

I. Course Description

This course will explore the nature and purpose of the church in the contemporary world. The mission of the church will be examined through four roles of the church under its overarching vocation as “Witness”: “Prophet,” “Community,” “Servant,” and “Evangelist.” Students will be encouraged to construct their own understanding of the identity and calling of the church, which could be translated into a missional ecclesiology appropriate to their own ministry context. Attention will also be given to the relationship between church and culture.

II. Course Modality

Hyflex synchronous – Students attend weekly 90-minute class sessions in person or online. An additional 60 minutes of class time consists of an online lesson or activity. Students are also expected to complete course readings and assignments throughout the semester.

The instructor will be present in the classroom.

III. Course Objectives

At the end of this course, learners should be able:

- To understand and articulate mission as integral and central to the identity and calling of the church.
- To construct a missional ecclesiology that is theologically and ethically grounded, and culturally and contextually relevant.
- To set forth steps toward helping one’s own community of faith become an integral missional presence in its own ministry context.

IV. Contribution to MTSO’s Educational Mission and Degree Outcomes

By helping students construct an integral view of the nature and purpose of the church and explore the mission of the church in the contemporary world, this course contributes to MTSO’s commitment to providing theological education and leadership in pursuit of a just, sustainable and generative world consistent with the creative, renewing, resurrecting activity of God.

Specific Degree Outcomes

Students will be able to exercise leadership through contextually grounded practices of theological reflection and missional and prophetic witness that promote personal wholeness, faithful and hospitable community, and sustainable justice (M.Div.).

V. Textbooks

Required Texts:

Edgar, John. *A Front Porch for All People*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2023.

George, Sherron K. *Called as Partners in Christ's Service: The Practice of God's Mission*. Louisville: Geneva Press, 2004.

Hall, Douglas John. *The End of Christendom and the Future of Christianity*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997.

Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Open Secret*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

Ott, Craig, ed. *The Mission of the Church: Five Views in Conversation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016.

TUMC, “Grace upon Grace: Mission Statement of The United Methodist Church” (1990; a PDF copy available on Populi).

Supplemental Readings:

Bailey, Jeff. “Journey Inward, Outward, & Forward.”

Barnett, Victoria. “Why Did They Do It? Nazis and Ordinary Germans.” *Christian Century* 113/29 (1996).

Hirsch, Alan. "Defining Missional." *Leadership Journal* 29/4 (2008).

King, Martin Luther, Jr. "Why We Can't Wait" (1963) and "A Knock at Midnight" (1963)

Niebuhr, H. Richard. "The Responsibility of the Church for Society." In *The Gospel, the Church and the World*, ed. K. S. Latourette. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946.

Padilla, C. René "What Is Integral Mission?" Del Camino Network (n.d.).

Park, Joon-Sik. "Ecclesiologies in Creative Tension: The Church as Ethical and Missional Reality in H. Richard Niebuhr and John H. Yoder." *International Review of Mission* 92/3 (2003).

Park, Joon-Sik. "The Worldwide Nature of The United Methodist Church: A Historical and Missiological Reflection." In *Methodism and American Empire: Reflections on Decolonizing the Church*, ed. Filipe Maia and David W. Scott. Nashville: Abingdon, 2023.

Robert, Dana. "World Christianity as a Women's Movement." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30/4 (2006).

Walls, Andrew F. "The Expansion of Christianity." *Christian Century* 117/22 (2000).

Wright, Christopher J. H. "The Care of Creation, the Gospel and Our Mission." In *Creation Care in Christian Mission*, ed. Kopya J. Kaoma. Oxford: Regnum, 2015.

Yoder, John H. "Christ and Powers." In *The Politics of Jesus*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.

(Some of the readings did not use gender-inclusive language as theirs was an age not yet sensitive to the issue.)

VI. Course Requirements and Assessment of Student Learning

(1) Class Attendance and Participation (15%):

Attendance at all sessions is expected. Unexcused absences will adversely affect the grade.

Much of the value of this course will come from interaction among the participants. Students are thus to prepare for each class session by carefully reading the assigned texts, and to take an active part in the discussions.

(2) Online Participation and Response (25% - Objectives 1–3):

- Students are expected to be fully present online.

Weekly online participation and response is an essential and vital aspect of learning. In this online format, the student's role requires more active and self-disciplined participation. Online participation may include: turning in assignments, posting initial and subsequent responses to the discussion board from Wednesday through Saturday, and other communication reflecting ongoing learning in the course. (See "Populi" each week for the assignment and online activity.) If no student response occurs during a week of the term, the student is considered absent. Lurking (reading only) does not earn credit, nor does it contribute to the class learning and community.

- It is important to manage your time.

Because online courses move quickly and require self-discipline, it is important to efficiently manage time. It would include not waiting until the last minute to turn in assignments or responses. Technology is not fail-proof; you would need to allow time for unforeseen problems.

- Each student will belong to a **Missional Formation Group**.

Most focused discussions will take place within this group. Groups are also designed to serve as a community that provides mutual support on a journey toward missional formation.

- Three online discussions will be completed synchronously via Zoom. (See the Course Schedule below.)

(3) Critical Reviews (15% - Objective 1):

Students are required to complete a book review of Newbigin's *The Open Secret*, critically reflecting on the text for implications for the nature and mission of the church. It is to be 2 pages (1.5-spaced) in length; and to use parenthetical citations, if necessary – e.g., (Newbigin, 73). Name and save the review as "Newbigin Review(Your Last Name)." It is due on October 7.

The following is a quote from "How to Write a Book Review" by Joel Green, which provides helpful guidelines:

"First, the review should indicate a thorough knowledge of the book as a whole, read on its own terms. . . . with an eye to several important questions, including: What is the book's fundamental aim? Central theme(s)? Presuppositions? Method(s)? Second, the review should engage the book critically and personally. . . . Is its argument cogent? How has the reading of this book shaped you? . . . Whenever possible, you should situate your critique of the book within the larger discussion of the subject [that is, mission of the church]."

Given the limited length of your review, it is to be *succinct* and *to the point*. You would thus need to be very *selective* of the themes to critically reflect on. What I hope to see are indications of a **thorough reading of the text** and of **critical engagement with it** (2/3 of the review). You are also to share how the text has shaped and affected your own understanding of mission (1/3 of the review).

(4) Presentation on a Missional Congregation (15% - Objective 3):

Students are to choose an exemplary missional congregation (other than the one they currently serve or attend) and to prepare a PPT presentation (8–10 minutes) with a focus on its theology and practices of mission that could help their own community of faith become an integral missional presence in its own ministry context. An interview (in person or virtual) of the pastor of the church is required. Presentations will be made in class on Oct. 28, Nov. 4, Nov. 11, and Nov. 18.

(5) Integrative Research Paper (30% - Objectives 2 & 3):

A **carefully integrated and researched paper** of 2,500 words (1.5-spaced) not counting notes and bibliography is due by midnight December 9.

--The focus of the paper is to be on constructing one's own missional ecclesiology, which is biblically and theologically grounded, and culturally and contextually relevant. What is expected of each student is to grapple with *the question of the nature and purpose of the church*. The final section (400–500 words) should provide concrete steps toward helping the student's own community of faith become an integral missional presence in its own ministry context.

--In addition to careful research (**minimum of 3 books and 5 journal articles** beyond the class readings), students should **engage and refer to various aspects of the course learning, including the readings, in an integrative way**.

--Two Options:

- Students may articulate and critically engage the ecclesiology of a book of the New Testament, a particular Christian tradition, or a major theological figure, as a basis to ground one's ecclesiology in; or
- Students may choose an important topic that concerns the missional nature and vocation of the church, and provide a comprehensive, critical missiological reflection on it (e.g., ministry with the poor, integral short-term mission trips, missional church movement, mission education).

In either option, the focus is to be on developing one's own missional ecclesiology.

-- The following are the most respected journals in mission studies:

International Bulletin of Mission(ary) Research, International Review of Mission, Missiology, and Mission Studies.

Assessment:

- 15% Class Attendance and Contribution
- 25% Online Assignments
- 15% Critical Book Review
- 15% Presentation on a Missional Congregation
- 30% Research Paper

Written Work:

All written work must be typed with 12-point font. It will be evaluated on the basis of (1) clarity of the writing, (2) critical interaction with the text, and (3) the student's own integrative reflection. There will be a penalty for late papers commensurate with the degree of lateness and the adequacy of the excuse.

Inclusive Language:

In accordance with MTSO's inclusive language policy, all students are expected to use gender inclusive or gender neutral language in their writing and in classroom discussions when referring to human beings. Inclusive language is carefully and deliberately chosen to break barriers of exclusivity.

VII. Course Schedule and Format

August 26 (Week 1)		
Topics	Readings & Assignments for Synch. Session	Online (8/27–30)
- Overview of the Course - GBGM Mission Statement - Four Roles of the Church		Video Viewing and Discussion: -The Anglican "5 Marks of Mission"

September 2 (Week 2)		
Topics	Readings & Assignments for Synch. Session	Online (9/3-6)
Missional Church	Readings: - Alan Hirsch, "Defining Missional" - "Introduction" (ix–xxxvi) in Ott, <i>The Mission of the Church</i>	- Discussion: - "Mission of the Church: An Integral Transformation Approach" in Ott (41–64)

September 9 (Week 3)		
Topics	Readings & Assignments for Synch. Session	Online (9/10–13)
Missional Church (2)	Readings: - Hall, <i>End of Christendom and Future of Christianity</i> - Padilla, "What Is Integral Mission?"	- Discussion: - Hall, <i>End of Christendom and Future of Christianity</i>

September 16 (Week 4)		
Topics	Readings & Assignments for Synch. Session	Online (9/17–20)
• Missional Ecclesiologies in Creative Tension	• Readings: - H. Richard Niebuhr, “The Responsibility of the Church for Society” - John H. Yoder, “Christ and Powers” - Joon-Sik Park, “Ecclesiologies in Creative Tension: The Church as Ethical and Missional Reality in H. Richard Niebuhr and John H. Yoder”	• *Discussion (1): “Mission of the Church: A Multicultural and Translational Approach” in Ott (21–38)
September 23 (Week 5)		
Topics	Readings & Assignments for Synch. Session	Online (9/24–27)
• United Methodist Understanding of Mission • Worldwide Nature of The UMC	• Readings: - “Grace upon Grace: The Mission Statement of The UMC” - Park, “The Worldwide Nature of The UMC”	• Video Viewing and discussion: - “The Shadow of Hate”
September 30 (Week 6)		
Topics	Readings & Assignments for Synch. Session	Online (10/1–4)
• Racism • Discussion on “The Shadow of Hate”	• Readings: - Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (1963) and “A Knock at Midnight” (1963)	• Discussion: - “Mission of the Church: An Evangelical Kingdom Community Approach” in Ott (91–114)
October 7 (Week 7)		
Topics	Readings & Assignments for Synch. Session	Online (10/8–11)
• A Trinitarian Understanding of Mission	• A Critical Review: - Newbigin, <i>The Open Secret</i> (2 pages, 1.5-spaced)	
October 14 (Fall Break)		

October 21 (Week 8)		
Topics	Readings & Assignments for Synch. Session	Online (10/22–25)
- Ministry with the Poor - Rev. John Edgar, guest lecturer	Reading: - Edgar, <i>A Front Porch for All People</i>	*Discussion (2): - “Restore 1” & “Restore 2” (videos)

October 28 (Week 9)		
Topics	Readings & Assignments for Synch. Session	Online (10/29–11/1)
Missional Congregations (1)	Presentations on missional congregations	Video Viewing: “Weapons of the Spirit”

November 4 (Week 10)		
Topics	Readings & Assignments for Synch. Session	Online (11/5–8)
- The Holocaust and the Righteous Gentiles - Missional Congregations (2)	- Barnett, Victoria. “Why Did They Do It? Nazis and Ordinary Germans.” - Presentations on missional congregations	- Discussion: - “Mission of the Church: A Prophetic Dialogue Approach” in Ott (3–18)

November 11 (Week 11)		
Topics	Readings & Assignments for Synch. Session	Online (11/12–15)
Missional Congregations (3)	Presentations on missional congregations	*Discussion (3): - Wright, “The Care of Creation, the Gospel and Our Mission”

November 18 (Week 12)		
Topics	Readings & Assignments for Synch. Session	Online (11/19–22)
- Missional Congregations (4) - Church of the Saviour in D.C.	- Presentations on missional congregations Reading: - Bailey, “Journey Inward, Outward, & Forward”	- Discussion: - Dana Robert, “World Christianity as a Women’s Movement”

November 25 (Thanksgiving Break)		
----------------------------------	--	--

December 2 (Week 13)		
Topics	Readings & Assignments for Synch. Session	Online (12/3-6)
- Rise of Non-Western Christianity - Mission in Partnership	Readings: - George, <i>Called as Partners in Christ's Service</i> - Andrew F. Walls, "The Expansion of Christianity"	

December 9 (Week 14)	
Topics	Readings & Assignments for Synch. Session
Conclusion	Final Research Paper due by Midnight December 9

*Synchronous Online discussion.

VIII. MTSO Standard Syllabus Statements

Carefully review these policies and refer to the MTSO Academic Catalog / Student Handbook for additional details.

All students in every degree program are expected to become familiar with MTSO policies as listed in the most current MTSO Academic Catalog and Student Handbook, connected here. The policies listed below are highlighted here because of their importance to our academic lives together.

https://www.mtso.edu/site/assets/files/2103/academic_catalog_2024-25_web.pdf.

Class Attendance

Regular attendance is expected in all classes. Students attending online are required to show their faces the entire class time in order to be considered present. You are expected to attend class as you would in a face-to-face classroom (not driving, cooking, folding clothes, etc.). During asynchronous class time, faculty will monitor time used in posting and responding to colleagues to track your participation.

An excessive number of absences may result in grade reduction despite successful completion of all assigned work. In most cases, a student will fail a course if they are absent for 25% of the class sessions (including online meetings).

Electronic Devices

As an institution dedicated to the advancement of learning, MTSO is firmly committed to a philosophy of mutual respect. When use of electronic devices violates that respect instructors have the right to impose appropriate grading penalties. In many courses, electronic devices are integral to learning, especially for students attending online. However, the use of such devices should be restricted to course-related purposes. General browsing of the Internet or engaging in email or social networks during class time is inappropriate. Unless there is an emergency requiring immediate attention, phone calls should be returned during classroom breaks (even if you're at home) in an area that is not disruptive to others.

Title IX/504 ADA Statement

MTSO is committed to providing a workplace and educational environment that are free from discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. To ensure compliance with federal and state civil rights laws and regulations, and to affirm its commitment to promoting the goals of fairness and equity, MTSO has developed internal policies and procedures that provide a prompt, fair, and impartial process for those involved in an allegation of discrimination or harassment on the basis of protected class status, and for allegations of retaliation. More information about the University's policy and grievance processes can be

found at <https://www.mtso.edu/about-mtso/notice-nondiscrimination/>. Reports of misconduct can be made to the Title IX/504/ADA Coordinator, Kathy Dickson, kdickson@mtso.edu.

ADA/Disability Services

MTSO supports all students by encouraging self-advocacy and empowering students to help themselves, while providing a safe environment in which to do so. We commit to an inclusive learning environment and will support reasonable, documented requests for accommodations and learning adaptations. To request a reasonable accommodation, contact the Director of Student Services, Bhoke Kirigiti, at bkirigiti@mtso.edu.

Documenting written work at MTSO

Written work submitted for courses at MTSO must conform to the Note-Bibliography style in the [Chicago Manual of Style](#) (18th edition). All sources used in completing an assignment must be properly cited. This includes AI tools like ChatGPT and Grammarly. It is permissible to use such tools to identify and correct grammatical errors; however, students must indicate in a citation how these tools were used and retain a version of the document that contains the student's original, uncorrected writing. Instructors may ask students to submit this uncorrected document together with the final version.

For guidance on formatting citations and a helpful discussion of how to avoid academic misconduct, see the Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL) website at <https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/index.html>. Students who commit academic misconduct will be subject to penalties up to and including expulsion from the Institution.

Plagiarism is not merely a disciplinary matter. Avoiding plagiarism ensures that all voices are identified in written and oral work. Faculty want to hear the student's voice and also need to distinguish it from other voices the student incorporates into a paper or presentation. All other voices, including those generated by artificial intelligence, must be properly credited whether the student is replicating exact phrasing or paraphrasing in the student's own words.

Technology Requirements

If you do not already have one, you are required to obtain a personal library card in your local library system and to create your own accounts for free digital media services like [Libby](#), [Kanopy](#), and [Hoopla](#) in order to access various free resources that may be assigned for your coursework.