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IS 501 Christian Formation: Kingdom, Church, and World

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Attention:

This extended learning syllabus is intended for distribution to members of IS501X3 and others by my permission. It is not intended for general distribution on the Internet. Permission to copy, in whole or in part, must be requested from me, the teacher (Clint Baldwin). Thank you for honoring these instructions.

Welcome:

Yes, indeed – Welcome! Kingdom, Church, & World is a course that has the potential to change our lives. It is a course that guides us toward reexamining (or examining for the first time!) our presuppositions, our theories, and our actions as we pilgrimage in this life.

We will consider issues that will stretch us...all that we are – our minds (the way we think), our hearts (the way we feel), and our responses (the way we act)! Such growth oriented activity is both difficult and rewarding. It is difficult because we have to critique areas of ourselves with which we may have become inappropriately comfortable. It is rewarding because we come away changed persons; renewed and reinvigorated to allow God to work in and through us. This is indeed Good News!

As you can see, this course places a high priority on the integration of thinking, feeling, and action; on the interweaving of theoria and praxis (theory and practice). In order to be the bearers of God’s Kingdom in, for, and to the world, it is imperative that we actively live out the beliefs we advocate. More soberly, it is likely that we actually do live out our beliefs in the world – however, they are often not the ones we verbally espouse. How can we, in our own lives, move toward moderating Paul’s dilemma concerning the mind, the flesh, will, and action in Romans 7; the dilemma that leads to participating in activities other than our intentions?

Immediately below you will find some operational “nuts and bolts” necessary for traversing this extended learning course. Subsequently, we will more extensively engage specific aspects of IS501X3 – Kingdom, Church, & World.
**ExL Support Team:**

As we navigate IS501X3 together, the following are people available to assist us:

**Technical difficulties** with FirstClass, contact Jared Porter:  
Exl_Support@asburyseminary.edu

**General ExL questions or concerns**, contact Kevin Osborn:  
Extended_Learning@asburyseminary.edu  
OR  
ExL_Director@asburyseminary.edu

**Interlibrary loans**, contact Dot James:  
Dot_James@asburyseminary.edu

**Library questions/research support**, contact Information Commons:  
Email: Information_Commons@asburyseminary.edu  
Link: http:www.asburyseminary.edu/library  
Toll-Free Reference Help Line: 1.866.454.2733

**Advanced Library research assistance/concerns**, contact Hannah Kirsh:  
Hannah_Kirsh@asburyseminary.edu

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**Specifities on Obtaining Library Materials and Research Assistance:**

ExL students are encouraged to make use of local libraries, if possible. However, library services are always available to students through the Asbury Seminary Library. All requests for books and journal articles should be made online by going to the following link: http://asbury.hosts.atlas-sys.com/illiad/logon.html.

Advanced Research assistance -- which includes using various online databases, or doing research on a specific topic -- is available by contacting Hannah Kirsh (Hannah_Kirsch@asburyseminary.edu).

To request material from the Asbury Seminary Library, please follow the instructions on the library loan page (http://asbury.hosts.atlas-sys.com/illiad/logon.html). Students who live within a 50 mile radius of either the Florida or the Wilmore campus should come to campus to obtain their materials.

Please allow 5-10 business days for all requests to be filled. ExL students are billed for the cost of photocopies (5 cents per page) if the materials are not available in electronic format; however, shipping via media rate is free. (Media rate normally takes 5 business days for shipping, but it can take two weeks to addresses in the West). Express mail services (prices vary according to weight) and scanning (5 cents per page in pdf format) are also available. Requests generally require 1-2 business days to be processed. Plan ahead and make your requests early enough to allow for shipping and processing!
Course Windows and Icons:

The **Course Center** will contain a copy of the syllabus as well as all class modules.

**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 concerning each module.

The **Prayer Center** is a place where any praises, prayer needs or requests, etc. can be placed so that we as a class can pray for each other as such situations emerge in relation to the class or our lives in general.

The **Discussion Center** is to 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 the professor, you should post to the Discussion Center.

The **Team Folder** represents a limited version of the Discussion Center. As a class, we will divide into teams of between four and six. The Team Folder is where team members place class work requested to be done with a Team oriented component in mind (it is shown below how this is made specific). As well, the Team Folder is a place for discussions that arise – beyond other class discussions – both spontaneously and out of Team oriented assignments that will in turn add to the robustness of individual learning and to the class discussion as a whole. The Team Folder is outside of the purview of the Discussion Center…it is only available for the team members assigned to it. Often, assignments will involve your Team Folder.

The **IS501X3 Office** is for private correspondence between you and the professor. This will contain items that you do not want to appear publicly before all of your classmates.

(You may reach me by email at Clint_Baldwin@asburyseminary.edu prior to the beginning of the course. Once the course begins, as per above, you may utilize the "to Office" icon to send messages to me that are intended for my eyes only.)

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. **Remember:** None of the conversations carried on in this location are ever saved.

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.
Catalog 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.

Course Introduction and Specific Description:

Again, welcome! ☺ This is a course about which I am very passionate! There are few courses that give one an opportunity to critically examine one’s presuppositions and commitments regarding the nature of the Kingdom of God and its relatedness to the concepts of Church and World. These are three distinct, but intimately related aspects of the reality in which we all engage while practicing/living ministry – whether we be laypersons or clergy. Yet, even while by default we all participate in this reality composed of these components, how can ministry be most meaningfully engaged in without thoroughly examining aspects of this reality? In this course, we will have opportunity to consider a number of questions and issues including:

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?

By the end of the semester, we will have examined these matters and we shall have given first-order attempts at theologically sound and praxis-oriented answers to these questions. Let the fun begin!

Course Rationale:

It is altogether reasonable to ask, with regard to a given course, why a particular course is required, and so it is here. While there is a sense in which much of this whole syllabus is intended to answer that question, this course can be further characterized 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 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 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 the faithful performance of scripture by God’s people. Issues of importance include:
1. What constitutes a biblical “meta-narrative”? Is there only one or are there multiple ones?
2. What role do these meta-narratives play?
3. How is one to understand the relation of “part” and “whole” when interpreting the biblical narratives?
4. What does it mean to refer to the biblical materials as “narrative”?
5. How does the biblical narrative subvert our familiar ways of being, thinking and acting in the world?

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 his Church. This may 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 people of God and to understand what it means to be in His service in the World as representatives of his Kingdom.

Course Objectives/Expected Student Competencies:

Having successfully completed this course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate an understanding of the biblical meta-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 meta-narrative;
3. Draw out major theological, moral, and philosophical implications of this meta-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 meta-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 meta-narrative;
6. Articulate the ecclesial and missional implications of this meta-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).
Course Requirements:

1. **Students will be assigned to a Team** consisting of between 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:
   
   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 (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.

3. 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 available electronically via the web through the ATS library (they are also available in your assigned readings packet). Students will each week submit to their Team folder a brief posting (50 words or less) of **insights or commentary** related to that study.

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. (Each student will need to confirm their project with the professor)

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

6. **Mid-Term (1) essay.** This essay gives 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 essay 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 question about two weeks before it is due.

7. **Mid-Term (2) essay.** This essay 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 essay 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 essay.** This essay 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 specifically individualized 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.

   The essay 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.
Course Assessment

Student's fulfillment of the course requirements will contribute to their course grade in accord with the following percentages:

1. Interaction Papers and participation in discussion in their Team folders – 200 pts.

Discussion in the Team folders will be evaluated as follows:

1. Did you give a succinct, understandable statement that reflected your understanding of the course material and its relationship to the question posed?
2. Did you reflect critically on the interface between course content and personal experience?
3. Did you post your own answers/responses in a timely way, so as to promote conversation among the members of your team?
4. How effective were you in generating ideas/proposals for group interaction?
5. How effective were you in your engagement with the ideas/proposals generated by others on your Team?
6. Did you respond to your Teammates as per the instructions for the exercise?
7. Did you attend to issues of form and style appropriate to academic writing?
   - I expect us (myself included) to use proper English grammar at all times. This includes complete sentences, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. For assistance in this area, consult a standard style guide such as Carol Slade, Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports, and Theses (11th ed., Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999). If you consistently/egregiously utilize poor grammar you can expect it to be reflected in your final grade.
   - Specifically for your formal papers, you may put documentation in parentheses, e.g., (Donovan, 121). However, also include a bibliography at the end of your document so your readers will know to what exact source the parenthetical reference refers – even if the references are to the texts we are employing in this course.

Course Grading Criteria:

Graded Work:

Asbury Seminary defines grades using the following criteria (Catalog, p. 28):

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

A plus (+) or minus (−) indicates positions between categories (for example, B+ = very good; C− = slightly below acceptable, etc.).

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 2001-03 Catalog p. 29)

Course Expectations:

What you can expect of me

1. Prompt replies to questions and postings (i.e., usually generated during my next office hours after receiving the posting).
2. Interaction, participation, and direction in the ongoing discussions that will occur over the course of the semester.
3. Prompt feedback and assessment on assignments.
4. Occasional bloopers as we together navigate this mode of teaching & interacting.
5. My energy and excitement as we engage in studying and learning the material at hand.

What I expect of you

1. Participation in online discussion both in the Discussion Center, in your Team Folder, and in our online chats as the need arises.
2. On time completion of assignments.
3. Your honest questions when you don’t understand the material or the instructions.
4. Your patience as we work together in this medium.
5. Your willingness to engage in issues you may find stretching and challenging.

What I expect us to get personally from the class

1. A new, different, and expanded understanding of the way God is working in the world through the Church and through ourselves as part of the Church
2. Some possible witness and relationship procedures that will give us more confidence and effectiveness in our relationships
3. Insight into how mission in various contexts may be fruitfully carried out.
4. A team of prayer supporters and colleagues that may last beyond the boundaries of this class.
Course Online Etiquette:

As stated by my colleague and good friend Matt Zahniser:

A crucial element of this course is the dialogue we enter into with each other. All discussions will be characterized by 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. **Love of God and neighbor enhances learning. Practice a hermeneutic of charity.**

Indeed, this course calls for good “e-manners.”

[ note: these guidelines reflect the assessment criteria stated above and will bear upon grading]

1. Please limit each general posting (whether initial offering or response) to between 50 and 75 words [unless instructed to do otherwise]. My posts to you 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. **So be careful how you put things in writing!** ☺ (this is meant to be a case-in-point) You may be perceived as shouting, when you only meant to add an emphasis.
3. As per ATS guidelines, utilize gender inclusive language in all of your posts. Only specify gender when a topic is meant to specifically apply to a particular gender.
4. Employ appropriate grammar in your posts...much more so in your papers, but even while accentuating brevity, it is also important in your ongoing e-discussions.

How to Submit Course Work:

Unless specified otherwise, you will submit coursework that is due by dragging it/sending it to the IS501X3 Office Icon. *Each of your assignments to be handed-in should come with a document title beginning with your last name, then your first name, and finally a short item description such as “midterm, etc., ending with “.doc” or “.rtf” or whatever appropriate designator.*

Course Material:

Required Reading:


• Readings Packet (available from ATS Cokesbury bookstore)
  • Pieces from: Merton, Thomas; Arnold, Eberhard; & Word Made Flesh, *The Cry*
  • Wesley Readings (these are available electronically via the web through the ATS library as well as in your readings packet)
**Required Media:**

These clips are being sent to you on CD/DVD via mail. Each module/section will discuss specific aspects of this material as it comes due.

**Recommended Reading:**

Suggestions will be offered in the modules/sections as this better facilitates associating texts with a context

*Please note: readings may be supplemented from time-to-time with materials made available via electronic media. Advance notice will be given as possible.*

**Course Schedule:**

**Beginnings…**
Our course officially begins on Tuesday, June 1, 2004. Sometime during the day, our course icon will appear on your FirstClass desktop.

**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 9-12 – Module Three: Kingdom, Church, and World**

(Note: A detailed reading and assignment schedule will appear in each Module)

**Endings…**
Our course will officially end (communication will come to a close) on Friday, August 27, 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 August 27.