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IS 501 Kingdom, Church, and World

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Welcome to IS 501X2
Welcome to the fall session of Kingdom, Church, and World. 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.
In this course we will have the opportunity to reflect on a number of questions and issues including:

1. What is the kingdom of God?
2. What is the Church?
3. How does and should the Church engage the world?
4. What do we mean when we speak of “the world?”
5. What relationship exists between the kingdom, the Church, and the world?

There will be other questions that you will raise as well. 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. In light of this, it is good to remember that this is an introductory course that is designed to give you a taste of the curriculum that lies ahead in theological study.

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 the class 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 RuthAnne_Reese@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:
Support Staff:

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

ExL_Office@asburyseminary.edu
Phone: (859) 858-2393

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

Info_Commons@asburyseminary.edu
Phone: (859) 858-2233
Toll-free: (866) 454-2733

Accessing Information Commons 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, click here: http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/index.shtml
   ExL Students may request books, photocopies or emailed attachments of journal articles/reference books from Asbury Seminary's Library. Please allow 3-10 business days for all requests to be filled. Contact the Information Commons for costs 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 databases, go to http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/index.shtml and enter your 10-digit student ID# number in the login box. Your student ID# is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0's to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000XXXXX where XXXXX = your student id).

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 overarching 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 will be able to:

1. Articulate an understanding of the biblical 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 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-a-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.

Required Texts


Wesley, John. Selected Readings (available in the Course Center under Supplemental Texts).

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**


**Basic Orientation**

1. Beginnings
Our course will begin on Tuesday, September 6, 2004. Sometime during the day, the 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. Thursday mornings are set aside to work on this class in particular.

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 IS501X2 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.

The Teams folder will be used for team discussions, collaboration and accountability to each other. Within the Teams folder you will find a file that lists the membership of each Team and a folder for each Team. To engage in discussions with your Team, simply click on your Team folder, read files posted by your Team members and post your own contributions to the discussion.

The To Office icon is for private correspondence between you and the professor. 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 saved automatically. If you wish to save a chat conversation you must copy it and paste it into a document prior to closing the chat window.
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, 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.

The Prayer Folder is a place to post prayer requests and to pray for each other in writing. I am committed to praying for each of my students by name once a week. Please feel free to send any private prayer requests to the office.

4. Endings ....
Our course will officially end (communication will come to a close) on December 15, 2004. 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 15.

Course Requirements

Participation (20%)
1. Students will be assigned to a Team consisting of five or six students and the professor. The Team will be the primary venue for discussion. Students will submit to their Team folder Interaction Papers that will initiate discussions among their team members over required reading. Please write 1 single spaced page (about 250 words -- 500 words MAX). Please write these in the body of the email rather than posting them as attachments. 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 (100 words or less per posting). This is a minimum expectation. I encourage all Team members to strive to respond to all members of their Team each week.

3. Formation Groups: 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. Readings from John Wesley are in pdf format in the Course Center in the Supplemental Readings folder. For 10 of our 13 weeks together, the Formation Group will be facilitated by a different leader. The leader should begin the week's discussion by answering the general orientation questions (posted in the Formation Group folder) and then soliciting brief answers to these questions from the group. At the same time, the leader will also facilitate devotional (how does this help us to know God?) and formational (how does this help us to be more like God?) discussion in the group around the biblical or wesleyan reading required for the week. Discussion questions are supplied.

**Kingdom Project (20%)**

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. Please send a note to the office indicating what type of Kingdom Project you are going to do. You should begin thinking about your project as soon as possible and submit your report of what you plan to do no later than October 12.

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 (100 words or less) write a reflective response to the papers submitted by their Team members.

**Exams (60%)**

6. **Mid-Term (1) essays.** These essays give 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 essays 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. I will post the specific essay questions about two weeks before they are due.

7. **Mid-Term (2) essays.** These essays 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 essays 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 essays.** These essays 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**  
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.
**Grading:** Work for IS501 will be evaluated at a graduate/professional school level. The grading scale is as follows

- **A =** 94–100 Exceptional Work
- **A- =** 90–93
- **B+ =** 87–89
- **B =** 83–86 Good Work
- **B-=** 80–82
- **C+ =** 77–76 Acceptable Work
- **C- =** 73–72
- **D+ =** 67–69
- **D =** 63–66 Marginal Work
- **D-=** 60–62
- **F =** 59 and below Failing Work

**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.’” From ATS 2003-05 Catalog, page 28 (emphasis added).

**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 each Module).