

## **MISSION IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE** **MS 5XC5\MS 6XC6**

**Instructor:** Dr. Lee Beach

**Instructor's Contact Information:** Email: [beachl@mcmaster.ca](mailto:beachl@mcmaster.ca)

**Course Times:** Fall semester 2021; Online. Class will meet together (online) Tuesdays at 1:00 – 2:50 on the following dates, Sept. 14, Oct. 5, Nov. 2, 30.

Doctoral Students will also meet (online) Sept. 28, Oct. 12, 19.

**Course Description:** This course provides an introduction to the principles and practice of the church and its mission in contemporary Western culture. The course will seek to help students develop a practical theology of mission by considering its biblical roots, historical practice, the nature of the church, the challenge of contextualization in contemporary culture, and emerging issues and approaches to mission in the current Western cultural milieu. Students will be encouraged to formulate creative approaches to mission and evangelism in their own social contexts as well as begin thinking about mission in other cultural contexts.

### **Course Objectives:**

#### **Knowing:**

1. This course will help students understand foundational scriptural and theological principles for the mission of the Church in contemporary culture.
2. This course will help students to understand key features of contemporary Western culture (Canada in particular) as they relate to issues of spiritual need, and the proclamation of the Christian message.
3. This course will help students to become conversant with strategies for equipping the church for mission and engaging the culture in missional enterprise.

#### **Being:**

1. To encourage reflection and integration in terms of personal, congregational, and social aspects of Christian identity.
2. To help students develop confidence in their own ability to lead a congregation in missional engagement in their community and world.

**Doing:**

1. To give students the opportunity to develop their own philosophy of mission and evangelism for local church ministry and consider strategies for implementation.
2. To equip students with relevant strategies for personal and congregational mission.

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:**

- *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*. Michael W. Goheen, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011).

- *Women in the Mission of the Church: Their Opportunities and Obstacles Throughout Christian History*. Leanne M. Dzubinski and Anneke H. Stasson, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021).

- *Faithful Presence: Seven Disciplines that Shape the Church for Mission*. David Fitch (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2016).

- *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. David J. Bosch, (New York: Orbis, 1991).

## Course Requirements

### i. Paper: A Biblical Theology of Mission

This paper should offer an introductory biblical foundation for the mission of the church. The paper should offer a biblical basis for mission and develop a theological foundation for the ongoing mission of the church. The paper should interact with key biblical texts in the Old and New Testament that speak to the missional nature of Israel and the church, it should also offer theological reflection on how those texts along with any other relevant historical examples can be formed into a coherent theology of mission. A short, concluding section should offer some brief reflection on the implications of this theology on the work of the church in contemporary culture. The paper should demonstrate comprehension of course materials, required texts (particularly *A Light to the Nations* and *Women in the Mission of the Church*) as well as at least eight other pertinent sources on the issue of mission.

**This paper should be 4000 words (double spaced) in length. It will constitute 25% of the course grade. It is due Oct. 5, 2021.**

### ii. Paper and Presentation: Challenges Facing the Church in Mission

This assignment is in two parts. The paper should offer three key challenges that you believe the church in North America is facing today as it seeks to engage the context missionally. Each challenge should be briefly presented and an explanation as to why you see it as a key challenge should be provided. The presentation and exploration of each challenge does not have to be exhaustive, but it should be descriptive enough to make it clear why it stands as a missional challenge for the church. The challenges should not be so local that they only apply to your church context, but it is okay to write from your own social and/or cultural vantage point. This means that you may identify a challenge (or two) that are unique to your context but may not apply to all churches throughout North America (i.e. challenges unique to immigrant churches or churches in a particular social location). However, they should be challenges that other congregations in a similar situation would share, not just something that is unique to your church or ministry context. The paper is designed to be descriptive, not

prescriptive, so there is no need to provide solutions to these challenges in this paper. The paper should reflect that research has been done on each challenge identified by citing at least three appropriate sources for each challenge (some sources can be duplicated for different challenges if appropriate).

**This paper should be 6-8 pages in length and will constitute 20% of the final course grade. It is due Oct. 19, 2021.**

The second part of this assignment is to prepare a short presentation based on your paper to present to a small group of your classmates. The presentation should be conceived in a TED talk style where you succinctly offer your three challenges and describe why they are things that the church must pay attention to. The talk should conclude with one idea as to how the church must position itself (i.e. how it must think and/or behave) in order for it to face these challenges effectively.

The presentation will be offered to the doctoral group in this course and the course instructor. Time for group interaction on the content of your presentation will take place after your presentation.

The presentations will be scheduled for regular class time (1:00-2:50) on Oct. 19<sup>th</sup>.

**The presentation should be 10-12 minutes in length and will constitute 10% of the final course grade. It will be due Oct. 19 and presentations will take place at the doctoral student gathering scheduled for that day.**

**iii. Research, Reflection and Specialization Paper: How can we do mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century West?**

This paper should offer an introductory analysis of contemporary approaches to mission (and evangelism) in church ministry. The paper should critically engage with those approaches and how they either do, or do not, equip the church to engage effectively with the contemporary context. From there the paper should engage with your dissertation topic and explore how your topic will address or connect with the churches mission in contemporary culture. The paper should reflect an appropriate level of research for a doctoral level research paper (i.e. a minimum of 15 sources). Prior to finalizing the topic for your paper the student should consult with the instructor to assure that the direction of the paper is in keeping with both the nature of the course as well as the direction of your dissertation research.

Each paper will be posted on our A2L site for peer review and discussion. A schedule for due dates and participation requirements will be finalized within the first two weeks of the course.

**This paper should be 6000 words (double spaced) in length. It will constitute 35% of the final course grade. Due dates will be finalized within the first two weeks of the beginning of the course. They will most likely (depending on the size of the doctoral cohort) range between Nov. 23 – Dec.7.**

#### **iv. Participation**

As an online course an ongoing commitment to participation in the online gatherings and the online discussion forums is absolutely essential to the ethos and overall quality of the course. Thus, students will be graded on their participation based on the quality and frequency of their participation. For each online discussion (not when we gather but when we are using discussion boards) students are expected to offer one response to the discussion prompt provided by the instructor and at least two responses to classmates posts. Further directions will be given for each discussion as they are posted. Grades will be determined using the rubric at the end of the syllabus (see appendix one).

**Class participation will constitute 10% of the course grade.**

### **Course Outline and Expectations**

**Course Introduction: Zoom class meeting (online), Tuesday Sept. 14<sup>th</sup>, 1:00-2:50 pm ET**

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

Introduction to a biblical theology of mission.

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: A Biblical Theology of Mission**

Weeks of September 13, 20 & 27. We will consider the concept of the theology of mission as it is presented in the Old and New Testaments, with reflection on other theological ideas that help form a Christian theology of mission.

Doctoral students will meet Sept. 28 to discuss sections of the book *Transforming Mission*. The book will be broken into sections and divided up between students. Each student will be expected to bring a short 5-7 minute summary of their section to the group with at least two discussion questions to guide the groups interaction. A schedule for these presentations and discussion will be provided on the first day of class.

Presentations: Class gathering on Sept. 14. The week of Sept. 20 & 28 on-line lectures and other learning resources will be provided.

Student Responsibilities: Please attend our first class gathering on Sept. 14 and also review the material posted each week for this unit. During the week of Sept. 20 engage with the online resources that are posted on the class A2L site and join in the online discussion. Post your response to the question provided by the instructor by Friday Sept 24. This week you do not have to respond to other posts (but you are welcome to do so if you want to). Also, over these three weeks read the course text *A Light to the Nations*. Join the doctoral group gathering Sept. 28.

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## **Unit Two: The History of Christian Mission**

The Weeks of Oct. 4 & 11. We will explore the history of Christian mission and how the church has engaged in mission throughout the different eras of history.

Presentations: Oct. 5 class gathering. Week of Oct. 11 online lectures and other learning resources.

Doctoral students will meet Oct. 12 to discuss sections of the book *Transforming Mission*, The book will be broken into sections and divided up between students. Each student will be expected to bring a short 5-7 minute summary of their section to the group with at least two discussion questions to guide the groups interaction. A schedule for these presentations and discussion will be provided on the first day of class.

Student Responsibilities: Join the class gathering Oct. 5. The week of Oct. 11 engage with the online lectures and other resources. Read the book *Women in the Mission of the Church*. Participate in the online class discussion during the week of Oct. 11<sup>th</sup> based on the *Women in Mission* book. Post your response to the question provided by the instructor by Thursday Oct. 14 and respond to at least two posts from your group members by Sunday Oct. 17 (more instructions will be provided). Hand in your *Biblical Theology of Mission* paper on Oct. 5. Join the doctoral group meeting Oct. 12.

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## **Unit Three: Critical Issues in Mission Today**

- The weeks of Oct. 18, Nov.1, 8, 15 (there will be no course content the week of Oct. 25) We will explore a number of issues that confront the North American church today in terms of challenges and opportunities for missional engagement including; the rise of the “nones,” racial and indigenous issues, “spiritual but not religious,” and immigration and immigrant churches (particularly the issue of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> gen. retention and evangelism).

- Presentations: online lectures and other resources the weeks of Oct. 18, Nov. 9 & 23. Class gathering Nov. 2.

Doctoral students will meet Oct. 19 (1:00-2:50 ET) to present their “3 challenges” ideas to the group and engage in discussion together around the ideas presented.

-Student Responsibilities: Engage with the lectures and resources provided online. Work on and hand in your *Challenges Facing the Church* paper on Oct. 19. Prepare your group presentation and join our doctoral group on Oct. 19.

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**Unit Four: Equipping the Church for Mission**

The weeks of Nov. 23 and Nov. 30 we will consider issues of equipping the church for mission and developing strategies for engagement.

Presentations: online lectures the week of Nov. 23 and class gathering Nov. 30.

Student Responsibilities: Engage with the online material the week of Nov. 22 and join the class gathering on Nov. 30. Work on and hand in your *Research, Reflection and Specialization* paper according to the schedule that will be prepared within the first two weeks of class. Join the online discussion of your fellow doctoral students papers each week.

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**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](mailto: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.

## **Appendix One: Rubric for Grading Participation**

### 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 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.

## Introductory Bibliography

Adeney, Francis S. *Graceful Evangelism: Christian Witness in a Complex World*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010.

Barrett, Lois Y. et. al. *Treasures in Jars of Clay: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.

Beach, Lee. *The Church in Exile: Living in Hope after Christendom*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2015.

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

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Guder, Darrell, (editor) *Missional Church*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

Hastings, Ross. *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-Evangelizing the West*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2012.

Heath, Elaine. *The Mystic Way of Evangelism*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008.

Hunsberger, George and Van Gelder, Graig (ed.'s), *The Church Between Gospel and Culture; The Emerging Mission in North America*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

Muck, Terry and Adeney Francis. *Christians Encountering World Religions: The Practice of Mission in the 21st Century*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009.

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*Witness*, Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007.

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Wright, Christopher J. H. *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*,  
Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2006