

CREATING VITAL CONGREGATIONS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Phillips Theological Seminary
AH 800.10/Summer 2019
June 10 – 14
8:30 am – 5:00 pm
Rm. 302

Professor: Rev. Annie Lockhart-Gilroy, Ph.D.
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Office hours by appointment only

“When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist.” - Dom Helder Camara

“I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them.

Away with the noise of your songs!

I will not listen to the music of your harps.

But let justice roll on like a river,

righteousness like a never-failing stream!” -Amos 5:21-24

“Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public.” – Cornel West

Course Description

This course, rooted in public theology, is designed to give congregational leaders a foundation in which engagement in the public square is not a distraction from the mission of the church, but a fulfillment of it. Students will engage with works from scholars, pastors, and faith-based activists. Students may have an opportunity to study congregations that are active in their communities and work towards social change. Students may also create projects for their own contexts meant to enrich their congregations and surrounding communities. This course fulfills the requirement for an elective in Faith and Public Discourse.

Course Goals

Through participation in this course students will be invited:

- To claim the role of public theologians and equip congregants to do the same.
- To understand the various ways the congregations could be politically active.
- To understand strategic ways to involve congregations in public theology and political engagement.

MDIV Program Goals that this class addresses:

- Attend to the continuing importance and practice of vocation as a constant and developmental practice of discernment, integrating spiritual practices and formation in one's own sense of and nurturing of vocation, and adopting

responsible and ethical leadership practices in light of one's own deepening understanding of vocational identity.

- Attend to the continuing importance and practice of conversation as an interpretive practice of historical and theological reflection, and articulate one's own understanding of Christian faith informed by historical understanding and embodied in contemporary contexts in faith communities, the arts and sciences, and public discourse.
- Attend to the continuing integration of the learning processes of interpretation, context awareness, vocational discernment, and conversation into leadership skills such as preaching, teaching, care, and worship, within the overall practice of ministry.

MA Program Goals that this class addresses:

- Articulate a theology that takes into account a liberative hermeneutic and is responsive to key themes in Christian theology, ethics, biblical exegesis, Christian history, and each student's own denominational heritage and polity;
- Develop an understanding of the student's own personal and spiritual formation appropriate to the practice of ministry.

MTS Program Goals that this class addresses:

- Articulate substantive issues in Christian theology in a manner that takes into account a liberative hermeneutic responsive to key themes in biblical exegesis and Christian history.
- Articulate understandings of individuals, groups, and cultures that are informed by conversation between the theological disciplines and critical studies in arts, culture, and the sciences.

Course Texts (in order of study)

Required Books (in order of study)

Thomas Edward Frank. *Soul of a Congregation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000.
Carl S. Dudley and Nancy T. Ammerman. *Congregations in Transition: A Guide for Analyzing, Assessing, and Adapting in Changing Communities 1st Edition*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002.

William Barber, *The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Fear*. Boston: Beacon Press Books, 2016.

OR

Greg C. Ellison II, *Fear+Less Dialogues: A New Movement for Justice*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.

Additional readings reflecting contexts and interests will be chosen by the student.

Course Housekeeping

- **Office hours** are by appointment only. We can meet in person (in office 15), by phone, or in a Zoom classroom online. When you need to schedule an appointment, send me an email with three possible times that you can meet and your preferred way to meet. My preferred meeting days are Wednesdays, Tuesdays, and Mondays (in that order).
- **Attendance Policy:** Phillips has an established Attendance Policy that states: “Any student who misses 20% or more of the class contact hours for a course, for

any reason, cannot pass or successfully audit that course.” 20% of this course is one day. Additionally, any absence will lower your class participation grade.

- Please do not eat in class. Feel free to have a beverage or small snack. But if you must have a heavy snack or meal, please step out of the classroom to eat it.
- ***Disability Accommodation Statement:*** Phillips Theological Seminary recognizes disability as an aspect of diversity, vital to the seminary community and society. The Office of Admissions and Student Services has worked to identify opportunities to strengthen our academic programming by making available to all students various disability resources intended to bolster success and make the learning environment accessible and inclusive to all. Students with disabilities can begin the collaborative process of accessibility by contacting the Office of Admissions and Student Services to develop a partnership, generate solutions, and implement reasonable accommodations. Refer to the student handbook for the entire disability accommodation statement.
- ***Phillips Catalog Definition of a Semester-Hour:*** In accord with regulations announced by the United States Department of Education in October 2010, the Phillips faculty defines one semester-hour of academic credit as that which may be granted for successfully completing over the course of a semester a set of required learning activities representing approximately forty-five clock hours of graduate-level study. Therefore, the workload for this course represents 135 hours of work. This is impossible to do in one week. Therefore, it is expected for students to work on this course before it begins on June 10th and after it ends on June 15th.

These hours are based on projections of the minimum time that a typical Phillips student should anticipate spending in each course in direct instruction by the instructor(s), reading and library research, synchronous and asynchronous online discussion, creative theological reflection and writing, content review and testing procedures, and other appropriate educational assignments designed by the instructor to ensure that students achieve the learning objectives of the course as published in the course syllabus.

- ***Use of inclusive language in this course:*** In reference to humanity, inclusive language is required in speaking and writing. In reference to the Divine, individuals ought to be aware of the problem of language with reference to God. We need to be sensitive to the metaphorical, analogical nature of all our language about God, and to be aware that the Bible and Christian tradition use feminine and non-human as well as masculine images and categories for speaking of God. See the student handbook for the full inclusive language policy.
- ***Statement of Confidentiality:*** All persons engaged in teaching and learning at Phillips deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. In a seminary community marked by a real mutuality of care and support, members of the faculty, staff, and student body alike recognize—as we listen to one another and participate actively in critical theological inquiry and debate—that the practice of keeping confidences must be developed as a primary ministerial skill. Moreover, we understand the same set of respectful behavioral expectations and collegial confidentiality to advance the teaching and learning process in courses both on campus and online.
- Students are expected to know and adhere to the following policies that can be found in the student handbook: Academic Misconduct, Disability

Accommodation, Inclusive Language, and the Professional Behavior and Netiquette Statement.

- ***Lockhart-Gilroy Rule of Engagement:*** If you could have made a particular comment or written a particular analysis before taking this class, reading the class materials or listening to class lectures, your insights are not yet ready to share. The goal is to synthesize the new material you are learning with the knowledge that you bring to the class. I look forward to hearing your experiences augment the discussions of the readings, lectures, and class activities and seeing how you integrate practical examples into theoretical and theological discussions.

Graded Assignments

Class Participation

This course is conducted as a seminar course where students are expected to participate in class discussion. The participation grade is not based on the quantity of comments, but the quality of those comments. Comments should help other students engage with the texts and subjects with the class. Remember the Lockhart-Gilroy Rules of Engagement.

Critical Book Review

A 250 – 500 word review of either *Fear+Less Dialouge* or *The Third Reconstruction*. The purpose of this assignment is to engage with the text. Summarize the main arguments in the first paragraph. Then pick one or two things about the text that speak to you. It

could be because it resonated with what you have been wanting to say, or because it made you think about something in a completely different way, or because you thought it was horrible and worth arguing against. As you write and reflect, be sure to include quotations from the text. Explain why you chose this text. Explain what about the text made it worth writing about, and explain how you can implement the information you have learned in your ministry.

Due June 13

Annotated Group List of Criteria

In groups of three, you will create a list of ten criteria for being a vital congregation for social change. Each item on this list will be annotated by a short paragraph elaborating on each criterion and connecting this criterion to materials in the course. This list will be presented to your peers on the last day of class and you will be evaluated on your list and presentation.

Final Project

For your final project, you have two options.

Option 1: Create Three Projects for your Ministerial Context

This assignment is intended to assist you with integrating the major themes of this course with your practice and philosophy of ministry thus far. It is intended to challenge and stretch you to imagine and plan projects which will be creative, relevant and transformative for your local context. This will be expressed in three parts.

Part 1:

A description of the local context (church, non-profit, etc.) which includes the social location(s) and current modes of public theology. Be sure to use and cite at least 2 methods of studying congregations from this course to describe this congregation accurately (1,000 – 1,250 words).

Part 2:

Description of the three possible projects you would enact in your ministerial setting. These should not be standalone programs, but long-term projects that would really be able to address particular issues. The description should include, but not necessarily be limited to: (1) name of project, (2) a short paragraph explaining why you think your context needs this particular project; what need is this project filling? (3) An additional paragraph explaining how this need is appropriately filled by your ministerial context. (4) aims or goals of the project, (5) questions to be engaged by the project, (6) scope and timeline of the project. Other than stated paragraphs, this may be written in bullet form. (1-3 pages for each of the three projects.)

Part 3:

Your reflection and insights gained from working on this booklet of projects based upon class conversations. In what ways can/will these projects allow your people to bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in new and needed ways? What did it mean for you to imagine these possibilities? Be sure to cite readings from the class (250 – 500 words).

Option 2: A Congregational Study of a Vital Congregation Working for Social Change

You may choose to study a congregation that you believe has a strong sense of public theology and fits the criteria for a vital congregation working for social change. This would be a choice for someone who does not currently serve in a ministerial context for which to create projects.

This congregational study would describe the local congregation and current modes of public theology using at least 5 methods of studying congregations from this course to describe this congregation and its ministry accurately. As you describe the congregation, you are expected to integrate the readings of the course to aid you in analyzing their ministries of public theology (2,000 – 2,500 words).

Due July15

Evaluation and Grading

Grading is always difficult. *Grades* represent an evaluation of actual work -- not good intentions, inherent ability, intelligence, personal or moral or spiritual qualities. Final grades are based upon the performance of the individual as well as compared with the performance of other students in the course. The key to succeeding in this course is to read the assignments in the syllabus and make sure that you are doing everything that is asked of you. It is assumed that your work will also meet a standard of academic writing fit for a master's level class.

Grades for this course will be computed on the following basis:

Written Materials

- (a) basic grammar, spelling, sentence structure etc. (papers will be returned to learner for "another try" if necessary)
- (b) flow of organization
- (c) depth of thinking, clarity of information, demonstration of analytical skills, and addressing the requirements of the course
- (d) strength of your written assignments by incorporating quotes from the readings; use of an established citation system for footnoting.

Grade Percentages

Class Participation	10%
Critical Book Reflection	25%
Annotated Group List of Criteria	25%
Final Project	40%

Late Work Policy: Work that is handed in late will lose one grade for every day it is late. This will be waived only in documented extraordinary circumstances (serious illness, death of a family member, etc.). Being busy is not an extraordinary circumstance. Any assignment not handed in will be receive a grade of 0.

Rewrite Policy: The opportunity to rewrite an assignment is at the sole discretion of the professor. It is offered to students that seemed to have misunderstood an assignment and would otherwise receive a failing grade. There is no guarantee, however, that a student will be offered a rewrite.

Reading Schedule

June 10

Thomas Edward Frank. *Soul of a Congregation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000.

June 11

William Barber, *The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Fear*. Boston: Beacon Press Books, 2016.

OR

Greg C. Ellison II, *Fear+Less Dialogues: A New Movement for Justice*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.

Students choose which one of these books they will read.

June 12

Carl S. Dudley and Nancy T. Ammerman. *Congregations in Transition: A Guide for Analyzing, Assessing, and Adapting in Changing Communities* 1st Edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002.

June 13

2 peer-reviewed journal articles and 1 blog post of your choice that reflects ministry in your particular context.

June 14

2 peer-reviewed journal articles and 1 blog post of your choice that reflects a societal concern you feel called to addressing