

Civic action and pastoral leadership

2021 Spring Term | EL4550 | RFS course

The course begins with online work in the spring term, meets synchronously from February 26th – March 1st, and then concludes with various assignments the final one of which is due on May 21.

You must be present via zoom for these synchronous gathering times:

Friday, February 26: 5 pm to 8 pm

Saturday, February 27: 8:30 am to 11:20 am, 1:30 pm to 4:20 pm

Sunday, February 28: 2 pm to 4:50 pm, 6 pm to 8 pm

Monday, March 1: 8:30 am to 11:20 am, 1:30 pm to 4:20 pm

(February 5, 2021 syllabus version)

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Pronouns: She, her, hers

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Civic action and pastoral leadership.

The rise of digital technologies has rapidly shifted focus from that of “the private and the public” to the “personal and the collective.” In the process rising generations have little understanding of how traditional civic organizations and structures function. This course will focus on helping emerging pastoral leaders to reflect theologically on the structures and systems of civic action to gain a sense of what might be possible, and to encourage and empower lay people across generations. Questions addressed will include: how do courts function (eg. harassment, immigration), what kinds of state and federal aid might churches participate in utilizing (eg. county extension agents, nutrition programs), how can churches support local economic development, what kinds of nonprofit collaboration are possible, and what role can Christian public leaders play in civic action in pluralist and public spaces.

Full course (1.0)

Learning Objectives:

Following successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Map the basic elements of civic life in your immediate context (no smaller than town life, but no larger than statewide)
- Articulate clearly what your community of faith/belief teaches about civic engagement, and the specific theological resources it brings to the process
- Analyze how pastoral leaders have (or have not) been engaged in civic life in your context, and express your personal theological framework for embodying civic leadership through a community of faith
- Facilitate a difficult public conversation which grounds economic life in your theological convictions
- Embody a religious/spiritual practice which supports reflection on civic life
- Articulate the many different roles that are necessary in successful nonviolent civil resistance and how to support people in them
- Interpret public rhetoric through theological and media literate lenses

Program Objectives:

- MDIV: Graduates will testify to their baptismal callings that nurture the ongoing life of faith, hope, and love.
- MA in CYF: Graduates will employ theories of practical theology at the intersection of Divine and human action in the practice of children, youth, and family ministry.
- MA in LIM: Graduates will employ theories and practices of innovation and organizational transformation.
- MA in CM: Graduates will demonstrate acts of care and love within their ministry context

Reading (required):

- R. Bregman, *Utopia for Realists* (Back Bay Books, 2018) [978-0316471916]
 M. Cimperman, *Social Analysis for the 21st Century* (Orbis, 2015) [978-1626981430]
 K. Haga, *Healing Resistance: A Radically Different Response to Harm* (Parallax Press, 2020) [978-1946764430]
 R. Hobbs, *Mind Over Media: Propaganda Education for a Digital Age* (W.W. Norton Co. 2020) [978-0393713503]
 E. Liu, *Become America: Civic Sermons on Love, Responsibility, and Democracy* (Penguin Random House, 2019) [978-1632172570]
 “Government and civic engagement in the US: Discipleship in a Democracy” ELCA social statement adopted on June 24, 2020 (available via moodle)

Choose one of the following (this book should help you to resource your final project in theological terms and will be the book that you review for the course):

- K. Brown, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God* (Orbis, 2015) [978-1626981096]
- S. Craigo-Snell and C. Doucot, *No Innocent Bystanders: Becoming an Ally in the Struggle for Justice* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2017) [978-0664262624]
- S. Jones, *Call it Grace: Finding Meaning in a Fractured World* (Viking, 2019) [978-0735223646]
- H. Kim-Cragg, *Interdependence: A Postcolonial Feminist Practical Theology* (Pickwick, 2018)[978-1532617249]
- C. Moe Lobeda, *Public Church for the Life of the World* (Fortress Press, 2004) [978-0806649870]
- D. Sollee, *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance* (Fortress Press, 2001) [978-0800632663]

Recommended:

- H. Boyte, *Everyday Politics: Reconnecting Citizens and Public Life* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005)[978-0812219319]
- The Good Society: A Journal of Civic Studies (published by Penn State University Press)

An extensive list of additional **Resources** are available on my website:

<https://meh.religioused.org/web/civic/>

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

This course uses a combination of experiential engagement, cognitive study, and writing assignments to support students in meeting the learning goals. We will engage together online briefly prior to our synchronous online gathering in late February. We will then use the four days of RFS synchronous time to explore, integrate, and practice the ideas of the course. Following the RFS four days we will return to the asynchronous online environment to sort through and reflect upon the main questions and ideas of the course, as well as to support each other in constructing useful resources.

A detailed schedule for the RFS days will be available in early February, but in basic outline it begins on Friday evening February 26th, goes all day Saturday, Sunday afternoon and evening (so you can attend your own worship), and all day Monday, March 1st.

REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS

Pre-gathering assignment

Please introduce yourself in flipgrid, using the question prompt you will find there. Then, go back into flipgrid and listen to your classmates' introductions (<https://flipgrid.com/225df494>).

Read the ELCA social statement on discipleship in a democracy (found via moodle) prior to our synchronous gathering.

Synchronous gathering assignments

During our synchronous gathering time we will be doing a number of short assignments, some individually, some in small groups. There will be instructions given at the time. You must be present for the entire time.

Post-gathering assignments

March 2: Submit a brief description of your final project to moodle.

March 12: Submit a map of your immediate context using the questions in the civic mapping handout, offering initial reflections on that map in relation to your final assignment (no more than 500 words) and submit it in moodle.

March 19: Interview two leaders in your context: one a civic leader, one a pastoral leader using the interview questions in moodle, and then write a reflection (no more than 500 words) which you submit to moodle. (Even if you know someone who is both a pastoral leader and civic leader, please make sure you are interviewing two different people.)

Week of March 22-29: Respond to the question prompt in flipgrid (url tbd), and then respond to your classmate's responses (you must record at least two times, one your own response to the prompt and one which responds to a classmate) [complete this by midnight on the 29th]

Week of April 5-9: Respond to the question prompt in flipgrid (url tbd), and then respond to your classmate's responses (you must record at least two times, one your own response to the prompt and one which responds to a classmate) [complete this by midnight on the 9th]

April 12: Be prepared to share some element of your final project for which you seek advice in our "co-laboratory" workshop (instructions will be offered closer to that date). Your book review is also due April 17 at the close of this week (see below for instructions on how to review the book you chose from the list in the syllabus).

May 3: Final project draft due (see further instructions below). We will be engaging these projects in the week of May 3 as well as the week of May 10.

May 17: Final and complete project due! (submitted to moodle)

Book review assignment

Write a short review (no more than three pages) of a book you choose from the list of choice books found in this syllabus.

Please respond in your review to the following questions: (1) In what ways does this book support, and in what ways contest, the ideas and practices we are engaging in this class? (2) What would you identify as the author(s) primary theological stance? (3) How would you imagine this book serving as a resource within an adult learning context?

This review must be submitted to moodle by April 17th.

Final project assignment

This project has a lot of flexibility, but it needs to have both a learning and a civic action focus. The primary goal is to integrate the ideas and practices of this course into something you can draw on either in your immediate context, or in the near future.

You might design a learning event that explores media literacy in a faith context. You might put together a series of sermons on discipleship in democracy, embedded in a worship context with prayer and other resources. You might enact a series of restorative justice talking circles in your context. You might put together a learning event which helps your community offer input into a city, county, or national budgeting process. You might offer a learning event that prepares people in your community to engage in some kind of nonviolent civil resistance. Perhaps you are an MA student, and you want to use this course as part of your capstone work (talk with me!).

Start by asking yourself some key questions. What's a primary and enduring question you would enjoy focusing on? How does your faith feed that question and resource any responses to it? Where is the Spirit in the midst of this question? Who is the community you want to impact? At the close of our synchronous gathering I'm asking you to send me a brief sense of what you think your final project might be. Your submission should hold at least initial responses to these questions.

I think it's always useful to remind yourself of the basic learning design ideas that I have made available in a short video presentation on final projects (the slides are available as well) under course resources in moodle.

Once you've started to think about your questions and community, look at the EL4550 project rubric that lives in moodle. These are the criteria I will use to evaluate your project. Think about how much you need to describe or write out so that I can offer you useful feedback. I don't think this project should be more than 10 pages? But it could also draw on media – make a video, create a slide deck, describe an embodied meditation – within the context of your learning event.

Remember: I'm always happy to brainstorm with you about what you could do in this project. Email me for a time to talk by phone or meet in zoom! This project is due May 17th.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Prior to February 26th Pre-gathering Introductions	Focus: Preparing
	<p>In flipgrid (instructions at moodle), respond to the prompt that asks you to introduce yourself. Then, watch/listen to the introductions offered by your colleagues.</p> <p>Read the ELCA social statement "Discipleship in a democracy" prior to our weekend (https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Messages/Government).</p>
Friday, February 26	Focus: Attending
	<p>Orienting ourselves through attention to each other, to the main questions of this class, to the practice of a restorative justice talking circle, and to attending to the Spirit in our midst.</p>
Saturday, February 27	Focus: Truth and realit(ies)?
	<p>Today we have two main sections of time in which we will gather, 8:30 am to 11:20 am and 1:30 pm to 4:20 pm. Please note that our lunch break will be from 11:20 am to 1:30 pm, all times in central.</p> <p>This day will be focused on considering all the ways in which we understand what we mean by "reality," "truth," "propaganda," and "news." We will work on exercises from the Renee Hobbs book, and we will explore ways to develop thoughtful theological engagement with information in your specific contexts.</p>
Sunday, February 28	Focus: Social analysis
	<p>Today we will gather only in the afternoon and evening, from 2 pm to 4:50 pm, and again from 6 pm to 8 pm. Please note that the dinner break is pretty short!</p> <p>Our goal will be to explore what "social analysis" can mean when utilizing a reflective pastoral circle.</p>
Monday, March 1	Focus: Engaging conflict
	<p>Today we meet from 8:30 am to 11:20 am, and 1:30 pm to 4:20 pm. Again, lunch will be from 11:20 to 1:30 pm central time.</p> <p>Much of what Kazu Haga writes about, as well as ideas throughout the rest of our readings, engage issues of conflict in meaning-making. So today we will explore how to engage</p>

	<p>conflict, both personally and in larger contexts. In particular we will focus on varieties of communicative practices.</p> <p>By the close of our time together you should have a good sense of what you want your final project to be about. Please submit a brief description of your project to me in moodle by March 2.</p>
Week of March 8	Focus: Mapping civic structures
	<p>Mapping your context in terms of civic structures, and building a theological base for resilient meaning-making. We will return to Maria Cimperman's analysis here.</p> <p>Prepare for the week using this video Watch my video presentation There will be other short videos or blog posts available as well</p> <p>Please make sure you have completed reading Maria Cimperman, <i>Social Analysis for the 21st Century</i> (Orbis, 2015).</p> <p>Draw a map of your immediate context using the questions in the civic mapping handout, and submit it as an assignment in moodle.</p>
Week of March 15	Focus: Leadership (civic and pastoral)
	<p>During this week you will interview a civic leader and a pastoral leader in your context using a form I give you. This week we will also delve more deeply into the ways in which Eric Liu frames his "civic sermons."</p> <p>Prepare for the week using this video Watch my presentation Watch these short videos</p> <p>Please complete your reading of Eric Liu, <i>Become America: Civic Sermons on Love, Responsibility, and Democracy</i> (Penguin Random House, 2019).</p> <p>Your reflection (no more than 500 words) on the interviews will be due on Friday of this week, submitted to moodle.</p>
Week of March 22	Focus: Solidarity economics
	<p>This week we will be drawing on Bregman's framing of the issues of a "realistic utopia" and consider what "solidarity economics" might consist in, particularly in the context of biblical understandings of economics and "household oikonomia."</p>

	<p>Prepare for the week using this video Watch my presentation Watch these short videos</p> <p>Please complete your reading of Rutger Bregman's <i>Utopia for Realists</i> (Back Bay Books, 2018), and engage the flipgrid question. You must both respond to the question in flipgrid, and then also respond to at least one other person's response there (click on the comment button to record a response).</p>
March 31 – April 6	Spring break
	I pray you have a powerful Triduum!
April 5	Focus: Nonviolence and restorative justice
	<p>This week we will be working with ideas of nonviolent communication, restorative justice practice, and Kazu Haga's book.</p> <p>Prepare for the week using this video Watch my presentation Watch these short videos</p> <p>Please respond in flipgrid to the prompt you will find there, as well as to at least one other response made by a colleague. Please make sure you have completed reading Kazu Haga's book <i>Healing Resistance: A Radically Different Response to Harm</i> (Parallax Press, 2020).</p>
April 12	Focus: Co-laboratory for final projects
	This week we will be workshoping final projects, prior to the April 16 to 26 RFS break at Luther. This is also the week your book review is due (of the theological book you choose from the list in the syllabus).
April 16 – April 26	[RFS break]
	I hope you can use this time to “catch your breath” and attend mindfully to your project. If you are taking another class, I hope you can focus your attention there in helpful ways.
May 3	Focus: Project sharing
	During this week we will share projects with each other. The goal is to get feedback from colleagues before submitting your final version of your project.

May 10	Focus: Project sharing
	During this week we will share projects with each other. The goal is to get feedback from colleagues before submitting your final version of your project.
May 17	Final project due
	Please submit your final project in moodle.

POLICIES OF LUTHER SEMINARY

ADA Compliance Statement

Reasonable accommodation will be provided to any student with a disability who is registered with the Office of Student Affairs and requests needed accommodation. If you are a student with a disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) and think that you might need special assistance or accommodation in this class or any other class, please contact the Office of Student Affairs or contact your instructor directly.

Academic Honesty

Members of the Luther Seminary community are expected to conduct themselves responsibly and honestly in academic matters. Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses against this expectation and are subject to disciplinary action.

If instances of cheating or plagiarism are detected, one of the disciplinary actions shall follow: either the instructor records a failure for the assignment or examination, or the instructor records a failure for the course. In either case, the instructor shall bring the matter to the Office of the Academic Dean and the Office of the Dean of Students, and the question whether further disciplinary action should be considered will be determined in consultation with the instructor, the Office of the Academic Dean, and the Office of the Dean of Students. See the current Student Handbook for more details on this matter.

Plagiarism

"Plagiarism is the dishonest act of presenting the words or thoughts of another writer as if they were your own.... If you quote from anything at all...you must put quotation marks around it, or set it off from your text. If you summarize or paraphrase an author's words, you must clearly indicate where the summary or paraphrase begins and ends.... In every instance you must formally acknowledge the written source from which you took the material." [Quoted from James A. W. Heffernan and John E. Lincoln, *Writing: A College Handbook* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), p.457.]

Some examples of plagiarism could include:

- Copying from a source text (whether online or offline) without proper acknowledgment.
- Turning in another student's work with or without that student's knowledge.
- Copying materials word-for-word from a source text, supplying proper documentation, but leaving out quotation marks.
- Paraphrasing materials from a source text without appropriate documentation.
- Turning in a paper copied from a website.
- Recycling your own work from a previous assignment, without permission of the instructor or proper citation

If instances of cheating or plagiarism are detected, one of the disciplinary actions shall follow: either the instructor records a failure for the assignment or examination, or the instructor records a failure for the course. In either case, the instructor shall bring the matter to the Office of the Academic Dean and the Office of the Dean of Students, and the question whether further disciplinary action should be considered will be determined in consultation with the instructor, the Office of the Academic Dean, and the Office of the Dean of Students. See the current Student Handbook for more details on this matter.

Title IX Statement

Luther Seminary is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and Luther policy prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Sexual misconduct — including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking — is also prohibited at Luther.

Luther Seminary encourages anyone experiencing sexual misconduct to talk to someone about what happened, so they can get the support they need and we can respond appropriately. If you wish to speak confidentially about an incident of sexual misconduct, want more information about filing a report, or have questions about school policies and procedures, please contact our Title IX Coordinator, Peter Susag, who can be found on our school's website.

Luther Seminary is legally obligated to investigate reports of sexual misconduct, and therefore it cannot guarantee the confidentiality of a report, but it will consider a request for confidentiality and respect it to the extent possible.

As a teacher, I am also required by Luther Seminary to report incidents of sexual misconduct and thus cannot guarantee confidentiality. I must provide our Title IX coordinator with relevant details such as the names of those involved in the incident.