	
2	Apr 27	Missional Theology: Primary Concepts	

3	May 4	A Missional Theology of Culture Zoom discussion of Missional Context Paper (TBD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook blog due May 6 • Blog interaction due May 9 																
4	May 11	Cultural Context & Missional Theology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missional person/movement blog due May 13 • Blog interaction due May 16 																
5	May 18	The Challenge of Missional Theology & Evangelical Identity Zoom workshop discussion of project/paper topics & approaches (TBD)																	
6	May 25	One-on-one Discussion with Studebaker on Project/Paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missional context paper due May 22 																
7	Jun 1	Missional Theology and the Future of the Church																	
8	June 8	Integrative Paper Presentation & Collaboration: <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Paper Presentations</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>1.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>2.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>3.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>4.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>5.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>6.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>7.</td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Paper Presentations		1.		2.		3.		4.		5.		6.		7.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper presentations due June 10 • Collaborations due June 13
Paper Presentations																			
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9	June 15	Conclusion and Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects/papers due June 17 																

VI. Assignment Descriptions:

- Please submit all assignments in their Avenue to Learn folders or post on Padlet.
- Papers and assignments may be submitted early for feedback from the professor and resubmitted on the due date for grading.

A. Student Selected Textbook and Blog:

1. Purpose: This assignment develops analytical, synthetic, and critical skills.
2. Description: Select a book on missional theology that you have not previously read. 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 (see III.B for ideas). Prepare a blog of 500 words on your book.
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. 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.
 - c. Correlate: Based on your observations of contemporary church life, ministry, and Christian life, identify correlations with the themes discussed in the book.
4. Collaborate:

The collaborative nature of this assignment has two parts:

- a. Post your blog on the Padlet Blog—see the course outline on A2L.
 - Padlet is an online bulletin board and interaction forum (I will illustrate its use in the course introduction). It gives you the opportunity to share your work and to interact with your class colleagues.
- b. Post an interaction with the blogs posted by your class colleagues (the interactions can be written, audio, or video responses posted on the Blog Padlet). I will demonstrate these functions in the course introduction.

B. Missional Person/Movement Blog:

1. *Research:*

- Select a figure and/or movement (e.g., New Monasticism and Shane Claiborne).
 - Research the figure/movement using articles, books, informative web resources (5 to 7 sources). Note: given restricted library access, books may be difficult to access.
2. *Write* an opinion piece (blog) on the figure/movement. The audience for the blog is not academic. It should effectively deliver a description, analysis, and contribution of the figure/movement to a popular audience. Length: 500 words. Be concise, clear, and interesting.
 3. *Post* your blog to the course Missional Person/Movement Padlet.
 4. *Interact*: Comment on at least one of the blogs posted by your class colleagues. You can contribute with the text, audio, or audio-video function within Padlet.

C. Missional Context Paper

1. **Purpose:**
This assignment gives you the opportunity to investigate a contextual area of contemporary culture. Understanding and adapting to cultural context is central to missional church/theology. We will have a Zoom discussion the third week of the course so that you can share your topics and discuss them with each other.
2. **Description:**
This paper describes and analyzes an area of contemporary culture and suggests ways that it presents opportunities and/or challenges to contemporary Christian thought, life, and/or ministry. I encourage you to address an issue that relates to your current or anticipated ministry/vocational context.
3. **Guidelines for paper:**
 - a. Please consult to 5 to 7 sources—academic sources such as books and journal articles, professional magazines, media, statistical resources, and informative web resources. Note: given restricted library access, books may be difficult to access.
 - 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 two sections that detail . . .
 - 1) Area of contemporary cultural analysis,
 - 2) Conversation on opportunities and/or challenges to contemporary Christian thought, life, and ministry presented by the cultural topic.

- c. Length: 5 to 7 pages. Double spaced, Times New Roman Font, formatted according to MDC Style Guide.

- 4. Zoom discussion:
During the Zoom discussion, you will present a *summary* of your Missional Context Paper that introduces the two parts of the paper (area of contemporary culture analyzed and the conversation between opportunities/challenges).

The sharing and discussion are informal. You are not expected to have the final paper written. The Zoom discussion gives you the opportunity for connecting with and brainstorming your ideas with your class colleagues.

Length of presentation is approx. 10 minutes, which includes discussion time.

D. Paper Presentation (video Padlet post)

- 1. Purpose:
 - Presenting your paper gives you the opportunity to share your major paper/project with your class colleagues.
 - The final paper/project is not due until June 17, so your presentation may not reflect the completed paper/project. Indeed, the gap between the presentation and final due date provides you the opportunity to incorporate feedback from your class colleagues (see below for Paper/Project Collaboration).
- 2. Guidelines:
 - a. Create a video presentation that shares your paper/project's . . .
 - Topic
 - Why you chose your topic
 - Content development
 - Key resources
 - b. Video length: 10 to 15 minutes.
 - c. Post on Paper Presentation Padlet

E. Paper/Project Collaboration

- 1. Purpose:
Provides experience in responding to and contributing to your class colleagues' projects. It also provides the opportunity to develop professional skills in online presentations.

2. Description:
Each student prepares a critical evaluation of the integrative papers presented by their class colleagues. Evaluations can be written, audio, or audio-visual.

- a. The critique:
- 1) Remember to be charitable.
 - 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 address a significant topic and develop it?
- For projects, does it seem like an effective approach to a particular issue, topic, and does it seem effective given its target audience?

- b. Post your critical evaluation for each student in the Paper/Project Collaboration Padlet.

F. Constructive Paper/Project:

This assignment constitutes the “major paper” for the course. The purpose of the paper/project is vocational development. It should advance your vocational trajectory. Selecting whether to prepare a project or a paper is an important step in the process.

- Paper?
If you anticipate further graduate work or writing a thesis as part of your MTS or MDiv, then an academic research-thesis paper is an excellent option. A research-thesis paper provides skill development in conducting the concentrated study of a particular research topic necessary for academic research.
- Project?
If your vocational track is vocational ministry or an alternative professional field, then a project may be an effective option. Completing a project provides skill development in contextualizing and applying the fruit of theological research and reflection.

If you have an idea for a paper or a creative project that does not neatly fit into the parameters of the specialization descriptions, please discuss your idea with me. I am open to papers/projects that cohere with the essence of the course and that are suited to your vocational/research field and interests.

◆ Please consult the assignment focus for your degree specialization ◆

Church and Culture Specialization

Investigating the interface between theology and culture is the purpose of this assignment. The paper/project provides the opportunity to explore the relationship between missional theology/movements and culture. Options are open. Examples: You can look at an historical example of the way cultural context shapes contemporary beliefs and practices of the church (a Newbigin redux). You can explore how one or more categories of theology can provide a lens for discerning missional engagement with culture, contemporary politics, and social issues.

Christian Thought and History Specialization

Exploring an issue in or related to missional theology and/or history is the purpose of this specialization. It can take a biblical, historical, or contemporary focus. For example, what is the history of missional theology and of the missional church movement? Why did it emerge, who were and are the key thought leaders of the movement? How does the missional church movement differ in theology and practice from other forms of the church?

Christian Worldview

This specialization relates to the ways Christians understand the world with an awareness of Christianity's intellectual environment—historical, contemporary, and global. Select an area of missional theology, a figure, and/or movement and analyze its worldview assumptions. The paper/project should be constructive and not only descriptive. The heart of this assignment is your creative proposal on the contribution this person, figure, event offers to a Christian worldview. For example, how did Newbigin's (or other missional figures) worldview differ from other popular views in the church? How did this different worldview enable him to diagnose and proscribe new pathways of Christian ministry and relationship to culture? Or, what are the biblical foundations for a missional theology of church practice?

Pastoral Studies Specialization

Applying and articulating the significance of missional theology for a ministry setting is the purpose of this specialization. For example, prepare a sermon or message appropriate for a given ministry audience or develop a seminar for leadership training in your ministry setting. You can draw on biblical, historical, and/or systematic theology resources. The content of the project draws from theological resources but expresses the yield of that theology in language and terms that are appropriate for a ministry audience. Alternatively, if you have an idea for contextualizing the resources of missional theology for ministry other than in the examples listed above, please talk with me so we can design a project that enables you to maximize your work in the class for your ministry context and meets the goals of the specialization in Pastoral Studies.

1. Guidelines for Paper:
 - a. Content and argument:
 - Detail a clear thesis (the view that your paper supports).
 - Describe your topic under consideration.

- Write an essay that coherently demonstrates your view.
 - Detail major alternatives and/or criticisms of the position and interact with them vis-à-vis your view (where appropriate and in so far as space allows).
- b. Presentation:
- Write a stylistically clean and academic paper—e.g., avoid colloquialisms (academic is different than conversational voice), passive voice (use active).
 - Research-thesis papers must have a thesis statement (stated in the introduction). They should include an introduction, content sections, and a conclusion.
 - Use and document a *minimum* of ten scholarly resources (books, journal articles, book essays). Internet resources can be utilized, if they are scholarly and/or professional sources. Given restrictions on library resources, accessing books may be difficult, so higher reliance on journal articles, etc. may be required.
 - Accurately document sources according to MDC Style Guide.
 - Paper length: 10–12 pages.
 - Provide a bibliography (list only the books cited in the footnotes of the paper).
2. Guidelines for Projects/Sermons:
- a. Annotated bibliography of research sources: an annotation is a paragraph or two that describes the content of the book, essay, or article and how it relates to your project.
 - b. Sermon: submit a manuscript of your sermon/message that includes footnotes, which detail where and how you applied and adapted your theological research.
 - c. Double-spaced pages, 12 point Times New Roman font.
 - d. Use and document at least 10 scholarly resources (e.g., books, journal articles, and essays). Internet resources can be utilized, if they are scholarly and/or professional sources.

- e. Document sources with footnotes and follow MDC Style Guide.

VII. Policies:

- A. Textbook Purchase: Note: alternative options for book purchases will likely be necessary due to disruptions caused by COVID-19.
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 of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.
- 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 ([link](#)). Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.
- E. 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.

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, the grade will be reduced to 85).
- Please note, late papers may not be graded and returned at the same time as the other papers; they will not receive comments from the professor on the grade rubric.
- 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.

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