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# IS 501 Christian Formation: Kingdom, Church, and World

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## Asbury Theological Seminary

### **IS501 – Christian Formation: Kingdom, Church, and World**

**FALL 2004**

**(Tentative)**

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### **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?

### **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. Kingdom, Church, and World are three distinct, but intimately related aspects of the reality in which we all engage while practicing/living ministry – whether we are 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 meta-narrative or are there multiple narratives?
2. What role do narratives play?
3. How is one to understand the relation of “part” and “whole” when interpreting biblical narratives?
4. What does it mean to refer to biblical materials as “narrative”?
5. How do biblical narratives 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 who 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 motif (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 motif;
3. Draw out major theological, moral, and philosophical implications of this motif, 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 motif;
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 motif;
6. Articulate the ecclesial and missional implications of this motif--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. Teams/Groups**

The first week of class students will be assigned to a Team consisting of between four to six persons. The Team will be a primary venue for discussion, mutual accountability, and for fulfilling class assignments – including the Kingdom Project. The teams will meet each week for approx. 75-90 minutes in order to accomplish the required directives.

#### **A. Interaction Papers**

Before each class period, each team member is required to submit an **Interaction Paper to the Team folder** that will initiate discussion among team members over the required reading.

Interaction papers will have three parts:

- a. In part one you will write **a few sentences** that identify the subject of a particular reading and what is the **thesis** or concern in relation to that subject.

- b. In part two you will briefly **identify one or two specific issues** raised in the reading that are important to you and briefly (in a few sentences) indicate why you think the issue(s) is (are) important.
- c. In part three you will raise **one or two questions** prompted by the reading that you would like your team to discuss during class-time team-meetings.

Further, while you are not obligated to do this, you may and are encouraged to respond to your team members' postings throughout the time between classes, offering further postings beyond the required material in order to more fully engage everything you are encountering through class (or from other areas) and in order to more fully engender group camaraderie, cohesion, & intimacy.

### **B. Team Readings/Meetings**

In each offered class Module, students will be asked to engage in the **study of biblical passages and/or some 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). The primary venue for engagement of these readings will be in the Teams. Each class period, students will meet with their Teams (approx. 75-90 min.) to **discuss insights and offer commentary** related to their studies of the readings. Each person in the team is expected to lead/facilitate the discussion at least once during the semester.

## **2. Kingdom Project**

Each Team will come up with a choice for a Kingdom Project to be engaged in together. While the ideal is for members to participate in this together, it is allowed for members to participate at different times/dates in the cases of scheduling conflicts (Please remember that partnership in engagement is the goal; individualized divergence should be undertaken as a last resort). Each student in each team 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. Each team will need to confirm their project with the professor. After completion of the Kingdom Project, as time permits, each team will share their experiences with the class.

### **A. Kingdom Project Reflection Paper**

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 – if these stipulations are not followed, there will be an initial one letter-grade drop and the paper will then be critiqued as normal.

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.

3. **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 – if these stipulations are not followed, there will be an initial one letter-grade drop and the paper will then be critiqued as normal. I will post the specific essay question about two weeks before it is due.

4. **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 – if these stipulations are not followed, there will be an initial one letter-grade drop and the paper will then be critiqued as normal. I will post the specific essay question about two weeks before it is due.

5. **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 in 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, power, 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 – if these stipulations are not followed, there will be an initial one letter-grade drop and the paper will then be critiqued as normal. I will post the specific essay question about two weeks before it is due.

### **Course Assessment**

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

1. <b>Interaction Papers, discussion/participation in Team/Course matters both in class and online–</b>	200 pts.
2. <b>Kingdom Project &amp; Reflection Paper –</b>	200 pts.
3. <b>Midterm (1) Essay –</b>	200 pts.
4. <b>Midterm (2) Essay –</b>	200 pts.
5. <b>Final Essay –</b>	200 pts.
<hr/>	
Total = 1000 pts.	

### **Interaction in FirstClass IS501 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 and/or possibility for reflection 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. As per ATS guidelines, did you utilize gender inclusive language?
8. 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.

### **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.).

The evaluative point range for this course will be:

<b>A</b> = 950-1000	<b>B-</b> = 800-829	<b>D+</b> = 670-699
<b>A-</b> = 900-949	<b>C+</b> = 770-799	<b>D</b> = 630-669
<b>B+</b> = 870-899	<b>C</b> = 730-769	<b>D-</b> = 600-629
<b>B</b> = 830-869	<b>C-</b> = 700-729	<b>F</b> = 590 or below

### **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)

### **Attendance Policy:**

Attendance is expected. However, if unavoidable circumstances occur arrangements can be made. If more than one class is missed extra reading is necessary (100 pages per day missed) along with a two page, single-spaced summary of the reading to be handed in within one week of the missed class; if the hand-in date is missed a 100 point grade reduction will result. Lastly, if more than two days are missed a student/professor conversation is necessary and a reduction in grade is likely.

### **Late Assignments:**

If an assignment is turned in late it will be graded but no feedback will be provided and grade reduction will be in proportion to the lateness of the work and in proportion to the reason for not turning in the assignment on time.

### **Course Expectations:**

#### **What you can expect of me**

1. Prompt replies to questions and postings
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 (it's reality)
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.
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 this semester.
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 Component:**

1. Each student will have an IS501 icon available on their FirstClass desktop. There will be a **Discussion Center** for general class discussion that is accessible to everyone, an **Office** where you will post personal questions/concerns to the professor with those messages only being accessible by the professor, and **Team Folders** where teams will post their team assignments & interactions with each other with these messages only being accessible by the members assigned to any given team and by the professor.

### **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."

As we interact with each other, in the Team Folders, the Discussion Center, and the Office

**[note: these guidelines reflect the assessment criteria stated above and will also 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. As above, employ appropriate grammar in your posts...much more so in your papers. Even while accentuating brevity, it is important to remain comprehensible.

### **How to Submit Course Work:**

Unless specified otherwise, you will submit coursework that is due by dragging it/sending it to the IS501 Office Icon area that will be provided in each of your FirstClass accounts. All coursework is to be submitted in MS Word format. *Each of your attached electronic assignments to be handed-in should come with a document designator beginning with your last name, then your first name, and finally a short item description such as “midterm, etc., ending with “.doc” or “.rtf” (ex. – BaldwinClintmidterm.doc).* Please pay close attention to these guidelines; not adhering to this procedure will result in a letter grade drop for that particular assignment.

### **Course Material:**

#### **Required Reading:**

- **Brueggemann, Walter.** *The Prophetic Imagination.* Fortress Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2001.
- **Clapp, Rodney.** *Border Crossings.* Brazos Press, 2000.
- **Donovan, Vincent.** *Christianity Rediscovered.* Orbis, 25<sup>th</sup> Ann. Ed., 2003.
- **Hauerwas, Stanley and Will Willimon.** *Resident Aliens.* Abingdon Press, 1989.
- **McLaren, Brian.** *A New Kind of Christian.* Jossey-Bass, 2001.
- **Wright, Tom.** *The Challenge of Jesus.* Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1999.
- **Yancey, Phillip.** *What’s So Amazing About Grace? – Visual Edition.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.
- **Yoder, John Howard.** *The Politics of Jesus.* Wm.B. Eerdmans & Paternoster Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1994/1999.
- **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:**

This will be made available to you as necessary.

#### **Recommended Reading:**

- **Boff, Clodovis & Boff, Leonardo.** *Introducing Liberation Theology.* Orbis, 1987.
- **Clapp, Rodney.** *A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society.* Intervarsity Press, 1996.
- **Coelho, Paulo.** *The Fifth Mountain .* HarperFlamingo, 1998.
- **Hauerwas, Stanley.** *A Community of Character.* Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1981.

- **McLaren, Brian.** *The Story We Find Ourselves in.* Jossey-Bass, 2003.
- **Newbiggin, Leslie.** *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission.* Eerdmans, 1995.
- **Snyder, Howard.** *Kingdom, Church, & World.* Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1985/2001.
- **Snyder, Howard.** *Liberating the Church.* Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1996.
- **Snyder, Howard.** *Models of the Kingdom.* Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1991/2001.
- **Snyder, Howard.** *The Radical Wesley.* Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1980/1996.

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

### **Course Schedule:**

(Specifics will be offered as class commences. For those who are “antsy” ☺, we will be reading Wright first and then Brueggemann.)

### **Beginnings...**

Our course officially begins Friday, Sept. 10, 2004. However, please begin checking your FirstClass desktop for our course icon and possible messages therein at the commencement of the semester.

<a href="#"><u>Week 1 – Friday, Sept. 10</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Week 5 – Friday, Nov. 5</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Week 2 – Friday, Sept. 22</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Week 6 – Friday, Nov. 19</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Week 3 – Friday, Oct. 8</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Week 7 – Friday, Dec. 3</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Week 4 – Friday, Oct. 24</u></a>	

**Endings...** – Dec. 3 will be our ending class...