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IS 501 Kingdom, Church, and World

Brian G. Edgar

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ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

KINGDOM, CHURCH, WORLD

- IS 501 XL-

Syllabus

PRELIMINARY VERSION

A final version of this syllabus may be provided at the start of the course.
However, apart from matters beyond my control (eg texts suddenly become unavailable)
the information here can be relied upon and texts purchased etc.

Dr. Brian Edgar,

Professor of Theological Studies

Fall Semester, 2008

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. 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. How are we to participate as the Church in God's mission to the World?

The course places a high priority on the integration of thinking, feeling, and action – on the interweaving of theory and practice. So let's begin to ask together what it means to be the people of God? What does it mean to be those distinct people that bear witness to the grace and power that is ours through the work and mission of God?

The development of this syllabus and all course materials is a product of a collaborative effort by the Kingdom, Church, and World faculty committee. This course is team taught and team developed. The syllabi, therefore, for the various sections of the course might be similar in content and design. This team design is foundational for our thinking together.

The syllabus is intended for distribution to members of this course and others by my permission. It is not intended for general distribution on the internet or elsewhere. Permission to copy, in whole or part, must be requested in writing from this professor. Thanks for honoring this!

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 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 "thinking" and "living" theologically, biblically, and holistically. Issues of importance include:

1. What does it mean to refer to the biblical materials as "narrative"? How is one to understand the relation of "part" and "whole" when interpreting the biblical narratives? What constitutes a biblical "meta-narrative"? Is there only one or are there multiple ones? What role do these meta-narratives play?
2. What role does the kingdom of God play in the scriptural story?
3. What does the biblical narrative tell us about God's mission (the *missio dei*)?
4. How does the biblical narrative subvert our familiar ways of being, thinking and acting in the world?
5. What is the role of culture in shaping our own understanding of scripture, mission and ministry?
6. How does Wesleyan theology understand scripture, the kingdom of God, and participation 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, the Church, and to understand what it means to be in God's service in the world as agents of God's kingdom mission in the world.

Course Outcomes

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

1. Articulate an understanding of the biblical meta-narrative 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-narratives;
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*).

Required Reading:

- Bartholomew, Craig G. and Michael W. Goheen. *The Drama of Scripture: Finding our Place in the Biblical Story*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004.
- Clapp, Rodney. *A Peculiar People*, Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996
- Frost, Michael and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: innovation and mission for the 21st century church*, Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrikson, 2003
- Jenkins, Philip, *The Next Christendom: the coming of global Christianity*, Oxford University Press, 2002
- Newbigin, Leslie. *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, (Revised Edition) Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995
- Wright, Tom. *The Challenge of Jesus*, Downer's Grove: InterVarsity or London: SPCK, 1999

*Please note: these readings will be supplemented from time-to-time with materials available electronically. The IS501 Small Group Packet which some classes use for this course is **not** required as the reading in that packet is available electronically. I assume that the Small Group Packet will continue to be available from ATS Cokesbury bookstore but you should only purchase it if you wish to have a paper version of the reading that you do not have to copy yourself.*

The following material is required reading:

John Wesley, *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodist*, available at http://www.godrules.net/library/wesley/274wesley_h6.htm

John Wesley, *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* available at http://www.godrules.net/library/wesley/274wesley_h2.htm

John Wesley, *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* available at http://www.godrules.net/library/wesley/274wesley_h3.htm .

John Wesley, *Thoughts on Methodism* (still looking for an electronic version. If you can find one please let me know)

John Wesley, *The Character of the Methodist* available at <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/character/>

John Wesley, *The General Spread of the Gospel* (Sermon 63) available at <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/63/>

Recommended Reading:

Budde, Michael and Robert Brimlow, *Christianity Incorporated: How Big Business is Buying the Church*. Brazos Press 2002

Clapp, Rodney. *Border Crossings*, Brazos Press, 2000

Donovan, Vincent. *Christianity Rediscovered*, Orbis, 2003

Escobar, Samuel, *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone*. InterVarsity, 2003.

Hart, Trevor. *Faith Thinking*, InterVarsity, 1995

Hauerwas, Stanley. *A Community of Character*, University of Notre Dame,

Hauerwas, Stanley and Will Willimon. *Resident Aliens*, Abingdon Press, 1989

McLaren, Brian. *A New Kind of Christian*, Jossey-Bass, 2001

Middleton, J. Richard and Brian J. Walsh, *Truth is Stranger than it Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age*. InterVarsity Press, 1995

Pohl, Christine, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*. Eerdmans, 1999.

Robert, Dana, *Gospel Bearers, Gender Barriers: Missionary Women in the Twentieth Century*. Orbis, 2002

Stackhouse, Max. *The Church in a Global Era*, Eerdmans,

Snyder, Howard, *Kingdom, Church, and World: Biblical Themes for Today*. Wipf & Stock. (Originally published as *A Kingdom Manifesto*, 1985, InterVarsity Press.)

Snyder, Howard. *Models of the Kingdom*. Abingdon, 1991.

Walker, Andrew. *Telling the Story*, Wipf and Stock Publishers,

Yoder, John Howard. *The Politics of Jesus*, Eerdmans, 2nd edition, 1994

Course Assessment:

Students will be required to undertake a variety of assessments including interaction papers and participation in group discussion; essays and a Kingdom Project and Reflection Paper. For the **Kingdom Project students will spend a minimum of 12 hours participating in a group ministry (with other Christians)** of some kind that touches the lives of those outside of the church with the presence of the Kingdom of God. This project should be one serving the marginalized: poor, oppressed, etc. It should

include face to face interaction with persons, preferably non-Christian persons. Students are encouraged to do the project with a group (accountability group, family, small group from church, etc.). Possibilities for the Kingdom Project may include a ministry within which a student is already participating if approved by the professor. Each student must confirm the project with the professor prior to beginning to work on it. You should begin thinking about your project as soon as possible.

Near the end of the semester, 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. Specific instructions for this paper will be posted in the course center.

Starting date:

Our course will begin on September 2, 2008.

Instructor

Dr Edgar is Professor of Theological Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary. He is an Australian scholar who has taught for many years in undergraduate and graduate programs at a number of Australian and international theological institutions. Previously he was the Director of Theology and Public Policy for the Australian Evangelical Alliance. He is a minister of the Word of the Uniting Church in Australia and is author of *The Message of the Trinity* (IVP, 2004) and a number of other publications. He is also a member of the World Evangelical Alliance Theological Commission.

Prayers

Students are encouraged to use the Prayer Forum in Moodle. We have the privilege of being able to support one another in this way. Please pray regularly for the others in the class. Although prayers and prayer requests can be posted at any time each student will be asked, on a roster basis, to provide a 'prayer of the week'. Please try and relate the theme of the prayer to the topic being covered that week. It can be an original prayer or one you have drawn from somewhere else. All students are encouraged to pray this prayer as they begin their study for that week. This means that the prayer for the week needs to be posted up before the week begins. A roster will appear in the Prayer Centre and you will be reminded to visit it during the preliminary, introductory module.

Video

Videos will be available on the web-site. Please note that the images (various pictures and drawings) which appear within the video are copyrighted by other people and organizations and while they can be used in this context for educational purposes you are not permitted to make copies of them or reproduce them in any way. Sorry about that, but please do not involve yourself or Asbury in any legal issues.

Research Responsibilities

While a considerable amount of material is available in set texts, provided in supplementary reading and advice is available from the instructor, students are reminded of their responsibility to find their own study material, especially when undertaking assignments. Remember that the Asbury library allows a generous amount of time for

borrowing – six weeks – and they will bear the cost of posting material to you (though you have to pay to return them).

ExL Support Contact Information

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:

a. 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/information/hours.htm>

2. Materials Requests:

a. To search the library catalog for available materials, click here:

<http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/index.htm>

b. 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.

c. 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:

a. ExL students are encouraged to contact the Information Commons for research assistance including help 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. Asbury Scholar- Online Databases:

a. To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-text journal databases, go to <http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/index.htm> 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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The World-wide-web

The web is a source for this course which is very mixed: some is great and some is very bad. You must be discerning. When surfing the web to find an image or a story about your favorite film star checking for site credibility probably doesn't rate very highly on your agenda. But when using the source for learning and referencing in a paper it is very important.