MB 810 Advanced Missiological Anthropology

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is an advanced course about the development of anthropology as it relates to Christian mission. The class will follow a historical approach to successive schools of thought in anthropology. We want to take a critical perspective on anthropological theories for several reasons. Anthropology has played a part in shaping various modern and post-modern worldviews in the West. In particular, the projects of cultural relativism and cultural pluralism stem directly from anthropology. Anthropology has also been implicated in the politics of colonialism, neo-colonialism and contemporary global capitalism. A critical view of anthropology as it relates to theology will lead us to our main concern, and that is missiology. There will be a conscious effort in our course to maintain a dialogue between anthropology, theology and missiology. Our goal is to gain insights about missiological issues and concerns.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To read all the material, attend all lectures, and participate in all class discussions.
2. To be able to dialogue about the main points which will be raised in lecture and readings.
3. To develop skills in analyzing mission issues from anthropological, theological and missiological perspectives.
4. To develop skills in interpreting the meaning of mission issues.
5. To develop skills in applying Biblical and cultural understandings to resolve mission problems and to make and execute mission plans.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Texts:


These texts will be read in parallel rather than sequentially. Something will be lost in terms of a particular author’s development of an argument. However, something will be gained by placing several authors’ narratives side-by-side for comparison. Through comparison, we will be in a position to offer a more informed critique of the ideas that are presented.
Hiebert’s book contains some seminal articles in the development of missiology. Hiebert was a missionary in India, then he came to the University of Minnesota just as I was finishing there (1971). After he earned his Ph.D., he has made some major contributions to the field of missiology (critical contextualization, hermeneutic community, centered set, etc).

McGee and Warms’ collection is invaluable (and costs a lot) because it includes primary materials; that is, articles written anthropologists working within the various paradigms of anthropological theory. These will allow us to interact directly with various strands of anthropological thought.

Luzbetak’s book is one of those “classics” in the field of missiological anthropology. It will help us make the connections and apply our findings.

Bernard’s book gives us the practical side of theory; if that is what we want to study, then how will we collect data, what kind of data will we collect, and how will be analyze the data?

Assignments:

1. Critical Reflection Papers. A paper will be due at the beginning of each week (after the first week and before Thanksgiving) that will identify the dominant themes in the readings. We will use these for discussion during class. These will be a great aid to you and the class as they will prepare you for the week’s work. The papers should begin with a single sentence describing the anthropological theory that is the topic of the week. This opening sentence should be followed by a list of the main assumptions or propositions of this particular school of thought. The final paragraph should suggest how these assumptions relate to theology and missiology.

These papers should be two to three pages, double spaced, and are due on the following schedule: (Note: these are of no use if they are turned in late).

- September 14: A Science of Culture.
- September 21: Cultural Evolutionism.
- September 28: Historicism.
- October 5: Functionalism, or Culture Change.
- October 12: Culture and Personality.
- October 19: Cultural Ecology, or Neo-Evolutionism.
- October 26: Structuralism, or Symbolic Anthropology.
- November 2: Ethnoscience, or Cognitive Anthropology.
- November 9: Behavioural Evolutionism.
- November 16: Symbolic Anthropology.

2. Read an ethnography. Write a book review. Look at Missiology or the American Anthropologist to see how to write a book review. Choose an ethnographies in your theoretical area of study or in your geographical area of study, but it must be written by an anthropologist. Consult with the instructor before making final decisions.
3. Write a Summary Paper on Theory. Your research project in this course is to take a particular theoretical perspective (e.g., symbolic interactionism, structuralism, functionalism, cultural materialism, diffusion, etc.); or a particular anthropological concept (e.g., culture, comparative method, cultural configuration, ethnohistory, cultural ecology, functional integration, kinship, magic, myth, psychic unity, social structure, revitalization, acculturation, innovation, etc.); or an anthropologist and his/her writing (e.g., Marvin Harris, Morris Opler, Julian Steward, Ruth Benedict, Bronislaw Malinowski, Clifford Geertz, Mary Douglas, Victor Turner, David Bidney, Ralph Linton, Edward Sapir, Alfred Kroeber, Ward Goodenough, Homer Barnett, Margaret Mead, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Rodney Needham, etc.), and apply the insights from that perspective, concept, or person to one or more missiological problems.

Think smart. Pick an area or theory that is new to you so you can learn something new, but also use this as an opportunity to inform some aspect of your dissertation research if you are a D. Miss or a Ph.D student.

Your end product for this exercise will be a paper (ten to fifteen pages, single-spaced) that will be made available for class members to photocopy. I will be happy to critique and provide feedback on an early draft of your paper. Be prepared, as well, to make an oral presentation to the class of a summary of your thinking.

The following deadlines apply to your paper:
- October 05 - Selection and approval of your topic
- November 09 - Complete outline of your paper.
- December 14 - Final draft due.

COURSE EVALUATION

50% Class preparation papers (10 papers @ 5% each)
20% Book Reviews. (2 reviews @ 10% each)
30% Research Paper

COURSE GRADING

The unit of credit is a semester hour, which is defined as one hour of classroom work per week for one semester, or its equivalent. The 4.00 point system is used to compute grade point standing. The grading system is:

A 4.00 Exceptional work: surpassing, markedly outstanding achievement of course objectives.
B 3.00 Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives.
C 2.00 Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives.
D 1.00 Marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives.
F  0  Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives.

INCOMPLETE WORK

The official end of each term is 4:00 p.m. on the last day of the examination schedule. This hour is the deadline for handing in all course work. Each instructor may set an earlier deadline for submission of any or all course work. The student must petition the faculty person involved and the student’s advisor for permission to receive an “I” at the end of the semester.

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 a 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.”

Incomplete grades shall be removed one calendar month prior to the close of the following semester unless an earlier date is designated by the Office of the Chief Academic Officer on the individual petition. If the work is not completed by the time designated, the “I” shall be changed to an “F” unless a passing grade can be given based on work already completed or unless special permission is granted by the Chief Academic Officer.

Professors are required to give either a grade or an “I,” if approved, to each student registered for credit in a course. Students with Incompletes in two or more classes will not be allowed to enroll in a new semester or term without permission from their Dean.

OFFICE HOURS

Office hours will be Wednesday and Thursday 1:00-2:30 p.m. It is best to make an appointment in advance (Katherine Riley 858-2077). My office is in the Administration Building, second floor, office of The Director of Postgraduate Studies. Telephone: 858-2218.