

CH 767: Social Gospel
January 2014
Professor Diane Lobody

This course is a focused study of the Social Gospel movement as it developed in the United States during the Progressive Era, between about 1880 and 1935. Through intensive examination of the lives and writings of selected leaders, we will explore the movement's Christian vision of social reform and transformation. Together we will:

- Examine the social, cultural, ecclesiastical, and theological contexts that shaped the Social Gospel movement;
- Research the lives and distinctive professional contributions of Social Gospel and Progressive leaders;
- Explore the theological, methodological, and intellectual developments that informed the Social Gospel as a system of thought;
- Investigate the practical, pastoral, and institutional work of Social Gospel and Progressive leaders and organizations;
- Assess the strategies used by Social Gospel leaders to effect social, economic, and political transformation;
- Critique the strengths and limitations of the Social Gospel and the Progressive movement, and appraise their long-term consequences for U.S. churches and society;
- Gauge the meaning and relevance of this movement for Christian thought and practice today.

And we will do all of this in three weeks! The course is structured in a blended format, which includes three very invigorating but lo-o-o-ng sessions on campus with required online activities during the intervening days of each week. We mean what we say when we call this a January intensive!

TEXTS

Required Texts:

Bettye Collier-Thomas. *Jesus, Jobs, and Justice: African-American Women and Religion*. New York: Knopf, 2010.

W. E. B. Dubois. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Enriched Edition. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005.

Clifford Putney. *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Walter Rauschenbusch. *Christianity and the Social Crisis in the 21st Century: The Classic That Woke Up the Church*. Edited by Paul Raushenbush. New York: Harper One, 2007.

Vida Dutton Scudder. *Social Teachings of the Christian Year: Lectures Delivered at the Cambridge Conference*. Forgotten Books, 2012.

Keith Zahniser. *Steel City Gospel: Protestant Laity and Reform in Progressive Era Pittsburgh*. London: Routledge, 2013.

Recommended Text:

Gary Dorrien. *Social Ethics in the Making: interpreting an American Tradition*. London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Supplemental Text:

Jane Zieligman. *97 Orchard: An Edible History of Five Immigrant Families in One New York Tenement*. New York: Harper Paperbacks, 2011.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Online Activities: The course is in a blended format, with online activities to be completed before each class session on campus. Please note that these activities constitute class time--- they are mandatory, and they differ from reading assignments and other homework. Some of these activities are graded. The CH 367 Sakai course site is the locus of all online activities for this course. Please click on the relevant tab for each week. There you will find links to historical resources and other materials, as well as descriptions of specific preparatory exercises for the next class session.

Contributions to the Classroom Community: This course is a focused and sustained study of a cluster of social and theological questions that continue to trouble, provoke, and challenge us today. Our collective and individual work will flourish if we each contribute gladly and imaginatively to building a fruitful learning community. Every student here has a different personality, a distinctive communication style, and a set of often quirky habits, but it is still a requirement of this course that you contribute actively and consistently to the class.

Come to class on time, every time, prepared to explore the topics of the day. Plunge enthusiastically and openly into class discussions and activities. Reflect thoughtfully and fruitfully on the issues raised in class and in the readings. Add to the conversations in an informed and intelligent way. Take on and fulfill your responsibilities in assigned class leadership roles. Employ your own gifts and talents for the benefit of the class--- your technical savvy, your cooking skills, your artistic creativity, whatever you can do to enhance and strengthen the work of everyone. Find relevant and useful resources (websites, articles, books, media) as the course unfolds, and share those materials with your colleagues in the classroom or by posting links or comments to the resources page of the Sakai course site. Interact with your colleagues with honesty, compassion, and grace. Take the issues seriously but take yourself lightly.

This course is taught as a seminar, and in a seminar every person at the table matters. Hence contributions to the classroom community are a component of your final grade. In summary, I expect your informed participation in class discussions, active involvement in all class activities, proactive discovery or development of resources that your colleagues might find helpful or interesting, and gracious interactions with your colleagues even when they infuriate you.

Participation in class activities will contribute one-third to your final grade.

Research on an Assigned Social Gospel Leader: The men and women who led the Social Gospel and Progressive movements were, as you will discover, world-changers. We need to learn from them, and to that end each of you will become the class's resident expert in the life, thought, and work of one selected leader in the Social Gospel or Progressive movement. Think of this person as your historical conversation partner as we explore various matters of social justice. You will select your person from the list provided on the Wiki page of the Sakai site prior to the first class session.

During these intensive weeks of the course, you are to explore that person's life and work--- really immerse yourself in your person's world. The best way to do that is by reading both primary and secondary sources (writings authored by your person and scholarly studies written by others about your person). You'll also want to acquaint yourself with the social problems and questions that shaped your person's leadership in the Progressive movement.

Your first responsibility is to get a good grasp of your Social Gospel leader's life story. Here are a bunch of questions to get you going:

1. When and where was your person born? Who were your person's people--- family, spouse, partner? Where did your person live over the course of his or her lifetime? When did he or she die?
2. What was your person's social location (race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, social class, economic class, physical condition, generation, etc.)? What were your person's religious or denominational

affiliations over the course of their lifetime? Where was your person formally educated (high school, college, seminary, graduate school)?

3. What professional work did your person do? What jobs did she or he hold?
4. What did your person write? Compile a list of books, articles, sermons, newspapers, speeches, lectures. What are the topics of these publications?
5. What events or experiences converted your person to "Social Christianity" or Progressive thinking? What was the most significant event or experience prompting your person's decision to become a social activist?
6. What was the first social problem your person seriously attempted to tackle? How many other social problems did your person address over the course of her or his life? What were these social problems or issues?
7. What organizations did your person organize, lead, or join (political affiliations, reform lobbies, advocacy groups, etc.)?
8. Who were your person's colleagues, close friends, and collaborators in their social gospel or progressive work?

A New Kind of Social for the Social Gospel:

Once you've gotten a grip on your person's life, you'll need to discover how they thought, and the best way to do that is to listen to your person's voice. You'll need to know your person deeply, because I am going to ask you to become your person.

Social Gospel and Progressive Leaders were keen observers, incisive analysts, and thoughtful problem-solvers. They tackled an array of problems that are familiar to us today, and their insights continue to offer us wisdom. They were also brilliant networkers. So we are going to bring these folks into our contemporary conversations with us and with one another, through social media. Here's how we'll do this:

You are to create a Facebook page for your person and take on their persona. Build the page as though you were that person. During our first class session you will have time to create their profile, begin to construct a timeline, join our private Social Gospelers group, and friend the other Social Gospel and Progressive leaders in the class. Then, during the weeks of the course, you are to offer comments as your person on the topics posted on the Social Gospelers Facebook page. Respond to the comments of the other Social Gospel leaders. Your comments should be substantive, credible observations in the voice of your person. But honor the tone of Facebook--- your comments should NOT be mini-papers! Feel free to create Twitter or Instagram accounts in your person's name (you can also use those accounts to post to Facebook). You should plan to comment at least five times per week during the two weeks between January 14 and January 28.

In order to do this well, you'll need to immerse yourself in your person's way of thinking. That means you'll have to read some of your person's writings, explore what other scholars have said about your person, and familiarize yourself with your person's perspectives on a variety of social issues.

Social Gospelers doing social media will be the primary online activity for this course.

Your contributions to Facebook will contribute one-third to your final grade. I never thought I would include such a statement in a syllabus.

Reflection on a Text Written by Your Person:

Select one work authored by your person, read it with care, and do additional research in scholarly studies that inform your understanding of this work. Based on this research, do one of the following:

1. Write an essay in which you analyze and interpret the text as an historical document, with critical attention to your person's approach to a specific social issue of his or her own era. Then reflect on the value of the text for readers today. You must use and refer to a minimum of five secondary sources

(scholarly books or articles) in your essay. The essay is to be 1500-2000 words long, and is to be posted to Dropbox no later than 5 PM on Tuesday, February 4.

2. Create a class presentation in which you describe the historical social issues your person was attempting to address in this text, analyze the most salient and intriguing ideas conveyed in this text, and reflect on the value of these ideas for people today. The presentation is to be thirty minutes long and should be lively, media rich, and far more than a lecture. If you choose this option, you will need to schedule a time for your presentation on the first day of class.

Your essay or presentation will contribute one-third to your final grade.

AND HERE'S THE LEGAL STUFF:

Please see Student Handbook for sections providing policy details on the following:

ADA—MTSO seeks to remove barriers to inclusion in its learning communities. Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs at the beginning of the semester. Please contact the Director of Student Services to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Any accommodation must be agreed upon prior to the due date of the affected course requirement.

Class attendance—Regular attendance is expected in all classes. During unavoidable absences, students are responsible for missed work. An excessive number of absences may result in grade reduction or course failure, despite successful completion of all assigned work. In most cases, a student will not be allowed credit for a course if he or she is absent for 25% of the class sessions.

Electronic Devices—Turn mobile devices off or “vibrate only” during class. Browsing the Internet or engaging in email or social network conversations during class is discouraged. Instructors have the right to impose grading penalties for disruptions due to electronic devices.

Human Subjects Research—Research by MTSO faculty, students, or affiliated personnel that collects non-public information from and/or about living individuals or contemporary organizations/groups for purposes of publication or public presentation (including class assignments) must be approved by the Human Subjects Research Committee. MTSO faculty, students, or affiliated personnel should err on the side of caution and apply for committee approval of any activity that may fit this description.

Inclusive Language—In accordance with MTSO’s policy on inclusive language, all students are expected to use gender inclusive or gender neutral language in their writing and in the classroom discussions when referring to human beings.

Incompletes—To receive a course grade of Incomplete, students must submit the petition form from the Registrar with all signatures to the Dean’s Office before the last day of regularly scheduled classes. See Student Handbook for intensive term deadlines. Any petition submitted without a due date for outstanding work will be denied. If work is not complete by the due date the Registrar will record the grade of F for the course.

Pass/Fail—The decision to exercise this option must be made before the end of the second week of the course by completing the appropriate form available through the Registrar. To receive a grade of “pass” the student must do at least the equivalent of C minus work in the course.

Plagiarism—Plagiarism is a serious matter of academic, professional, and personal integrity. All students at the masters level are expected to understand the requirement to provide attribution when the work of others is used. Students are also expected to be familiar with and understand the school’s policy on Academic Misconduct found in the Student Handbook. If a student has questions about attribution, citation, and how to avoid plagiarism they should consult the course instructor, the school’s writing

instructor, or library staff. When in doubt it is better to provide attribution even if one is uncertain about the proper citation form. Plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct that results in disciplinary actions per the Student Handbook that may range from failing an assignment or course to expulsion

Contact the Professor: I welcome conversations with you about anything related to your experience and work in the course. Email me at dlobody@mtso.edu. This is absolutely the most reliable way to reach me.

CLASS SCHEDULE

January 14:

Introduction to the course and to one another
Charity, Reform, Social Change, Radical Revision
The Gilded Age and the Progressive Era
How the "Other Half" Lived
Critiquing Capitalism
Liberal Theology
Discussion: Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*
Discussion: Zahniser, *Steel City Gospel*
A Network of Social Gospelers

January 21:

Race, Ethnicity, and the Social Gospel
Defining "America"
Prohibition
Urban Ministries
Immigration: Ellis Island Potluck Lunch (bring a dish to share based on a recipe from an immigrant culture--- you'll also need to bring your own plate, utensils, beverage, etc.)
Discussion: DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*
Discussion: Collier-Thomas, *Jesus, Jobs, and Justice*

January 28:

Gender and the Social Gospel
Children's Work
World at War
An Applied Social Christianity
Discussion: Scudder, *Social Teachings of the Christian Year*
Discussion: Putney, *Muscular Christianity*

February 4:

Essays due today, to be posted to Dropbox by 5 PM