

**MS P31010 Contemporary Church Leadership
Syllabus Winter 2025**

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Wednesday: 4:00-5:50 p.m.
Specializations: CC/PS

Course Description:

To be a Christian leader in the climate of contemporary church life calls for creative, focused and inventive strategy. This course is designed to equip pastors and leaders of Christian churches and non-profits to build their acumen in effective approaches to forward-thinking leadership. The course will guide participants to critically examine the tasks of contextual leadership and will introduce effective constructs for Christian leadership. Forward looking and imaginative leadership calls for collaboration, adaptability, and risk-taking. This course will guide emerging and mature Christian leaders to a sound and creative framework for contemporary church leadership.

About the Professor:

Dr. Zylla is the *Professor of Pastoral Theology* and the *J. Gordon and Margaret Warnock Jones Chair in Church and Ministry* at McMaster Divinity College. Drawing on his experience as the lead pastor of three congregations over seventeen years and his leadership roles in theological education for 22 years, Dr. Zylla offers perspectives on Christian leadership born from practice. Dr. Zylla's research interests include pastoral theology, congregational studies, and Christian spirituality. His current research is related to the development of congregational spiritual formation. He lives in Ancaster, ON with his wife, Melodie.

Course Objectives:

Knowing

1. To gain understanding of key principles and themes of Christian leadership in contemporary culture.
2. To heighten self-comprehension of styles of leadership and their application.
3. To deepen knowledge of conflict resolution and advanced strategic planning.

Being

1. To reflect carefully on one's own capacity for ministry leadership.
2. To deepen the spiritual roots of mature Christian formation for leadership.

Doing

1. To plan a leadership strategy for church or NGO engagement.
2. To determine ways of strengthening one's own leadership skills and capacity

Textbooks:

Gibbs, Eddie. *Leadership Next: Changing Leaders in a Changing Culture*. Downers Grove, IL; Intervarsity Press, 2005.

Irving, Justin A. and Mark L. Strauss. *Leadership in Christian Perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019.

Malphurs, Aubrey. *Advanced Strategic Planning: A 21st Century Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*. 3rd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, (1999, 2005), 2013.

Supplemental Textbooks:

Ledbetter, Bernice M. and Robert J. Banks and David C. Greenhalgh. *Reviewing Leadership: A Christian Evaluation of Current Approaches*. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, (2004), 2016.

Niemandt, Nelus. *Missional Leadership*. Cape Town, South Africa: AOSIS Publishing, 2019.

Part I - Foundations of Church Leadership

January 8	Module 1	A Theology of Christian Leadership
January 15	Module 2	Faith Based Approaches to Leadership [<i>Ledbetter, et.al. Chapter 4</i>]
January 22	Module 3	Leading Change <i>Gibbs, Chapter 2</i>
January 29	Module 4	Activities of Leadership <i>Gibbs, Chapter 7</i>

Part II - Orientation for Church Leaders

February 5	Module 5	Missional Leadership <i>Gibbs, Chapter</i>
February 12	Module 6	Seven Habits of Mature Leaders <i>Gibbs, Chapter 6;</i> <i>Irving/Strauss, Chapter 2</i>
February 19	<i>no class</i>	<i>MDC Reading Week</i>
February 26	Module 7	Discerning Mission and Strategy <i>Malphurs, Chapters 4, 13</i>
March 5	Module 8	Discovering Core Values <i>Malphurs, Chapter 6</i>

Part III - Organizational Leadership

March 12	Module 9	Building a Team <i>Gibbs, Chapter 5; Malphurs, Chapter 10;</i> <i>Irving/Strauss, Chapter 9</i>
March 19	Module 10	Creating Expectation and Vision Casting <i>Malphurs, Chapter 5</i>

March 26	Module 11	Budgets, Funding, and Financial Planning	<i>Malphurs, Chapter 12</i>
April 4	Module 12	Managing Conflict	<i>Gibbs, Chapter 9</i>

Course Requirements:

1. Textbook Review 20 marks

Review Justin A. Irving and Mark L. Strauss' book, *Leadership in Christian Perspective* in 5-7 pages. The review should be self-reflective and integrative. How is your orientation to Christian leadership influenced by the themes in this volume? What strategic changes will you make to your leadership approach and how will you ground this in a biblical/theological perspective? The review should not rehearse the arguments of Irving/Strauss, but rather reflect the emerging vision of your own theology of leadership. The assignment will be evaluated on these criteria:

- Biblical and theological framework for Christian leadership
- Self-assessment of authenticity in leadership
- Relational dimensions of mature Christian leadership
- Ministry application – establishing leadership principles

Due: January 29, 2025 11:59 p.m.

2. Personal Mission Statement 20 marks

The ability to assess one's own approach and capacity for Christian leadership is crucial. In this 8-10 page essay course participants should:

- a. Evaluate their own theological and biblical perspective on leadership.
- b. Highlight strategies for maturing in one's own capacity to initiate creative mission.
- c. Define goals and aims for personal and spiritual development in the next five years.
- d. Critically examine weaknesses and challenges for maturing as a Christian leader.
- e. Assess their capacity and strengths for various types of ministry leadership.
- f. Demonstrate awareness of key issues of spiritual development highlighted in course textbooks.

Due: February 26, 2025 11:59 p.m.

3. Christian Leadership Interview and Reflection 25 marks

Interview ONE of the following leaders that best represents your current or future ministry context:

- 1) a lead pastor/executive director of a smaller church or ministry organization (only administrative staff)
- 2) an "overseeing level" pastor/minister/director of a larger church or ministry organization (with supervision of other ministry staff members), or
- 3) a non-profit leader who oversees other paid employees

Key issues to explore: description and theology of Christian leadership; how do you develop emerging leaders?; what are the spiritual practices that sustain mature leadership? What principles have you discovered to manage conflict in leadership? How do you keep your ministry/organization on track missionally? What are the greatest challenges in leading your church/organization?

Write a 7 page summary of the interview and the lessons learned. How can you apply these lessons to your own development as a Christian leader? What adjustments and strategic changes will you make based on your encounter with this mentor/leader? How is your own perspective on Christian leadership shaped from this interview?

Due: March 19, 2025 11:59 p.m.

4. Strategic Plan

35 marks

The final assignment in this course is to develop a 12-15 page strategic plan for a church or Christian organization that mirrors the aspirational church/organization of the course participants. The strategic plan should include the following elements:

- a. A five-year map of the strategic goals and aims of the church/organization.
- b. An outline of the various leadership development goals for the church/organization including human resources, financial aims and administrative purposes.
- c. A perspective on the kinds of internal resources and changes that the leader her/himself must develop in order to sustain this ministry.
- d. A list of key challenges and obstacles that might be encountered in the implementation of the strategic plan with an outline of responses and plans to address these.
- e. A vision statement with clearly communicated goals and aims.
- f. A biblical/theological framework for the missional aims outlined.
- g. An assessment strategy for the level of achievement of the strategic plan.
- h. Demonstration of integration of readings from the course textbooks.

Due: April 4, 2025 11:59 p.m.

MS P51020 DPT Syllabus Supplement:

DPT students who wish to take this course for five-unit credit must contact the professor to obtain the DPT syllabus supplement. This supplement involves additional reading requirements and assignments appropriate to the doctoral level study of the subject. Contact: zyllap@mcmaster.ca requesting the syllabus supplement.

Late Papers: Late papers will be docked 1% each late day including weekends. (Extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances such as extended illness, etc.)

Spacing: All assignments are to be double-spaced.

Contacting the Instructor: Dr. Phil C. Zylla

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College Style for Submission of Written Work:

All written work—unless informed otherwise by the professor—is to be submitted in accordance with the *McMaster Divinity College Style Guide for Essays and Theses*, available on the McMaster Divinity College website.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one's own (regardless of the means of its production, including AI) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student's dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

A special note about AI: You are expected to do your own thinking and to write your own papers, etc., and not to have AI do this work for you. There may be value in using an AI tool to help you locate and collate resources or to help you “tidy up” your English grammar, usage, and mechanics, especially if English is not your native language. However, using AI to create content for you and then submitting that content as if you created it is considered plagiarism (i.e., submitting work that is not one's own as if it is one's own) and is a violation of the academic honesty policy.

AODA

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

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, for example, the following: NRSVue (2022), TEV/GNB/GNT (1976), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

Bookstore

All required textbooks for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416.620.2934 or 416.668.3434 (mobile); or by email at books@readon.ca. The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

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 until the first day of class.