

CL 8530: Gospel and Cultures
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Spring 2009
NW251 / 9 am to 12:30 pm

This doctoral seminar explores the intersecting academic conversations of cultural studies, theology, and political theory towards the end of supporting missional congregations. This seminar encourages interdisciplinary theological conversation among the participants focused around global civil society and digital cultures in the context of missional leadership.

Participants will:

- Ask how engaging practices of leadership with congregations offers new opportunities for these congregations to engage their communities and the world as public companions with God in global civil society.
- Develop a working vocabulary and set of exploratory tools from within political theory, cultural studies, media studies, and theology for scholarly research that responds to the needs of contemporary religious communities as they arise within their wider environments.
- Problematize their own specific locations and communities by gaining a sense of the many ways in which theologies sensitive to cultural contexts reflect upon the subject matter of civil society and digital cultures.
- Develop a familiarity with the ideas and concerns that cluster around the issue of “gospel and cultures,” particularly as related to public theology and congregational leadership in global civil society. They will then use that familiarity to situate themselves within a particular scholarly discourse and investigate that discourse for its utility in supporting congregational mission.
- Work collaboratively as a research team on the class subject matter through participation in the interdisciplinary research of the seminar sessions and through public engagement with a class blog.

The essential questions this course takes up:

What does it mean to be a missional leader in the context of global civil society? How does confessing faith in word and deed in a public sphere occur – particularly amidst digital cultural spaces -- and in what ways might leaders shape and engage Christian faith in civil society? How does engaging the Bible within the context of civil society shape us for interpreting and confessing the Word of God? What resources and strategies exist for supporting these processes? What challenges and conflicts arise in doing so?

SEMINAR PRACTICES

Collaborative inquiry (presenter, 1st and 2nd respondents):

Each session of our seminar will be focused by a major presentation (20 - 30 minutes, accompanied by a 10-12 page paper and powerpoint/keynote presentation) of a substantial inquiry by a member of the seminar based on that week's reading, followed by questions and conversation led by two respondents. That presentation is due to all the seminar participants by 5pm on the Saturday prior to the scheduled class (cf. sign-up sheet).

The first respondent will open up questions and lines of inquiry with the presenter by presenting a short response (a 3-5 page paper with a short powerpoint/keynote presentation) (cf. sign-up sheet).

The second respondent will open the conversation with the rest of the seminar, suggesting a place to begin in the conversation started between the presenter and first respondent and, in spontaneous collaboration with the course professors, continually "float" the conversation in fruitful directions (cf. sign-up sheet).

Journalist:

Each session will also have an assigned journalist. The journalist will take notes and prepare a written summary of the discussion that will be posted to the class blog (<http://blog.luthersem.edu/cl8530/>) prior to the next seminar. The journal entry should be more than a series of quotations or notations, but rather it should show the main themes and topics of the session and its ties to previous conversations. Starting with the second session, each session of the seminar will begin with a presentation by the journalist of his/her Journal entry (cf. sign-up sheet).

Self-assessment and learning:

The previous session's presenter will also take 3-5 minutes to reflect with the seminar participants on how his/her thinking on the topic has been changed or strengthened because of the previous session's work. At least one insight from that self-assessment should make it onto the course blog – most often this will be as a comment to the journalist's entry.

Critical incident inquiry:

Each week all participants will fill in a brief CIQ form anonymously, and this feedback will be shared at the beginning of the next week's seminar.

REQUIREMENTS & EVALUATION

Each seminar participant is required to complete the following assignments (percentage of grade in parentheses):

- (20) Lead the seminar as the main presenter (along with 10-12 page paper and media presentation)
- (15) Function as the 1st respondent at least once during the term (along with a 3-5 page paper and media presentation)
- (10) Function as the 2nd respondent at least once during the term
- (10) Perform the role of journalist at least once during the term
- (35) Write a final research paper (20-30 pages, appropriately referenced and formatted)
- (10) Participate in another colleague's paper by being a collaborative assessor (for both their draft and final assessment)

Performing each of these more than once, or commenting on the course blog, will be considered an act of supererogation that will be considered in many ways on the day of reckoning!

STANDARDS

The standards by which the successful achievement of the objectives will be measured are as follows. The successful seminar participant will be able to demonstrate his or her:

1. ability to handle the basic categories and positions with precision and clarity. This includes reformulating classical and traditional language into one's own words and constructing a theological position that undergirds effective research and ministry.
2. knowledge of basic vocabulary as demonstrated by fluent and intelligent use of it in theological discourse.
3. capacities to discern and evaluate between conflicting viewpoints within a collaborative inquiry and conversation so as to clearly delineate issues in ways that foster further fruitful research and mission.

SEMINAR PAPER AND ORAL EXAM

Students will write a seminar research paper on a topic of their choice linked to the questions under consideration, subject to approval by the instructors. The paper will critically examine a subject, scholarly work, figure, or line of argument introduced in the seminar that is related to the problems and issues in the student's field of study, while also keeping in mind the student's vocation as a missional theologian and teacher of the church within one's particular context. Students will be expected to carefully exposit a major subject, scholarly work, or figure from those surveyed in the course. This exposition should demonstrate ample attending to the source materials before engaging in

overt critique and constructive integration into a line of argument. Papers shall be typed, double-spaced, 20-30 pages in length, and prepared in accordance with whichever style manual is in use by a journal in the student's field to which such a paper might be submitted.

Seminar participants will submit a draft to the instructors and two other seminar participants—collaborative assessors—for critique, and for a one hour reflective conversation arranged by the author. Seminar participants will arrange a final one-hour oral exam on the final draft with the instructors and their collaborative assessors.

Deadlines:

Draft: due to collaborative assessors by **May 7, 2009.**

Reflective conversation: students must schedule their reflective conversation with two collaborative assessors by **May 11, 2009.**

Final draft: due to instructor and collaborative assessors by **May 14, 2009.**

Final oral exam: must be completed by **May 22, 2009.**

Failure to turn in the first draft and/or final draft of the seminar paper by the deadlines will result in a penalty of one-half grade on the final grade for each deadline missed.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Benkler, Yochai. *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom* (Yale University Press, 2007).

Bevans, Steven. *Models of Contextual Theology* (Orbis 2004).

Brown, D., Davaney, S. and Tanner, K. *Converging on Culture: Theologians in Dialogue with Cultural Analysis and Criticism* (Oxford, 2001).

Cohen, J. and Arato, A. *Civil Society and Political Theory* (MIT, 1992).

Fine, A., Sifry, M., Rasiej, A., and Levy, J. *Rebooting America: Ideas for Redesigning American Democracy for the Internet Age* (Personal Democracy Forum, 2008) [Available online at: <http://rebooting.personaldemocracy.com/>]

Mitchell, Jolyon. *Media Violence and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Scharer, M., and Hilberath, J. *The Practice of Communicative Theology: An Introduction to a New Theological Culture* (Crossroad, 2008).

Shirky, Clay. *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations* (Penguin, 2009).

Tanner, Kathryn. *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Fortress 1997).

SEMINAR CALENDAR

February 9 / Seminar orientation and introductions, Niebuhr typology

February 16 / Bevans

February 23 / Tanner

March 2 / Cohen and Arato, Part one, pp. 1 - 174

March 9 / Cohen and Arato, Part two, pp. 175 - 341

March 16 / Cohen and Arato, Part three, pp. 341 - 604

March 23 / Brown, Davaney, Tanner, Part one, pp. 1 - 87

March 30 / CI international gathering

April 6 / Brown, Davaney, Tanner, Part two, pp. 89 - 197

[[Spring Break / April 13]]

April 20 / Shirky
Fine, Sifry, Rasief, Levy

April 27 / Benkler

May 4 / Scharer and Hilberath

May 11 / Mitchell

SEMINAR PARTICIPATION

February 9	Orientation	Journalist
	_____	_____
February 16	Journalist	Presenter
	_____	_____
	1 st Respondent	2 nd Respondent
	_____	_____
February 23	Journalist	Presenter
	_____	_____
	1 st Respondent	2 nd Respondent
	_____	_____
March 2	Journalist	Presenter
	_____	_____
	1 st Respondent	2 nd Respondent
	_____	_____
March 9	Journalist	Presenter
	_____	_____
	1 st Respondent	2 nd Respondent
	_____	_____

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