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IS 501 Christian Formation: Kingdom, Church and World

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Draft Draft Draft

IS 501 Christian Formation: Kingdom, Church and World

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(Office Hours: Tues, 2-3:30pm; Wed, 9:30-11am, Thu, 2-3:30pm
or by appointment)

Teaching Intern: Rob Hughes

Introduction:

A well-known early Church leader Cyprian of Carthage once said, “There is no salvation outside the [catholic] church.” Is this true? Are we meaning the same thing by the term “Church”? Is it the same church that I know or there is something more? What do we mean by the church? What really is the church?

Is not “the Kingdom of God” about another world? Is it really here in the world as Jesus once declared “the Kingdom of God is among you”? What is the Bible’s attitude to this “world”? What does the Kingdom of God (or the Kingdom of Heaven) in the Bible mean? What does it have to do with the world? Is the church the Kingdom of God? If not, how do they relate? Does the church have a role to play in between the Kingdom of God and the world? If so, how should the church relate itself with and engage the world? Questions abound and demands serious thoughts not only to “inform” us, but to “form” us to serve the Kingdom in the world as a part of God’s church.

... WELCOME to the fall 2008 session of Kingdom, Church and World. My name is Lalsangkima Pachuau, Associate Professor of History and Theology of Mission in the E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism. In introducing myself, I must quickly mention that I am Indian, born and brought up in northeastern part of India. My cultural and educational background is a mixed of Asian-Indian and American which I hope will be a source of enrichment in our venture together in this course.

This course is an opportunity to critically examine our presuppositions and commitments regarding the nature of the kingdom of God and its relationship to the church and world. These are three distinct, but intimately related aspects of the reality in which we all live and engage in ministry—whether we be laypersons or clergy—and this class gives us an opportunity to examine and think through them. This class is an **introduction** to various aspects of theology, biblical study, philosophy, anthropology, ecclesiology and mission. The topics that the course can touch upon are vast, and it is designed to give you a taste of the curriculum that lies ahead in theological study.

Course Rationale: It is altogether reasonable to ask why a particular course is required. There is a sense in which this entire syllabus is intended to answer that question, but this course has at least two over-arching intentions. First, an essential skill for all engaged in Christian ministry is the ability to “think theologically.” To think theologically is not

merely to be able to appropriate certain proof texts in order to give “biblical” answers to given questions. Rather, it involves the ability to begin to “get our arms around” the biblical message *as a canonical whole*, to be able to inquire of the biblical narratives in an integrative way, and to be able to develop our answers in a more holistic fashion. Already, we have referenced our ability to properly appropriate the biblical texts, and this brings us to the second over-arching intention: to begin to see the scriptures as organized around certain integrative motifs such as “kingdom.” In this regard, this course integrates theological reflection and biblically informed practice and demonstrates its significance for God’s people.

Course Objectives: Having successfully completed this course, students should be able to

1. Articulate their understanding of the biblical narrative that comes to focus for us best in Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of God;
2. Identify the particular contribution of the Wesleyan tradition to our understanding of this narrative;
3. Draw out major theological, moral, and philosophical implications of this narrative, especially as these are related to the nature and mission of the people of God;
4. Evaluate cultural products (e.g., literature, television, movies, advertisements, print media, music) in light of major theological, moral, and philosophical implications of this narrative;
5. Exercise criticism with respect to one’s own cultural context and discernment with respect to the context of others vis-à-vis major theological, moral, and philosophical implications of this narrative;
6. Articulate the ecclesial and missional implications of this narrative – specifically for one’s own context and generally for our shared global context; and
7. Exhibit a heightened sense of commitment to serving the kingdom of God in mission in the world.

At this point, let me list the books we are going to use in this course. Not that you are expected to, but if you wish, you can start reading some of these books at your leisure. I will make other details including course requirements, schedule and other guidelines available in September. I look forward to meeting all of you.

Required Readings:

Bartholomew, Craig and Michael Goheen. *The Drama of Scripture*. Baker, 2004.

Clapp, Rodney. *A Peculiar People*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1996.

Snyder, Howard. *Kingdom, Church, World*. Wipf & Stock, 2001 (originally published as *Kingdom Manifesto*)

Wesley Reading Packet available at Cokesbury bookstore.

Pick one each from A and B (and the remaining are recommended/optional):

A.

Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*.

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 1995.

Ramachandra, Vinoth. *God's that Fail: Modern Idolatry and Christian Mission*. Downers

Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997.

B.

Smith, James. *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church*. Baker, 2006.

Bauckham, Richard. *Bible and Mission*. Baker, 2005.