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IS 501 Kingdom, Church, and World

Gregory P. Leffel

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Christian Formation: Kingdom, Church, and World
IS501XL
Syllabus (Fall 2005)

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Phone: 859-858-8005
Office Hours: I am available online and by phone each Monday from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. EST. I am available at other times by appointment. Please contact me by phone (between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. EST) or by email.

This syllabus may be amended prior to the beginning of class.
The book reading list will not change (if you want to begin reading ahead). However, some details concerning the schedule, study Modules, and incidental readings are subject to change.

The course begins on Tuesday, September 6, 2005. On that day, the first module will be accessible within the Course Center by noon (EST).

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.

Introduction: A warm welcome to Asbury’s course IS501: Kingdom, Church, and World! I’m excited to teach this class and look forward to getting to know each of you on-line. This course integrates the unique ways in which we in the academy look at God’s mission from our assorted disciplinary points of view: theology, biblical studies, various fields of application, and missiology. I am a missiologist. That is, I reflect on the work of God in the world in and through God’s people. I do this through the lenses of theology, ethics, history, the social sciences, and praxis. I think you will be surprised to discover how much of our contemporary discussion about the Bible, theology, and ministry—including the name of this course—arises from reflection on mission.

We have, in this course, an opportunity to critically examine our presuppositions, our theories, and the way we live out our lives in regard to the nature of the Kingdom of God, the Church, and the World. These are three distinct, but intimately connected aspects of the reality in which we all engage in ministry—whether laypersons or clergy. We will consider issues that will examine these realities and give opportunity to ask a variety of questions, such as:

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. 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 or practices?

By the end of the course, we will have examined these questions and we shall have given them a first-order attempt at theologically sound and praxis-oriented answers.
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 missiology. As such 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 your fields of studies.

I will also add a personal note. It is often the case that ExL class members are not full-time students, that is, they are adding this class to a schedule already filled with work, or ministry, or both. I want you to know that I direct a Christian community in Lexington (a “missional community” you’ll hear more about later) as well as teach. In fact, I do both of these simultaneously in a deliberate attempt to pull together the academy and the church-in-the-world. Through many years of bi-vocational ministry I know firsthand how tough it is to keep work, study, and personal life balanced. So if any of you ever feel the need, I’m happy to talk to you about the practical circumstances of your journeys into seminary life and ministry as we go through the semester.

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 I would characterize this course as having 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 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 over-arching intention: to begin to see the scriptures as organized around certain integrative motifs. In this regard, this course integrates theological reflection and biblically informed practice and demonstrates its significance for God’s people.

Issues of importance include:
1. What constitutes a biblical narrative? Is there only one or are there a number of plausible ones? Is there a biblical “meta-narrative”?
2. What roles do these narratives play?
3. How is one to understand the relationship of “part” and “whole” when interpreting the biblical narratives?
4. What does it mean to refer to the biblical materials as “narrative”?
5. How do the biblical narratives subvert our familiar ways of being, thinking and acting in the world: that is, how do Christ and the Spirit speak through the story of scripture to transform the life of the church and its members, making us faithful citizens of God’s kingdom?

By engaging these questions, we will be undertaking a critical examination of some of our fundamental assumptions about who we are and what God calls us to be, not simply as individuals, but as members of God’s Church. This may be, and perhaps it should be, dis-orienting from time to time, but know that it will also be re-orienting. Keep in mind our end goal: to understand more fully what we understand ourselves to be as the people of God, the Church, and to understand what it means to be in God’s service in the World as representatives of God’s Kingdom.

Course Objectives/Expected Student Competencies: Having successfully completed this course, students will be able to:
1. Articulate an understanding of the biblical narrative, and correlative way of life, 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, missiological, ecclesial, moral, and philosophical implications of this narrative, especially as these are related to the nature and mission of God’s people;
4. Evaluate cultural materials (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-à-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 (the missio Dei).

Required Reading:

*IS501 Small Group Packet*, available from ATS Cokesbury bookstore.

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

Recommended Reading (purely optional, but related material you might find helpful):
**Required Videos/Media:** Video/Media clips will be sent to you on CD/DVD by the ExL staff. Instructions about when you will be required to view and interact with a specific video or clip will be given in each Module/section.

**Guidelines for Group Meetings:** See the IS501 Small Group Packet.

**Course Requirements:**

1. **General:** All written assignments (except Interaction Papers and Team interactions) must be typed with 12 point font, one inch margins on all four sides, and double spaced. Please put your name and the title of the assigned work on each item you submit. Work must conform to a style guide such as MLA or Chicago Style and this guide must be consistently applied. Parenthetical references, e.g., (Guder 1998:145), and Endnotes/References Cited may be used in lieu of footnotes. Proper English grammar is expected. This includes complete sentences, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. Consistent use of poor grammar will lower your grade.

2. **Small Groups (20%):** Students will be assigned to a Team consisting of four to six 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. Interaction papers will have three parts:

   **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.

   **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) indicated why they think the issue(s) is (are) important to them.

   **Part three:** Students will raise one or two questions prompted by the reading that they would like their team to discuss.

   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). This is a minimum expectation. I encourage all Team members to strive to respond to all members of their Team each week.

   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 Wesley are available electronically via the web through the ATS library. Students will each week submit to their Team folder a brief posting (50 words or less) of insights or commentary related to that study.

   Discussion in the Team folders will be evaluated as follows:

   a. Did you give a succinct, understandable statement that reflected your understanding of the course material and its relationship to the question posed?

   b. Did you reflect critically on the interface between course content and personal experience?

   c. Did you post your own answers/responses in a timely way, so as to promote conversation among the members of your team?

   d. How effective were you in generating ideas/proposals for group interaction?
e. How effective were you in your engagement with the ideas/proposals generated by your Team?
f. Did you respond to your Teammates as per the instructions for the exercise?

3. Kingdom Project/Reflection (20%): Students will spend a minimum of 12 hours participating in a Kingdom Project. A Kingdom Project is defined as involvement in a group ministry of some kind that touches the lives of those outside 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. Each student must confirm their project with the professor prior to beginning work on it.

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. 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 each of the papers submitted by their Team members.

4. Essay Exams: Exams will be assigned at the end of each Module. Questions and grading rubrics will be posted about two weeks before exams are due. Essay question responses will be no less than three and no more than five pages.

 Mid-Term Essay: Module 1 (20%).
 Mid-Term Essay: Module 2 (20%).
 Final Essay: Module 3 (20%).

Grading: Class work is evaluated at a graduate/professional school level and follows the ATS 2004-2006 Academic Catalog, p. 29. Please note the ATS policy on incomplete work. Remember that a good grade for an ATS class is a “B.” The grading scale is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94 – 100</td>
<td>Exceptional: surpassing, outstanding achievement of objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 93</td>
<td>Good: strong, significant achievement of objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 – 89</td>
<td>Acceptable: basic, essential achievement of objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83 – 86</td>
<td>Marginal: inadequate, minimal achievement of objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 – 82</td>
<td>Unacceptable: failure to achieve objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77 – 79</td>
<td>Acceptable: basic, essential achievement of objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73 – 76</td>
<td>Marginal: inadequate, minimal achievement of objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70 – 72</td>
<td>Unacceptable: failure to achieve objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67 – 69</td>
<td>Good: strong, significant achievement of objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63 – 66</td>
<td>Acceptable: basic, essential achievement of objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60 – 62</td>
<td>Marginal: inadequate, minimal achievement of objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59/below</td>
<td>Unacceptable: failure to achieve objectives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attendance and Late Work: Given the flexibility of online instruction it is expected that each student will “attend” class each week. This includes required interaction with Team members. “Absences” or delays in submitting assignments will be permitted only under extreme circumstances and must be arranged in advance. Failure to “attend” in a given week will significantly affect the final course grade. Grades for late work will be reduced by 10% if submitted by the end of the Module in which it is assigned, and reduced by 20% thereafter. It is important, however, to complete all work even if it is late.
Online Etiquette:  Note that these guidelines reflect the assessment criteria above and will bear upon grading.

1. Please limit each general posting (whether initial offering or response) to between 50 and 75 words unless directed to do otherwise. My class posts may often be longer.

2. Remember that your Team members and colleagues do not have the benefit of your non-verbal cues—hearing your tone of voice and seeing your body language. Think about how your communications will be received. Please do not use colored fonts or fonts larger than 12 point. I.e., please don’t shout at us.

3. Please utilize gender inclusive language in all your posts. Specify gender only when a topic specifically applies to a particular gender.

4. Employ appropriate and professional grammar in your posts and ongoing e-discussions, even while accentuating brevity.

Course Window and Icons:

1. The **Course Center** contains a copy of the syllabus as well as all class Modules. No interaction takes place here. This is where I post class materials.

2. The **Discussion Center** is used for all public class communication. Also, whenever you have a question or a comment about the course, the Modules, the assignments, or anything else which would be of interest to your classmates and me, post them here.

3. The **IS501 Office** is for private correspondence between you (individual students) and me. The Office contains items that you do not want to appear publicly before all of your classmates, including assignments, papers, projects, and personal correspondence. The Office should not be used to ask general course-related questions.

4. The **Archives Center** is used for storing conversations that have already taken place during the course of the semester. The Center keeps the Discussion Center from becoming unmanageable.

5. The **Chat Center** is intended for real-time interaction among students. You can get together with other members to study, ask questions, or to explore topics. Remember: None of the conversations carried on in this location are ever saved. When it is appropriate, I will also “chat” with individual students through the Center.

6. 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, chapel services in Estes Chapel, ExL Updates, Guidelines for Success, Helpful Hints, Interesting Links, a Powerpoint Viewer, and a Real Audio Player.

7. The **Team Folder** represents a limited version of the Discussion Center. As a class, we will divide into teams. The Team Folder is where team members place class work requested to be done with a Team-oriented component in mind. As well, the Team Folder is a place for discussions that arise—beyond other class discussions—both spontaneously and out of Team-oriented assignments. These add to the robustness of individual leaning and to the class discussion as a whole. The Team Folder is outside of the purview of the Discussion Center and only available to the team members assigned to it. Often, assignments will involve your Team Folder.

ExL Contact Information:

For general questions and administrative assistance for 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 the **Information Commons:**

Info_Commons@asburyseminary.edu
Phone: (859) 858-2233
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/icomm/hours.shtml.
2. **Materials Requests:** To search the library catalog for available materials, go to:  
   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 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/icomm/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).

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IS501 Course Schedule  
September 6 to December 16, 2005

Introduction

Week 1: Introduction and Organization of the Course

Module One: Kingdom—Living the Biblical Story

Weeks 2-5:
Reading: *The Drama of Scripture*
*The Challenge of Jesus*
Kingdom Project: Assigned
Mid-Term Essay

Module Two: World—Context for Living

Weeks 6-9:
Reading: *The Next Christendom*
*Colossians Remixed*
Kingdom Project: Field experience completed
Mid-Term Essay

Module Three: Church—Living in the World

Weeks 10-14:
Reading: *Missional Church*
*Christianity Incorporated*
Kingdom Reflection: Completed
Final Essay
Course Wrap-up