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MS 671 Anthropology for Christian Mission

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introduction to cultural anthropology, with application to Christian evangelization and mission.

From before the beginning (Genesis 1), our Triune God has been in mission, reaching out in self-giving, other-embracing love (John 1 & I John 1). We now call this the missio Dei, “the mission of God” to remind us that it is not our mission, nor does mission belong to the church. How God does mission is best understood in the sending of Jesus the Christ (Ephesians 2:11-15). As the Father has sent Jesus, so Jesus sends us (John 20:21). It is the life of Jesus here on earth that we most clearly see our example for mission: Jesus emptied himself, came down to the people, developed relationships and learned the local language for 30 years, and then began to preach about the Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:17; Luke 4:43) and perform acts of mercy and justice (Luke 4:18-21) that the people saw as signs and wonders of the presence of God among them (Luke 4:22,32,36).

The acts of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit (the proper title of Acts) continued in the apostles, deacons and those who were called later, like Paul. The apostles began in mission with the Jews (Acts 2-7). The deacons reached out a little further to the half-Jews (Acts 8) and then to the proselytes (Acts 8). Finally, Peter reluctantly reached out to those who were not Jewish, half-Jewish or even wanna-be Jews but were full fledged Gentiles (Acts 10). Still, it was the multi-cultural church at Antioch (not the mono-cultural church at Jerusalem) that commissioned and sent out the first missionaries: Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13). What they did changed not just the composition of the church but the life of the church. Jesus the Messiah (Christos) became Jesus the Lord (Kyrios) (Acts 28), because that is what the Greeks and Romans were looking for. New understandings of Jesus brought fuller meaning to the cosmic event of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus was interpreted anew as the Logos (John 1), the Pleroma (Colossians 1:19, 2:9-10), the Mystery and Wisdom of God (Ephesians). Every generation deserves a fresh reading of the gospel. Who will speak now to the migrant generation of this globalized world?

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 triilogue 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 for Master’s Level Students:
1. Other People’s Worlds: An Introduction to Cultural and Social Anthropology (1999)
2. The Christ of the Indian Road (1924)
   -- Michael A. Rynkiewich (These articles need not be bought; they can be accessed through the library.)
5. One Church, Many Tribes (2000).
   -- Richard Twiss. Ventura, CA: Regal Books (Gospel Light)

Assignments for Master’s Level Students:
1. Critical Reflection Papers. There will be ten papers due at the beginning of the middle weeks of the semester. 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 concepts and 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 way of looking at the world. The final paragraph should suggest how these assumptions relate to theology and missiology, that is, what difference does this perspective make for the work of the missionary and/or the local indigenous church worker. These papers should be two pages, single spaced, and are due as scheduled. (Note: these are of no use if they are turned in late).
2. Do an ethnography on a local cultural scene. Instructions will be given in class.
3. Write a Theology of Mission for you and/or your church. This will be your final. It will be very practical. You may write as senior pastor of a missional church, as missions pastor, or as a missionary for your supporting churches.

Texts for Th.M. and Doctoral Level Students:
1. All of the above texts, plus…
   -- Bruce Knauft McGraw Hill ISBN 0072972637
   -- Joel Robbins University of California Press ISBN 0520238001

Assignments for Th.M. and Doctoral Level Students:
1. *Do an ethnography* on a local cultural scene. Instructions will be given in class.
2. *Write a critical review* of one of the two ethnographies listed above.
3. *Write a Theology of Mission* for you and/or your church. This will be your final. It will be very practical. You may write as senior pastor of a missional church, as missions pastor, or as a missionary for your supporting churches.

**COURSE EVALUATION**

**Master’s Level Students.**

- 30% Critical Reflection Papers (10 papers @ 3% each)
- 30% Ethnography.
- 40% Theology of Mission Position Paper.

**Th.M. and Doctoral Level Students**

- 30% Ethnography
- 30% Critical Review of Ethnography
- 40% Theology of Mission 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 9:30-12:00 and Thursday 1:00-2:30 p.m. It is best to make an appointment in advance, but you may check during hours to see if others have not taken a time slot. Other times may be available by appointment. My office is in the ESJ School on the third floor of the McPheeters Centre, Room 308. Telephone: 858-2218