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# IS 501 Christian Formation: Kingdom, Church, and World

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IS501X1

Christian Formation: Kingdom, Church, and World

Spring 2008

(3 Credits)

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**Preliminary Syllabus (November 2007)**

**May be amended prior to the start of class**

**Welcome and Greetings:**

Welcome to the exciting first step on a life-long journey of ministry! I am glad you have joined us, and I look forward to exploring some of the foundational aspects of what it means to be the Church in today's world with you. We all bring a part of ourselves and our context with us on this journey, and I want each of you to feel free to contribute to this adventure from your own experiences. I have seen the Kingdom of God at work throughout the world, in Canada, China, the Philippines, and Central America, as well as in different areas of the United States. Each culture and subculture of this world provides an unique lens through which to understand the person and nature of God in ways which might be surprising and disconcerting. It is important above all else, to listen to the voices of those who see God in different ways so we might grow spiritually and come closer to understanding the complete message of the Kingdom of God. I welcome you to this journey and look forward to seeing what lies just around the corner!

**Personal Introduction:**

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B.A. (Anthropology) Florida State University 1991

M.A. (Anthropology) McGill University (Montreal, Canada) 1994

Ph.D. (Intercultural Studies) Asbury Theological Seminary 2005

I grew up in a family of three generations of missionaries and Methodist ministers, but with a passion for understanding how culture works. After getting my M.A. in Montreal, Canada, I taught English in a remote part of the People's Republic of China for two years. After I returned, I married my wife, a native of El Salvador in Central America, which has taught me more about cross-cultural communication than any class ever did. I have also traveled and done short-term mission in other places, including the Philippines and Honduras.

You may notice a decided bias in my choice of illustrations and subjects to talk about during this class. This is intentional. I have chosen in large part to use examples and focus on the peoples of Latin America and immigrants when I wish to illustrate a topic. I have three main reasons for this type of bias:

1. I have a passion for this geographical area and its people, and with my wife being an immigrant, I have had a good deal of exposure to the immigration experience. My knowledge of this area is currently the most up-to-date, and therefore will be more accurate than if I draw on other areas and subjects.
2. By 2050, the various predictions from census figures claim that 25% or more of the population in the U.S. will be Hispanic. This is a trend which will affect all communities and all churches in the U.S. and those who will be in ministry need to recognize this shifting cultural reality and prepare for its effects.
3. As the global church shifts from its traditional center in the North and West to the South and East, we need to be listening to the theological voice of the church in these areas. They are growing and we are not. They have something to teach us, if we will listen. Latin America has one of the most developed and coherent voices from this growing part of the church.

### **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.

We will consider the following questions, along with others which may arise:

1. What is the Kingdom of God?
2. What is the Church?
3. How is the Kingdom present in the World through the Church?
4. How are we to participate as the Church in God's mission to the World?

Sometimes these questions may challenge you and your accepted view of the world. Please remember that this is an on-going journey we are all on and different people may

be at different stages. Listen, critique, and debate, but always in an attitude which expresses the love of God to others.

### **Basic Structure of the Course:**

This course is loosely divided into three major sections, based on simple communication theory. To communicate successfully, you need a communicator (the Church), a message (the Kingdom of God), and an audience (the World). For successful ministry you need to understand each of these foundational elements and how they work together. This course will begin by examining the message of the Kingdom of God. We will then look at our roles as communicators of this message. What does it mean to be the Church? Finally, we will look at the changing world around us and how that context shapes our ministry.

### **Course Outcomes:**

At the end of this course, students should be able to...

1. Articulate an understanding of the overall storyline presented by the Bible as conveyed especially in Jesus' teachings of the Kingdom of God.
2. Identify the contributions of the Wesleyan Tradition to our understanding of the Kingdom of God.
3. Convey the major theological, moral, and philosophical implications of the message of the Kingdom of God for us as the Church, in terms of our identity, nature, and mission.
4. Evaluate various aspects of a culture in light of these theological, moral, and philosophical implications.
5. Be able to critique one's own cultural context and evaluate another culture's possible weaknesses and strengths in light of these theological, moral, and philosophical implications.
6. Articulate possible actions for the church to take within its current cultural context in light of the message of the Kingdom of God, and understand how this might affect the mission of the Church.
7. Exhibit a heightened sense of awareness and commitment to living out the message of the Kingdom of God, as the Church, within the global context of today's world.

### **Required Texts:**

Clapp, Rodney  
2000 *Border Crossings*. Brazos Press.

Hauerwas, Stanley and William H. Willimon  
1989 *Resident Aliens*. Abingdon Press.

Jenkins, Philip  
2007 *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. Oxford University Press.

Snyder, Howard  
2001 *Models of the Kingdom*. Wipf & Stock.

Snyder, Howard  
2001 *Kingdom, Church, and World: Biblical Themes for Today*. Wipf & Stock.  
(Originally published as *A Kingdom Manifesto*, 1985, InterVarsity Press.)

Wakabayashi, Allen Mitsuo  
2003 *Kingdom Come: How Jesus Wants to Change the World*. InterVarsity Press.

### **Recommended Texts:**

Ladd, George Eldon  
1959 *Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Press.

Samuel, Vinay and Christopher Sudgen, eds.  
2003 *The Church in Response to Human Need*. Wipf & Stock.

### **Additional Resources:**

**Rent or purchase the movie *Romero*** (released in 1989 by Lions Gate. Directed by John Duigan. Starring Raul Julia, Richard Jordan, Ana Alicia, Eddie Velez, and Alejandro Bracho. This is an older movie and may be difficult to find, so check with your local video rental stores early in case you need to purchase this video.

**Additional audio-visual, and electronic media materials will be used through out the class.** These include but are not limited to, short written lectures, recordings of speakers at Asbury Theological Seminary chapels (especially from past Kingdom Conferences), and online articles or video clips which can be accessed from your computer.

### **Module Agenda:**

Each week we will have a devotional about some scripture dealing with the Kingdom of God. These devotionals will be in a forum format for you to respond with your own thoughts. Often, there will be written lectures (usually on the weeks when there is no audio or video speaker) which you are welcome to comment or ask questions about.

For each week there will be discussion questions posted for your response. You will post a response to each question and then also respond to at least two other responses by your classmates.

### **Course Modules:**

#### **Introduction and Organization**

Week 1: Kingdom, Church, and World: Introduction and Overview February 11-18, 2008

Reading: **Kingdom Come** by Wakabayashi  
Assignment: Reflection Paper due by Feb. 18, 2008

**Module One: The Message- The Kingdom of God**

Week 2: The Kingdom: The Scriptural Message February 18-25, 2008

Reading: **Kingdom, Church and World: Biblical Themes for Today**  
by Snyder  
Assignment: Reflection Paper due by Feb. 25, 2008

Week 3: The Kingdom: A Wesleyan View February 25 - March 3, 2008

Readings: Online Articles as Assigned

Week 4: The Kingdom: The Message in Today's Context March 3-10, 2008

Video: **Romero**  
Readings: Online Readings as Assigned  
Audio: Tom Sine Chapels

**Module Two: The Communicator- The Church**

Week 5: The Church: What is it? March 10-17, 2008

Reading: **Models of the Kingdom** by Snyder  
Assignment: Reflection Paper due by March 17, 2008

Week 6: The Church: Who are we? March 17-24, 2008

Midterm Exam due by March 24, 2008

Week 7: The Church: What are we doing? March 24-31, 2008

Reading: **Resident Aliens** by Hauerwas & Willimon  
Assignment: Reflection Paper due by March 31, 2008

Week 8: Spring Reading Break  
March 31 - April 7, 2008

Week 9: The Church: It's Changing Nature April 7-14, 2008

Readings: Online Readings as Assigned  
Audio/ Video: Tom Skinner Chapels

## **Module Three: The Audience- The World**

Week 10: The World: The Ultimate Context April 14-21, 2008

Reading: **Next Christendom** by Jenkins

Assignment: Reflection Paper due by April 21, 2008

Week 11: The World: The Context of the Church Today April 21-28, 2008

Reading: Online Articles as Assigned

Video: **Los Talciguines: The Possessed Men of El Salvador**

Week 12: The World: It's All Around Us April 28 - May 5, 2008

Reading: Online Readings as Assigned

Audio: Rene Padilla Chapels

### **Concluding Classes**

Week 13: Kingdom, Church, and World: Putting It All Together May 5-12, 2008

Reading: **Border Crossings** by Clapp

Assignment: Reflection Paper due by May 12, 2008

Audio: Miriam Adeney Chapels

Week 14: Kingdom, Church, and World: Concluding Thoughts May 12-19, 2008

Kingdom Project due by May 12, 2008

Audio: Rene Padilla Chapel

### **Assignments:**

**1. Six reflection papers (30%):** One paper for each required text. These should be at least two pages long and demonstrate a basic knowledge of the author's point of view, combined with your own opinions and experiences. **Do not simply repeat what the writer said, you need to show how you might apply lessons learned from the text to your own ministry.**

**2. Participation in Forums and Group Work (25%):** Each student will participate in the forum discussion each week by posting and answer to a given question or thought (50 to 75 words per posting please) and responding to at least two other postings by their classmates in a substantive way.

**3. Mid-Term Exam (20%):** This will be an essay exam with a five page limit.

**4. Kingdom Project (25%):** Every student must spend a minimum of 12 hours participating in a Kingdom Project. This project must be a group ministry where the church is interacting with non-Christians in some way demonstrating the Kingdom of God. This might be an existing program or you may create a short-term program from scratch. Each student must have the project approved by the professor early in the semester. This project might include work with the homeless, the poor, at a food bank, or any other number of similar type projects. After choosing the project, the student will do some research on the underlying socio-cultural problem and various Christian responses to this problem. In light of the research and personal experience, the student will critique this Kingdom project from a Biblical perspective and assess whether it was a successful project or not. This paper should be at least 5 pages in length.

### **Expectations:**

#### **What you can expect from me:**

1. I will have all of your materials and assignments on-line by 12 noon (Eastern Time) at the start of every week.
2. I will be interacting with the course a minimum of two days a week and usually more (I am often on the computer everyday, except for weekends). I will try to respond to your emails within 48 hours on a first come, first serve basis. If a post is marked "Urgent" I will try to respond faster, but please only use this approach if it is extremely important.
3. I will monitor the class forums and enter and participate when I feel it is important to steer the conversation or to respond to important issues which are raised. I may not enter all discussions, especially if I feel you are all learning important material from your discussions with each other. Sometimes self-discovery is the best way to learn.
4. I will provide timely and substantive feedback on all graded assignments. Assignments turned in on time have priority and should be graded and returned within a week or two.
5. If I need to be away from the computer for an extended period of time, I will let you know in advance if possible.
6. I am new to ExL teaching and as such I expect to make the occasional blunder as I try to find the best way to teach using this medium, I ask for your patience and sincere criticism, if you feel I can improve this class in any way to enhance your learning experience.
7. I will pray for each of you by name throughout the semester and ask that you do the same for me.

#### **What I expect from you:**

1. You will actively participate in this classroom. Our classroom is electronic but real, and we will be interacting with each other. Each week you will find that my expectations for you are outlined in the class forums and assignments.

2. You will invest the same amount of time in this class as if you were on a physical campus. On a physical campus you would be in class for three hours, plus outside time for reading and assignments. Please make room for at least 10-12 hours of reading, reflecting, discussions, participating, and writing each week.
3. You will post your thoughts to the rest of the course through the course forums. We want to learn from your experience and wisdom too, so please do not keep quiet when you may have something important to say which we need to hear.
4. If you need to be away from the computer for an extended period of time or if a crisis or emergency hits your household, please let us know as soon as possible. Then we can discuss your needs and also lift you up in prayer. Please don't wait until the last minute to talk to me about any concerns you may have.
5. Pray for your classmates and me by name throughout this semester. We need all the help we can get!

**Additional Course Forums:**

Course Related:

1. Course News and Announcements: Contains news items for the course like due dates
2. Syllabus: (My syllabus will be located under the community related forums as a separate document labeled "IS501X Christian Formation: Kingdom, Church, and World.")
3. To Professor: Private communication between student and faculty
4. Course Questions: Repository of questions posted by the students related to the course

Community Related:

1. Prayer Forum: We understand that real life happens while you are taking this class. Please use this forum to support, pray, and care for each other.
2. Open Forum: Use this forum to discuss anything from sports, to doctrine, to jokes to personal information.

**Course Assessment:**

**Grading:**

Grading for this class will follow the guidelines posted in the ATS Academic Catalog. Remember that a good grade for an ATS class is a "B." The posted grading scale is as follows:

A 95-100% Exceptional work: surpassing, markedly outstanding achievement of course

objectives.

A- 90-94.9%

B+ 87-89.9%

B 83-86.9% Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives

B- 80-82.9%

C+ 77-79.9%

C 73-76.9% Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives

C- 70-72.9%

D+ 67-69.9%

D 63-66.9% Marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives

D- 60-62.9%

F Below 60 Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives

### **Incomplete Work:**

“A grade of ‘I’ denotes that the work of a course has not been completed due to an unavoidable emergency, which does not include delinquency or attending to church work or other employment. If the work of the course is incomplete at the end of a term without an emergency, a letter grade will be given based on the grades of work done, with incomplete work counted as ‘F.’ ” (See ATS Catalog)

### **Attendance and Late Work:**

It is expected that each student will "attend" class each week. The only way for me to know that you are "attending" class is for you to interact with the forum each week. This means you should post a response to the forum discussion each week and comment on at least two other posting by your fellow students. These must be significant postings, responses such as "I agree with everything he/she said" is not considered significant for graduate level discussion and will indicate to me that you are not interacting with your reading. "Absences" or delays in submitting assignments will be permitted only under extreme circumstances and must be arranged in advance.

### **Assignments:**

All assignments are due by the stated due dates. Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade per day late. For example, a B paper turned in one day late becomes a C, etc.

### **Postings:**

Please limit all postings to between 50 and 75 words, unless directed to do otherwise.

### **Discussion:**

A crucial element of this course is the dialog that we enter into with each other. All discussions are to be in the vein of encouragement, gentleness, patience, persistence, and hope. This does not mean that we will not challenge, confront, or question each other. It does mean that these things will be undertaken for the purpose of growth and stimulation to think and understand the subject at hand more deeply and more intimately.

### **Online etiquette:**

Remember that online, we do not have the benefit of your non-verbal cues, such as your

tone of voice and body language. Try to avoid sarcasm as this may not come across as intended.

**Please use gender inclusive language in all of your posts. Also use appropriate language and professional grammar, while at the same time trying to communicate in a brief manner. While I will not be specifically looking for spelling or grammatical errors, such mistakes are not expected at the graduate level of academic professionalism and will tend to lower your grade.**

**Additional Support:**

For general questions and administrative assistance regarding the ExL program contact Dale Hale at:

ExL\_Office@asburyseminary.edu or phone 859-858-2393

For technical support, library research support, library loans, and ExL media contact Information Commons at:

Info\_Commons@asburyseminary.edu or phone 859-858-2233 (toll-free: 866-454-2733)

Accessing Information Commons (Library) Materials:

**1. General Questions:**

The Information Commons is a "one-stop shop" for all student research, circulation and technical needs. The Information Commons hours are posted here:  
<http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/hours.shtml>.

**2. Materials Requests:**

To search the library catalog for available materials, go to :  
<http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/index.shtml>

ExL Students may request books, photocopies or emailed attachments of journal articles/portions of reference books from Asbury Seminary's Library. Please allow 3-10 business days for all requests to be filled. Contact the Information Commons for cost and instructions on how to make requests.

ExL students are encouraged to make use of local library resources. Students who live within a 50 mile radius of either the Florida or the Kentucky campus should come to campus to obtain their materials.

**3. Research Questions:**

ExL students are encouraged to contact the Information Commons for research assistance including help choosing a paper topic, determining the best sources to use for a paper, finding book reviews, or research questions about using the online databases or any other library materials.

#### **4. Online Databases:**

To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-text journal database, go to <http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/index.shtml> and enter your 10-digit student ID# in the login box. Your student ID# is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration web page. Add a 2 and enough 0's to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000XXXXX where XXXXX is your student ID).

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