

**Individual and Systems Change: Trends, Tasks, Tensions in the Church**

**D.Min. 916**

**Syllabus – Summer 2015 (July 27-31 – 8.30-5.30)**

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**Course Objective:** To understand the call for ecclesial change in the context of social tensions of our time.

**Course Description:** This class focuses particularly on race as a social construct, and how the race conversation in the U.S. affects leadership, churches, and systems of belief. Particular attention to two groups who have been primarily survivors of slavery and genocide will create space for the conversation on race: African Americans and Native Americans. Additionally, wider social context regarding social foci on consumerism adds to the complexity of the task of the church. Change theory and church movements inform the content of this course.

**Expected outcomes:** Upon completion of the course, participants will be able:

- To articulate the nature and value of the conversation about race.
- To describe the impact of this conversation on the call for the church.
- To understand the theological issues surrounding difference and diversity.
- To understand how consumerism and leadership failures add complexity to the church's self-understanding.
- To name how change can occur in the local church in light of the course content.
- To develop an understanding of systems change in the midst of conflict.
- To create a plan for the future for each ministry setting represented in the course.

**Required Texts:**

Jennings, Willie James. *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-300-15211-1

Kidwell, Clara Sue, Homer Noley, and George E. Tinker. *A Native American Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001. ISBN: 978-1-57075-361-9

Quinn, Robert E. *Building the Bridge as You Walk On It: A Guide for Leading Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004. ISBN: 0-7879-7112-X

Thandeka. *Learning to Be White*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., 2007. ISBN: 978-0-8264-1292-8

Woods, C. Jeff. *On the Move: Adding Strength, Speed, and Balance to Your Congregation*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-827227-28-6

**Choose 1 of the following:**

Cimino, Richard and Don Lattin. *Shopping for Faith: American Religion in the New Millenium*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998. ISBN: 0-7879-4170-0

Cobb, Kelton. *A Blackwell Guide to Theology and Popular Culture*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. ISBN: 1-4051-0702-2

Farber-Robertson, Anita. *Learning While Leading: Increasing Your Effectiveness in Ministry*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2000. ISBN: 1-56699-230-3

Miller, Vincent J. *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., 2005. ISBN: 0-8264-1749-3

Tanner, Kathryn. *Economy of Grace*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2005. ISBN: 0-8006-3774-7

Friedman, Edwin. *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*. New York: Seabury Books, 2007. ISBN: 978-1-59627-042-8

### **Overview of Assignments:**

This class is designed to address the complexity of social change in terms of systemic issues affecting ministry contexts. Trends, tasks, and tensions in the church often mirror those outside the church. Assignments will begin to “dig” into these complexities as a basis for fruitful conversation during class periods.

### **Assignments to be completed prior to the first class – please post in the Drop Box by July 26, 2015:**

1. Write a 900-1000-word paper based on Jennings, Kidwell, and Thandeka readings. Answer these questions:
  - a. What was the most surprising insight you encountered in each book?
  - b. What might you say to the people in your setting about your insight?
2. Write a 600-900-word paper based on Quinn and Woods readings. Answer these questions:
  - a. How is change described by each of the authors?
  - b. What kinds of systems are in play in your ministry setting?
  - c. What points in the readings would make a positive impact on these systems?
3. Find a YouTube video or a TED talk or another online illustration of the issues you address in paper 1 (Jennings, et al.). Be prepared to show it in class (25 minutes).
4. Find an article or book chapter that expands or challenges the Quinn and/or Woods arguments; be prepared to present in class (15 minutes).

### **Assignment for week in class:**

Be prepared to lead discussion regarding the book of your choice from the second list under Required Texts. There will be some overlap in book choices, so there is possibility of group work to present. You will be asked to relate your reading to the readings you completed in the first list (45 minutes). Answer these questions after summarizing the book for the class:

- What does your reading from list 2 have to do with list 1?
- What are the implications for ministry settings?
- What are the trends, tasks, and tensions you identify via your reading?
- What systems are at play?
- What change is being addressed, if any? If no change, what change would you make? Why?

**Assignment to completed 4 weeks after the last day of class (August 28):**

Create a project for positive change in your ministry setting that addresses the course content in terms of race, consumerism, and systems change. This project can include training, study, immersions, or any number of other foci. Be specific.  
2500-3000 words.

- Outline your project in terms of goals for change and hoped-for outcomes
- Supply content and timeline (as if you were actually implementing it)
- Describe how you will foster buy-in
- Describe how you hope to sustain this change
- Imagine unintended consequences
- Describe how this project might change your own ministry
- Describe how this project could change the nature and mission of the church

**Evaluation:**

10% - Paper 1

10% - Paper 2

15% - Online illustration presented in class

15% - Article/book chapter presented in class

10% - Class discussion based on book of choice

40% - Final project

**Class Schedule: (Lunch breaks normally 11.30 – 1.00)**

**July 27**

Devotions  
 Introductions and updates on ministry  
 Highlights of Jennings, Kidwell, and Thandeka – Lisa Withrow  
     Discussion based on papers - everyone  
     Discussion regarding systems and ministry settings - everyone  
 Videos

**July 28**

Devotions  
 Library presentation – research: 9.30 – 10.15 (Ray Olson, Director Hamma Library, TLS)  
 Highlights of Quinn and Woods – Lisa Withrow  
     Discussion based on papers - everyone  
     Discussion regarding systems and ministry settings - everyone  
 Integration  
 Article or Book Chapter expanding or challenging readings

**July 29**

Devotions  
 Integration of days 1 and 2 – Lisa Withrow  
 Book of choice presentations  
 Integration of material – Lisa Withrow

**July 30**

Devotions  
 Book of choice presentations  
 Integration of material – Lisa Withrow

**July 31**

Devotions  
 Book of choice presentations  
 Integration of material – Lisa Withrow  
 What I learned this week  
 Ideas for projects  
 Course evaluation

**Policies:**

**Please see MTSO 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.