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MI 720 Mission Biographies

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MI 720. MISSION BIOGRAPHIES

DESCRIPTION

A biographical approach to mission history in which the lives, ministries, and theologies of representative figures are studied. While the scope includes the whole range of mission history, the course is conducted as a seminar in which students research and report on persons of particular relevance to their own interests, ministries, or spiritual formation.

For the purposes of this course, a *missionary* is defined as one who has sensed and fulfilled a calling to cross-cultural ministry for the Kingdom of God, usually (but not always) in a place different from his or her homeland.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study mission history through the actual lives of representative missionaries.
2. To discern how God has worked in diverse missionaries' lives.
3. To note similarities and differences in missionary lives and experiences.
4. To observe the interaction of Gospel and culture as actually experienced by missionaries.
5. To catch the passion that moved people to enter and continue in missionary service.
6. To let God speak to us about his direction for our lives.
7. To learn from missionaries' successes and failures.
8. To observe the ways missionaries' lives have been depicted in print and on film.
9. To learn some of the elements of good biographical writing.
10. To provide opportunity for missionary biographical research.

COURSE METHOD

We will follow the schedule indicated below. Each morning we will begin with a brief devotional led by the professor or one of the students. Class sessions will combine lecture, discussion of readings, and biographical videos. Normally there will be two 10-minute breaks, one at 9:15 and one at 10:45. On the Wednesdays we will end by 11:20 in order to permit chapel attendance.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Pioneers of the Younger Churches, by John T. Seamands. Abingdon Press, 1967; Wipf & Stock, 2001. 221 pp.

Missiology 27:4 (October 1999) – Issue on Missionary Biography as Missiology. Read pp. 429-531.

Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret, by H. and G. Taylor. Discovery House, 1990.

Through Gates of Splendor, by Elisabeth Elliot. Rev. ed. Tyndale House, 1986.

(Instead of this book, you may read the same author's *Shadow of the Almighty*.)

Mary Slessor, Heroine of Calabar, by Basil Miller. Bethany House, 1974.

(Instead of or in addition to Miller's biography, you may read a different biography of Slessor.)

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES TO CONSULT

Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions, ed. Gerald H. Anderson. Macmillan, 1998.

Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement. Orbis, 1994.

Footprints of God: A Narrative Theology of Mission, ed. Charles Van Engen, Nancy Thomas, and Robert Gallagher. MARC, 1999.

From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions, by Ruth Tucker. Zondervan, 1983.

Guardians of the Great Commission: The Story of Women in Modern Missions, by Ruth Tucker. Zondervan, 1988.

See also the course bibliography, the extensive bibliographies in Tucker's two books, and the Bibliographies and References Cited in the October 1999 issue of *Missiology*. The books listed in Anderson's Select Annotated Bibliography in that issue have been included in the course bibliography. Note: The Select Bibliography for this course is included with the electronic (Seminary Network) version of the syllabus but not with the printed version, in order to save paper and expense.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Participation in all class sessions, including taking an active, informed part in discussion.
2. Completion of daily readings and written assignments, as listed in the Class Schedule. Some sections in Seamands' *Pioneers* book are specifically assigned for particular days, but the entire book should be completed by January 30.
3. Write brief biographical sketches of 12 missionaries whom you especially admire, or whom you view as particularly important in the history of the Christian world mission. Note: If you wish, you may work together with one or two others in the class (in whatever way you determine). Guidelines:

1 to 2 pp., single-spaced (10 or 12 pt. font) per missionary
 At least 6 must be non-North American and non-British
 Approximately half should be women
 Count married couples as one entry
 Use two or three sources for each entry; indicate sources
 Use dictionary style — for example:

Jones, E. Stanley (1884-1973). American Methodist missionary to India. [Summarize life & missionary career in several paragraphs.] (*NIDCC*, 546; *Mission Legacies*, 339-54.)

Due in two parts:

January 28 — Turn in the first 3 entries, together with a list only of the other 9.

February 11 — Turn in the remaining 9 entries (together with the first 3, as one set), in electronic format (Word or similar text document).

Alternative to this assignment: I am seeking one student who will serve as the compiler of these brief biographies. He/she will receive the biographical sketches (in electronic form) from the other students, compile them into one file, combining duplicate entries, and then provide each student with the complete file (either on paper or in electronic form). In return for this compiling/editing task, the compiler will be excused from writing the 12 biographical sketches.

4. Write two reflection papers (approx. 5 pages each, double-spaced) — one on Mary Slessor, and the other on any one of the missionaries studied in the required textbooks and the videos used in class. (For Mary Slessor, Hudson Taylor, and Gladys Aylward, see the reflection questions, below. These are the kinds of questions to be discussed. You do not need to deal with every question.)

4.1. Reflection paper on Mary Slessor: Due Friday, January 23.

4.2. Second reflection paper: Due February 6.

5. Write a critical study of one of the missionaries whose stories are told in *Pioneers of the Younger Churches* (15-30 pp., double-spaced, 10 or 12 pt. font). This book was first published in 1967, and since it has never been revised, some of the material needs updating. Your task is to identify ways the story should be updated by answering such questions as:

- 5.1. Are there more recent editions of the sources Seamands used?
- 5.2. Are there other (especially newer) sources that should be consulted?
- 5.3. Are there any errors that need correcting, or unclear passages that need clarifying?
- 5.4. What statistics need to be brought up to date?
- 5.5. Any other material you think should be added?
- 5.6. What would be four or five useful study questions that could be added?

Rationale: I would like, with the author's permission, to publish a revised/updated edition of this useful book. Student papers will help with this process. If a revised edition is eventually published, I will give credit to the class members for their contribution to the revision. So do excellent work! Due February 11.

There will be no final exam.

SUGGESTED REFLECTION QUESTIONS — *Mary Slessor*

- What influenced Mary Slessor to become a missionary to Calabar?
- What are the pluses and minuses of the kind of hero emulation demonstrated by Mary Slessor toward David Livingstone?
- What was Mary Slessor's preparation for missionary service?
- How did Mary's love for Charles Morrison affect her missionary career?
- How would you evaluate Mary's approach to missionary work?
- What character traits did Mary exhibit?
- What is the most important thing you gained from the life of Mary Slessor?
- What other missiological issues are raised or illustrated by Slessor's life?

SUGGESTED REFLECTION QUESTIONS — *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret* (Reflection for classroom discussion, or for second Reflection Paper)

- What influences shaped Hudson Taylor as a man of God?
- What did Taylor learn from the incident of the half-crown? (pp. 18ff.)
- What difficulties did Taylor confront on first arriving in China in 1854?
- What kind of response did Taylor receive on his initial inland trips? (pp. 56ff.)
- Evaluate Taylor's decision to adopt Chinese dress.
- What chain of events led Taylor to found China Inland Mission?
- What character qualities did Taylor demonstrate?
- How would you evaluate Taylor's overall mission strategy?
- What is the most important thing you learned from the life of Hudson Taylor?
- What other missiological issues are raised or illustrated by Taylor's life?

SUGGESTED REFLECTION QUESTIONS — *Gladys Aylward, "Inn of the Sixth Happiness"* (Reflection for classroom discussion, or for second Reflection Paper)

- What was significant about the social and historical context of Aylward's mission?
- What are missionaries to do when they are overwhelmed by contextual factors over which they have no control?

What qualities did Gladys Aylward demonstrate?

What was her missionary approach?

What are the essential *qualifications* of an authentic missionary?

What especially impressed you about the film?

What *image of missions* is presented in this film?

What other missiological issues are raised or illustrated by Aylward's life?

ATTENDANCE POLICY: See the current seminary *Catalog*, p. 24, "Class Attendance." Since this is an intensive course, each morning session (8:00-12:00) is equivalent to three class sessions (and thus to three absences, if missed).

EVALUATION

In grading, the course components will be weighted approximately as follows:

Class participation, including input from readings	25%
12 biographical sketches	25%
Two reflection papers	20%
Final paper (based on the <i>Pioneers</i> book)	30%

CLASS SCHEDULE

Note: In the event of any “snow days,” we will make up the lost classes either with an afternoon session or at a subsequent time.

- January 20: INTRODUCTION - SYLLABUS
(Tues.) TELLING LIVES: The Art of Biography
- January 21: THE MISSIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF STORY
(Wed.) FRANCIS OF ASSISI
Video: “Brother Sun, Sister Moon” (120 min.)
Assigned reading: Tucker, “Biography as Missiology...,” *Missiology* (Oct. 1999), 429-40.
Anderson, “Missionary Biography: A Select Annotated Bibliography,” *Missiology* (Oct. 1999), 459-65.
- January 22: BIBLICAL MISSION BIOGRAPHIES
(Thurs.) SAINT PATRICK
Video: “Saint Patrick: The Man, The Myth” (approx. 45 min.)
Assigned reading: Neely, “Saints Who Sometimes Were,” *Missiology* (Oct. 1999), 441-57.
Seamands, *Pioneers*, 13-26.
- January 23: MARY SLESSOR AND DAVID LIVINGSTONE
(Fri.) Video: “Livingstone and Stanley” (approx. 50 min.)
Assigned reading: Biography of Mary Slessor
Written assignment: Reflection Paper on Mary Slessor
- January 26: GLADYS AYLWARD
(Mon.) Video: “The Inn of the Sixth Happiness” (158 min.)
Assigned reading: Ross, “Alessandro Valignano, SJ,” *Missiology* (Oct. 1999), 503-13.
Seamands, *Pioneers*, 83-98.
- January 27: MISSIONARY CALL: Who Calls / Who Is Called?
(Tues.) Video: “Candle in the Dark” (William Carey) (97 min.)
Assigned reading: Scherer, “Bartholomew Ziegenbalg,” *Missiology* (Oct. 1999), 487-94.
Hoyle, “Teacher of Preachers: Sue McBeth and Her Mission to the Nez Perce,” *Missiology* (Oct. 1999), 475-80.
- January 28: MISSION LIVES AND MISSION STRATEGY
(Wed.) HUDSON TAYLOR’S SPIRITUAL SECRET
Assigned reading: *Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret*
Written assignment: Biographical Sketches (3 missionaries)
- January 29: MISSION LIVES AND CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY
(Thurs.) Video: “E. Stanley Jones”
Video: “They Cry in the Night” (Harmon Schmelzenbach) (60 min.)
Assigned reading: Davidson, “Semisi Nau—A Pacific Islander Missionary,” *Missiology* (Oct. 1999), 481-86.
Bundy, “Song of Ascents: Autobiographical Reflection and the Development of the Mission Theory of E. Stanley Jones,” *Missiology* (Oct. 1999), 467-73.
Dries, “‘Fire and Flame’: Anna Dengel...,” *Missiology* (Oct. 1999), 495-501.
Seamands, *Pioneers*, 99-113.

January 30: LEARNING FROM OUR MISSIONARY FOREBEARS
(Fri.) Video: "Chariots of Fire" (Eric Liddell)
Assigned reading: First 50 pp. of *Through Gates of Splendor*
Hunsberger, "Biography as Missiology: The Case of Lesslie Newbigin," *Missiology*
(Oct. 1999), 523-31.
Seamands, *Pioneers*, 142-62.
McGee, "Baptism of the Holy Ghost & Fire! The Mission Legacy of Minnie
F. Abrams," *Missiology* (Oct. 1999), 515-22.

February 6: ASSIGNMENT DUE: Second Reflection Paper

February 11: ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Biographical Study
Biographical Sketches
One-page reading report on Seamands, *Pioneers of the
Younger Churches*.

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