

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Doctor of Ministry Elective
October 1-5, 2001

PTH 969 COMMUNICATING WITH POSTMODERNS

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COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A discovery of the communication assets available to make the message and mission of the Christian church a reality for postmoderns.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course is an arena in which four kinds of personal growth are catalyzed:

Knowledge Growth...

1. The nature of postmodernism as worldview, spirituality, and lifestyle
2. The role of communication in the Church's mission and practice
3. The relevance of various communication models in engaging postmoderns
4. The traits of diverse and effective postmodern church models

Attitude Growth...

1. That there are more communication assets available than we realize
2. That discovery is the most powerful way to experience truth
3. That the only relevant church is the missional church
4. That theology, spirituality, apologetics, etc. are no longer distinct categories

Character Growth...

1. The humility required for radical dependence on the Spirit
2. The challenge of authenticity and vulnerability
3. The ultimate communication asset is the Spirit alive in our own heart
4. The willingness to risk being interdependent with others

Skill Growth...

1. Learnings that facilitate large and small-group communication
2. Sensitization to the role of technology in communicating with postmoderns.
3. Renewed confidence in the supernatural dimension of postmodern ministry
4. Capacity to practice theological reflection as the beginning point

COURSE TEXTBOOKS

Required Texts

- Duduit, Michael, ed. *Communicate with Power: Insights from America's Top Communicators*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996. (240 pages)
- Sweet, Leonard. *Postmodern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the 21st Century Church*. Broadman & Holman, 2000. (224 pages)
- McLaren, Brian D. *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey*. John Wiley & Sons, 2001. (192 pages)
- Smith, Jr. Chuck. *The End of the World as We Know It: Clear Direction for Bold and Innovative Ministry in a Postmodern World*. Waterbrook, 2001. (272 pages)
- Hunter, III, George G. *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West...Again*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2000. (137 pages)
- Carson, D.A., ed. *Telling the Truth: Evangelizing Postmoderns*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000. (406 pages)
- Webber, Robert E. *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelism for a Postmodern World*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999. (240 pages)
- Grenz, Stanley J. *A Primer on Postmodernism*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996. (211 pages)

Alternate Texts

- Sweet, Leonard. *SoulTsunami*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999. (443 pages)
- _____. *Aquachurch: Essential Leadership Arts for Piloting Your Church in Today's Fluid Culture*. Loveland: Group Publishing, 1999. (269 pages)
- Loscalzo, Craig A. *Apologetic Preaching: Proclaiming Christ to a Postmodern World*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000.
- Brasher, Brenda. *Give Me That Online Religion*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001. (208 pages)
- Chang, Curtis. *Engaging Unbelief: A Captivating Strategy from Augustine & Aquinas*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000. (184 pages)

- Dockery, David S. ed. *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997 (406 pages)
- Erickson, Millard J. *Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Responses to the Challenge of Postmodernism*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998.
- Gibbs, Eddie. *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000 (249 pages)
- McLaren, Brian D. *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000. (227 pages)
- Scifres, Mary J. *Searching for Seekers: Ministry with a New Generation of the Unchurched*. Abingdon Press,
- Rabey, Steve. *In Search of Authentic Faith: How Emerging Generations are Transforming the Church*. Waterbrook, 2001 (218 pages)
- Richardson, Richard C. *Evangelism Outside the Box: New Ways to Help People Experience the Good News*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000. (192 pages)
- Veith, Gene Edward, Jr. *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*. Crossway Books, 1994. (256 pages)
- Zacharias, Ravi. *Jesus among Other Gods: The Absolute Claims of the Christian Message*. Word, 2000. (195 pages)
- Clapp, Rodney. *A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996.

COURSE OUTLINE

1. Church.com: Communication and Mission
2. Inside Out: Authenticity and Vulnerability
3. The Truth Isn't What it Used to Be: Message and Media
4. The End of the World as We Know It: Audience and Experience
5. Church.com: Technology and Media

COURSE METHODOLOGIES

1. Pre-session readings and reflections
2. Peer learning through interaction both in and out of class
3. Guest speakers who are effective in the postmodern context
4. Multiple field trips to postmodern ministry venues
5. Class presentations by the instructor

6. Multi-media/live internet presentations on ministry models
7. One or more class session off-site in a secular, postmodern setting
8. Post-session research and action projects.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

a. Pre-session:

1. *Read:* from the Required Text list above, read 1500 pages. Substitute from the Alternate Text list for any required books you have already read. Read from the Alternate Text list in order.
2. *Write:* based on the readings, write a 3-page paper summarizing what you believe to be the impact of postmodernism on your own ministry context. Use definitions and concepts from the readings. Cite the authors you are referring to. Conclude by briefly addressing the issue of how you could respond to the postmodern influence. Be prepared to make a brief (3-5 minute) oral presentation of your conclusions in class, and to turn in the paper at the first class session.
3. *Report:* you will sign a reading report on the first day of class indicating that you have completed the 1500 page requirement.

b. During the session

Be present and on time for all sessions. Participation in class interaction, exercises, and assignments is required for peer learning.

c. Post-session (choose 1 of the following 3 options)

1. *Sermons:* using insights gained from readings and class interactions, write an original, 4-6 part sermon series designed to reach a postmodern, pre-Christian audience. *Do not recycle old messages! Do not adapt messages from other speakers!* You may do either a manuscript, or a very, very detailed outline. All sermons must be turned in hard copy, accompanied by audio or video cassettes of the presentation (live or practice), and must include media support (e.g., PowerPoint, video clips, etc.) Each message must be substantial in content and significant in length. A 5-page paper explaining how they connect to postmoderns, and why you have used the methods employed must accompany the sermons. Grading preference will be given to sermons actually delivered.
2. *Research Paper:* choose a major theme related to the course and write a 25-page research paper. The paper should identify and reflect upon key ideas related to the topic, report on the major literature in the area, and apply conclusions to your ministry context. This paper is an in-depth

research piece (that should be journal quality), and an action plan project. Based on your course learnings and the findings of your research, the paper should conclude with specific applications to your own ministry and your plan (with timeline) for implementing these applications. Topics should be approved in advance by the instructor.

3. *Internet Project*: research postmodern churches on the internet and prepare a 25-page paper on your findings. The presentation should include descriptions of the various churches, their worship styles, and other key features. You will need to discuss what defines these congregations as postmodern (as opposed to simply doing church without neckties.) Draw conclusions about their use of the internet itself, the application of their ministry model to your own (i.e., what you learned from them that could be applied in your context), and conclude by developing your own typology of postmodern churches. Place your own ministry context within this typology. An appendix to the paper should be your typology in the form of a chart.

Alternative: build a substantial website dedicated to evangelizing postmoderns. Write a 10-12-page paper reflecting on the nature of your intended audience, the strategic choices and models emulated in constructing the site, and the role of technology in the communicative mission of the church. Report in the paper on your actual experience with the site in operation. *Do not recycle existing sites!* This option requires prior approval with the instructor.

All written assignments are to be typed, double-spaced and represent quality, graduate level work. All written assignments must follow the *Turabian* style manual, 6th edition. Post-session work must include a substantial bibliography and use appropriate research citations.

Due date: January 5, 2002

Note: the participant will be charged a \$15 change-of-grade fee if work is turned in after the due date stipulated on the syllabus, even if permission has been given by the instructor.

GRADING PROCEDURE

	<i>Points</i>
Pre-session reading:	20
Reading oral report	10
Class participation	20
Post-session option	50

Grading will be on a percentage basis, with 90% of the total points (90) required for an A, 80% of the points (80) required for a B, etc. Pluses and minuses will be used for point totals within 2 points of any grade level.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

A topical bibliography will be distributed at the first class session.

SPECIFIC DATA

Course syllabus prepared by Earl Creps, May, 2001.