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IS 501 X Kingdom, Church, and World

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IS 501X Kingdom, Church, and World

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-10:45 a.m. ET; Other Times by
Arrangement

This syllabus may be amended prior to the beginning of class.

Preliminary Statement:

“The development of this extended learning syllabus and all course materials is intended for distribution to members of the course and others by my permission. It is not intended for general distribution on the internet. Permission to copy, in whole or in part, must be requested from the professor.” Thanks for honoring these instructions.

Welcome to IS 501X

Have you ever wondered about what is the kingdom of God, what does it mean to be the church, and how are we to participate as the church in God's mission to the world? In this course, we will have opportunity to consider a number of questions and issues including:

1. What is the Kingdom of God?
2. What is the Church?
3. How is the Kingdom of God present in the World through the Church?
4. What does it mean to be a part of the Church that is in the World?
5. What does it mean to **be** the Church?
6. What does it mean to **engage in** Churchly activities?

We will be setting out on a journey, where we help each other give attention to these matters and work on developing our understanding of and responses to God in relation to them. May God grant to us the request of Paul's prayer recorded in Colossians 1:9-14:

Colossians 1:9 For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will

in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. 11 May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (NRSV)

Support for the Journey

I will be your guide throughout our journey together. As a guide I will help us to organize for the trip, chart the path we will take, set our pace, draw attention to landmarks, and record our findings. Please do not hesitate to dialog with me about any discoveries, questions, obstacles, etc. that you encounter. Prior to the beginning of the course you may reach me by Email at mark_hatcher@asburyseminary.edu. Once the course begins you may utilize the "to Office" icon to send messages to me that are intended for my eyes only.

In addition, the following people are available to assist you with any concerns you have about technical or administrative issues concerning the ExL program:

For General Information about ExL, contact:

Amy Jo Adams at exl_coach@asburyseminary.edu
Kevin Osborn at exl_director@asburyseminary.edu

For Technical Support with ExL, contact:

Andy Adams at exl_support@asburyseminary.edu

For Library Assistance regarding Book and/or Article Requests, contact:

Hannah Kirsch at hannah_kirsch@asburyseminary.edu

For Interlibrary Loan Information, contact:

Dot James at dorothy_james@asburyseminary.edu

Catalog Course Description

What is the mission of the church? Behind this question is a cluster of related questions, the most important focused on the nature of God's creative and redemptive purpose (as this is expressed in the biblical story), its ongoing expression in the world, and its consummation in the eschaton. Participants in this course will explore how the church might discern, embrace, and participate in God's own mission.

Course Objectives

Having successfully completed this course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate an understanding of the biblical meta-narrative (the overall storyline presented by the Bible) 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 meta-narrative;
3. Draw out major theological, moral, and philosophical implications of this meta-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 meta-narrative;
5. Exercise criticism with respect to one's own cultural context and discernment with respect to the context of others vis-a-vis major theological, moral, and philosophical implications of this meta-narrative;
6. Articulate the ecclesial and missional implications of this meta-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.

Required Texts

Clapp, Rodney. *A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Postchristian Society*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

McLaren, Brian D. *A New Kind of Christian*. Jossey-Bass, 2001.

Snyder, Howard. *Kingdom, Church, and World*. Wipf and Stock, 2001.

Willimon, William. *Shaped by the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990.

Wright, Tom. *The Challenge of Jesus*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999.

Please note: these readings may be supplemented from time-to-time with materials made available via electronic media. Advance notice will be given.

Required Videos

Chuck Gutenson on Meta-narrative

Mary Fisher on Genesis 1-11

Mary Fisher on Creation, Uncreation, Recreation

(note: these videos will be sent to you by the ExL staff)

Collateral Reading

Hart, Trevor. *Faith Thinking*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995.

Newbiggen, Leslie. *The Open Secret*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm.B.Eerdmans, 1995.

Middleton & Walsh. *Truth is Stranger than it Used to Be*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995.

Basic Orientation

1. Beginnings

Our course will begin on Tuesday, September 3, 2002. Sometime during the day, our course icon will appear on your FirstClass desktop.

2. Modules

Each module will be available by the first Monday, 12 noon ET of the period for which it is scheduled. Upon opening each module, you will find detailed instructions for that module. These modules will consistently be found within the Course Center. I will be on-line throughout each week to answer any of your questions, respond to your comments, and participate in discussions.

3. Windows and Icons

While I am sure that each of you are aware of the intended use of each of the items which appear in the IS501X folder, let me summarize the manner in which I intend to use them this semester:

The Course Center will contain a copy of the syllabus as well as all class modules.

The Discussion Center will be used for all public communications. Anytime you have a question or comment about the course, the modules, the assignments, or anything else which would be of interest to your classmates and me, you should post to the Discussion Center. Also, this is where our conversations for each module will take place.

The Teams folder will be used for team discussions, collaboration and accountability to each other.

The To Office icon is for private correspondence between you and me. This is where you will submit individual assignments and send private correspondence to me.

The Archives Center will be used for storing conversations that have already taken place during the course of the semester. This keeps the Discussion Center from becoming too unmanageable.

The Chat Center is intended primarily for real-time interaction among students. You can get together with other members to study, ask questions, or to explore topics. None of the conversations carried on in this location is ever saved.

The Resource Center provides access to a number of specific tools available to all ExL students. These include access to the B.L. Fisher Library, the Services in Estes Chapel, ExL Updates, Guidelines for Success, Helpful Hints, Interesting Links, a Powerpoint Viewer, and a Real Audio player. I encourage you to take advantage of all these resources, and particularly to utilize the chapel access in order to connect with the seminary's on-campus opportunities for spiritual growth.

4. Endings

Our course will officially end (communication will come to a close) on December 13, 2002 You will receive an exit correspondence from me on that day. You will not be able to submit anything to me after 12 midnight (PT) on December 13.

Course Requirements

1. Students will be assigned to a Team consisting of five students and the professor. The Team will be the primary venue for discussion and mutual accountability. Students will submit to their Team folder **Interaction Papers** that

will initiate discussions among their team members over required reading. The interaction papers will have three parts:

a. In part one students will write a few sentences that identify the subject of a particular reading and what is the **writer's thesis** or concern in relation to that subject.

b. In part two students will briefly **identify one or two specific issues** raised in the reading that are important to them and briefly (in a few sentences) indicate why they think the issue(s) is(are) important to them.

c. In part three students will raise **one or two questions** prompted by the reading that they would like their team to discuss.

2. Students will each week submit to their Team folder their **thoughts on at least two of the questions** raised by their team members or professor (50 words or less per posting).

3. In each Module, students will be asked to engage in the **study of biblical passages and/or some brief readings from** the works of **John Wesley** that relate to the concerns of that Module. Students will each week submit to their Team folder a brief posting (50 words or less) of **insights or commentary** related to that study.

4. Students will spend a minimum of **12 hours participating in a Kingdom Project**. A Kingdom Project will be defined as involvement in a group ministry of some kind that touches the lives of those outside of the church with the presence of the Kingdom of God. Possibilities for the Kingdom Project may include a ministry within which a student is already participating.

5. Each student will write a **Kingdom Project Reflection Paper**. The goal of the paper is to integrate experiences received through the kingdom project with the reading and discussion done for this class. Please write no less than three and no more than five pages. The reflection must be typed or printed with 12 point font, one inch margins on all four sides, and true double spacing. Near the end of the course students will be asked to submit their paper to their Team folder and to briefly (50 words or less) write a reflective response to the papers submitted by their Team members.

6. **Mid-Term (1) essay**. This essay gives students an opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the objectives for Module One (Kingdom - Living the Biblical Story). These objectives are as follows:

- a. Articulate the importance of "story."
- b. Discern how cultural products participate in inviting us into certain stories.

- c. Articulate the basis for the unity of Scripture in the overarching plan of God, from Creation to New Creation.
- d. Articulate the hermeneutical importance of the kingdom and of the incarnation for understanding the biblical story.
- e. Articulate how Wesley's understanding of the way of salvation may serve as a guide for reading the biblical story.

The essay will be no less than three and no more than five pages, 12 point font, one inch margins on all four sides, and true double spacing.

7. Mid-Term (2) essay. This essay gives students an opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the objectives for Module Two (Kingdom and Church). These objectives are as follows:

- a. Enumerate significant ways in which the ongoing life of the people of God participates in and extends the biblical story.
- b. Articulate how kingdom-living relates to a community of believers.
- c. Articulate an ecclesiology oriented around participation in the kingdom.
- d. Articulate basic forms of ecclesial practice (e.g., hospitality, mission) that are a necessary outgrowth of an ecclesial commitment to living in the kingdom.

The essay will be no less than three and no more than five pages, 12 point font, one inch margins on all four sides, and true double spacing.

8. Final essay. This essay gives students an opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the objectives for Module Three (Kingdom, Church, and World). These objectives are as follows:

- a. Articulate the significance of the kingdom in terms of its cosmological and eschatological significance (rather than individual and subjective terms).
- b. Demonstrate the process of theological thinking - i.e., situating life within the interpretive and critical horizons of a theological vision of the purpose of God for creation that comes into focus in Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom.
- c. Draw out inferences of this view of the kingdom with respect to a range of social-ethical issues (e.g., money, justice, nationalism).
- d. Demonstrate the importance of understanding one's world in performing the kingdom.

Course Assessment

Student's fulfillment of the course requirements will contribute to their course grade in accord with the following percentages:

1. Interaction Papers and participation in discussion in their Team folders - 20%

2. Kingdom Project and Reflection Paper - 20%
3. Midterm (1) Essay - 20%
4. Midterm (2) Essay - 20%
5. Final Essay - 20%

Discussion in the Team folders will be evaluated as follows:

- a. Statements are succinct and understandable, reflecting student understanding of course material and its relationship to the questions or issues that are posed.
- b. Postings give evidence of critical reflection on the interface between course content and personal experience.
- c. Postings are timely, promoting conversation among the members of the team.

I interpret letter grades to mean the following:

- A Exceptional Work
- B Good Work
- C Acceptable Work
- D Marginal Work

Course Schedule

Week 1 Introduction and Organization of the Course

Weeks 2 - 5 Module One: Kingdom - Living the Biblical Story

Weeks 6 - 8 Module Two: Kingdom and Church

Weeks 9-13 Module Three: Kingdom, Church, and World

(Note: A detailed reading and assignment schedule will appear in the introduction to each Module).