

Exile: A Motif for Post-Christendom Ministry
MS 3XD3
Spring Semester 2021
(CC/CW/PS)

Instructor: Dr. Lee Beach
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Class Begins: May 4, 2021 until June 6, 2021
Time: Tuesday, 1:00 - 3:00 pm
Online

Class Begins Online May 4th with a webex gathering at 1:00 pm ET (details will be sent out well in advance). The class will gather online two other times; Tuesday, May 18 at 1:00 ET and Tuesday June 1 at 1:00 ET. All class gatherings will be for aprox. 90 minutes each.

Course Description: The Canadian church today exists in the midst of a cultural revolution. Its once firm place as a shaper of culture is gone. Having held a central place of influence for over one hundred years, today the Church increasingly finds itself on the margins of society. How did we get here and how do we function in this new reality? Some are suggesting that the motif of exile may be the most appropriate way for the church in Canada to understand itself in this postmodern, post-Christian era. This course will explore the changing place of the church in Canadian society, the experience of exile, specifically as it pertained to the nation of Israel and the early church, and how the contemporary church can best live as an exilic people while still remaining faithful to its calling to be God's missional people.

Course Objectives:

Knowing:

1. To help students understand basic realities of contemporary Canadian culture and the changing place of the church in it.
2. To understand key theological responses to exile in Old Testament, Second Temple and New Testament Literature.
3. To become conversant with exile as a concept and as a potential motif for helping the Canadian Church understand itself in the 21st century.

Being:

4. To encourage reflection and integration in terms of personal, congregational, and political aspects of Christian identity in Canada today.

5. To help students develop their own ability to integrate the motif of exile into their own spirituality and leadership in their congregations.

Doing:

6. To help students develop their ability to draw from biblical theology to do practical theology and vice-versa.
7. Equip students with the ability to use the Biblical resources that emerge from an exilic context in a way that informs their own lives and ministries.
8. To give students resources for applying contextually relevant ministry strategies in their current and future ministry contexts.

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 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 3% for each day (including weekends) late. Assignments should be submitted as an email attachment electronically in a word or pdf document.

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 formal class time. If you would like to meet together via zoom or webex please feel free to make an appointment with me for a time that works for both of us.

Required Texts:

- *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture*. Michael Frost (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2006).

- *The Templeless Age: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the "Exile."* Jill Middlemas (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007).

- *Living in Exile: Living in Hope After Christendom*. Lee Beach (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2015)

Course Requirements

i. **Class Participation**

This course will include an "Avenue to Learn" site that will provide information about each class, lecture material, reading assignments, discussion boards and some pre-class material for many of the classes. Students are expected to engage with the online material, the online discussions and come prepared to class gatherings for discussions and interaction.

Class participation is worth 20% of the final course grade.

ii. **Paper One: A Biblical Theology of Exile**

Prepare a paper on the Topic *A Biblical Theology of Exile*. This paper should introduce some of the key theological themes and biblical texts that emerge in the literature of the Old and New Testaments around the theme of exile. The paper should outline key exilic themes in the Old Testament as well as exilic themes in the New Testament. The paper ultimately should offer an overview of themes that reflect a biblical theology of exile. While it is not expected that the paper will be exhaustive in its exploration of exile, it should reflect a thoughtful engagement with the biblical history and theology of exile as historical and theological happening. Also, brief discussion of some Second Temple themes would also be valuable. The Paper should draw from course texts as well as at least eight other relevant sources.

This paper should be approximately 10-12 pages, double spaced in length and is due May 24, 2021. It is worth 40% of the final course grade.

iii. Paper Two: Exile as a Motif for Ministry

Prepare a paper on the Topic “*A Biblical Model for the Church in Exile.*” This paper should explore a key biblical book (or books) and present some of the key themes that the book sets forth as it addresses its audience as a people in exile. For example you may want to work with the Major Prophets, or the book of Esther, 1 Peter, etc. Choose one (or maybe two) biblical books and identify some of its primary ideas about life in exile. From here the paper should make connections between the ancient text and the contemporary Canadian setting. How can the biblical book be applied in a contemporary ministry setting? The paper does not have to be exhaustive in its reflection on how the book applies to the church today, but it should demonstrate some thorough consideration of how one or two points can be applied practically in ministry today. The paper should draw from course texts at least eight other relevant sources.

This project should be approximately 10-12 pages, double spaced in length and is due June 11, 2021. It is worth 40% of the final course grade.

Course Outline and Expectations

Course Introduction: WebEx class meeting (online), Tuesday May 4th 1:00 pm ET (approx. 90 minutes) *details will be provided.

Course overview, introductions, time for student questions regarding the course.

- Introductory presentation: Exile: A Motif for Contemporary Ministry
- 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), and to ask any questions you may have about the course.

Unit One: The Church in Canadian Culture

Week of May 4- 9. We will consider the evolution of Canadian culture from a place where the church functioned near the center of culture to this current time where it finds itself increasingly on the margins of culture. We will consider historic and current cultural trends that shaped and are shaping the direction of Canadian culture.

Presentations: On-line lectures and other learning resources.

- Student Responsibilities: Please review the material posted this week for this unit. Also, begin engaging with the course text *The Church in Exile: Living in Hope After Christendom*. Especially the foreword, the introduction and chapter one.
- During the week participate in the on-line discussion forum. Please post your response to the discussion prompts provided by the instructor by Thursday May 6th and respond to at least two posts by your classmates no later than Sunday May 9th. Initial posts should be 150-200 words and responses should be 100-150 words.

Unit Two: Exile in the Old Testament, Intertestamental literature and the New Testament

- The Weeks of May 10 – May 23: A number of brief online lectures on the topic of exile in the Bible (and intertestamental) literature.
- Class gathering (online) May 18, 1:00 pm ET.
- Student Responsibilities: Engage with the resources provided and review the online lectures the week of May 10-16. Continue to read the text *The Church in Exile: Living in Hope After Christendom*. Especially chapters 2 – 7. Read the course text, *The Templeless Age*.
- Post your response to the discussion question provided by the instructor on our online forum by Thursday May 13th. Respond to at least two posts by your classmates by Sunday May 16th. Initial posts should be 150-200 words and responses should be 100-150 words. Join the class online on May 18 for discussion and some new material.
- Work on your first paper “A Biblical Theology of Exile” (due May 24th).

Unit Three: Leading the Church in Exile

The weeks of May 24 – June 6. Online Presentations and Discussion Forums.

Class Gathering (online) June 1, 1:00 pm ET.

- Student Responsibilities: Engage with the resources provided and review the online lectures the week of May 10-16. Continue to read the text *The Church in Exile: Living in Hope After Christendom*. Especially chapters 8 - Conclusion. Read the course text, *Exiles*.
- Hand in your first paper May 24.
- Post your response to the discussion question provided by the instructor on our online forum by Thursday May 27th. Respond to at least two posts by your classmates by Sunday May 30th. Then again (to a new forum question) on Thursday June 3rd, with responses by Sunday June 6th. Initial posts should be 150-200 words and responses should be 100-150 words.
- Join the class online on June 1 for discussion and some new material.
- Work on your final paper Exile as a Motif for Ministry (Due June 11)

Additional notes:

A. Textbook Purchase

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore you may contact READ On Bookstore, at 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: <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>

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.

