

Theology in Context Seminar
Emergent Church and Theology

REL472 / 4 Credits / Northwestern College / Spring 2006

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Office/Hours: VPH 115, ext. 7079 MThF 3:30-5:00 / Wed 9:00-12:00

Class Time: TuTh 9:25-10:55 **Class Location:** VPH 202

Course Description:

This course is a research seminar in which students will explore contemporary questions and issues in light of the Christian religious theological tradition. It features the writing and presentation of a major paper, discussions, analysis and critique of research. This semester we will explore issues surrounding the emergent church and its theology.

Course Objectives:

1. To further develop careful research and analytical skills.
2. To reflect carefully on the meaning and application of the biblical witness in assessing the emergent church.
3. To grasp the historical and cultural development of postmodernity and the emergent church.
4. To think more clearly, consistently, historically and biblically about theological and ecclesiastical reflection in a postmodern context.

Primary Texts:

- Bible (modern translation; bring to every class period).
- D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Zondervan, 2005).
- Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Baker Academic, 2005).
- Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy* (Zondervan/Emergent YS, 2004)
- Brian McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian* (Jossey-Bass, 2001)
- Myron Penner, ed., *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views* (Brazos, 2005).

Course Requirements:

1. *Class attendance/participation*: Participation and attendance are mandatory; one express purpose of this course is to discuss theological issues in a seminar format. After *three* unexcused absences, students will be graded down one half letter grade for every subsequent unexcused absence.
2. *Readings*: Reading should be completed *before* class time listed. It is the responsibility of the student to be aware of forthcoming reading assignments given in syllabus.
3. *Written Projects*: Three written analyses are required, including a major integration paper.
4. *Oral Presentation*: One oral presentation is required.

Guidelines for Written Projects:

See specific guidelines at end of syllabus. For formatting guidelines see [Writing and Submission Guidelines](#). Please note that a hard copy of written assignments should be submitted to instructor and an electronic copy to Synapse.

Assessment of Written Projects:

Students will be evaluated according to the comprehension, analysis, and quality demonstrated in their analyses. Be sure to give a clearly elucidated *argument* for the views and claims made in the paper. For further clarification on assessment see [Grading Guidelines](#).

Course Assessment:

- Oral Presentation (20%) = 100 points
- Book Analyses (40%) = 200 points/100 points each
- Integration Paper (40%) = 200 points

Final Exam Schedule:

No final exam.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:

Northwestern College is a Christian academic community committed to integrity and honesty in all intellectual and academic matters. All students, faculty, and staff are expected to follow the highest standards of honesty and ethical behavior. In addition, as members of the campus community all students, faculty, and staff have a responsibility to help other

members of the community to demonstrate integrity in their actions. Behavior that violates academic integrity can take a variety of forms including, but not limited to, cheating on tests, quizzes, papers, and projects; plagiarism using unauthorized material; willful misrepresentation of evidence and arguments. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's words or ideas, with the intent of deceiving the reader concerning the origin of the words, ideas, or images. (Excerpts from *NWC Student Handbook*, 11)

Course Assistance:

I have an open door policy. Please come by my office, preferably at office hours, if you have any questions or are having any problems with the reading, lectures, note taking, written project, etc. Or come by for a cup of tea and chat about life. For further assistance in academic matters help is available through Patti Thayer at Academic Support (VPH 125B). Academic Support is there to help you so if you are having difficulties do not hesitate to ask for assistance.

Emergent Church Links:

[Emerging Church](#)

[Emergent Villiage](#)

[Brian McLaren](#)

[Leonard Sweet](#)

[Tall Skinny Kiwi](#)

[Vintage Faith](#)

[The Next Wave](#)

[Mosaic](#)

[Fresh Ministry](#)

[Alternative Worship](#)

[Sacramentis](#)

[Mosaic Church \(Austin\)](#)

[Mosiaic Church \(Grand Rapids\)](#)

[Apostle's Church \(Seattle\)](#)

[The Crossing \(Sioux Falls / RCA\)](#)

[The Ooze \(blog/message board\)](#)

Course Schedule:

Date	Topic	Reading
Jan 10	Introduction to a Conversation	
Jan 12	Basic Theology Exam	
Jan 17	A Conversation on Christianity and (some) Culture	
Jan 19	Some Illuminating Stories About How We Got Here (Wherever That Is)	
Jan 24	Some Illuminating Stories About How We Got Here (Wherever That Is)	Penner, "Introduction"
Jan 26	<i>Perspectives on Postmodernism</i> J. Smith and Westphal on Postmodernism	Penner, ch 5-6, 11-12
Jan 31	Franke on Postmodernism	Penner, ch 4, 10; <u>Book Analysis #1 Due</u>
Feb 2	Vanhoozer on Postmodernism	Penner, ch 3, 9
Feb 7	Geivett and S. Smith on Postmodernism	Penner, ch 1-2, 7-8
Feb 9	<i>Emerging Church</i> What is Postmodern <i>Culture</i> ?	Gibbs/Bolger, ch 1-2
Feb 14	Emerging Church on Identifying with Jesus	Gibbs/Bolger, ch 3
Feb 16	Emerging Church on Transforming Secular Space	Gibbs/Bolger, ch 4
Feb 21	Emerging Church on Living as Community	Gibbs/Bolger, ch 5
Feb 23	Emerging Church on Inclusion and Service	Gibbs/Bolger, ch 6-7
Feb 28	Emerging Church on Participation and Creativity	Gibbs/Bolger, ch 8-9
Mar 2	Emerging Church on Leadership and Ancient Church	Gibbs/Bolger, ch 10-11
	<u>Spring Break – March 4-14</u>	
Mar 16	<i>One Emerging Voice – Brian McLaren</i> Conversation about <i>A New Kind of Christian</i>	<u>Book Analysis #2 Due</u>

Mar 21	McLaren on Being Christian	McLaren, <i>Orthodoxy</i> , Intro – ch 1
Mar 23	McLaren on Being Christian	McLaren, <i>Orthodoxy</i> , ch 2-4
Mar 28	McLaren as Missional, evangelical, and Protestant	McLaren, <i>Orthodoxy</i> , ch 5-7
Mar 30	McLaren as Liberal/Conservative, Mystical, Biblical	McLaren, <i>Orthodoxy</i> , ch 8-10
Apr 4	McLaren as Charismatic, Calvinist, Anabaptist	McLaren, <i>Orthodoxy</i> , ch 11-13
Apr 6	McLaren as Methodist, catholic, Green	McLaren, <i>Orthodoxy</i> , ch 14-16
Apr 11	McLaren as Depressed, Emergent, and Unfinished	McLaren, <i>Orthodoxy</i> , ch 17-20
<u>Easter Holiday – April 13-17</u>		
Apr 18	<i>Reflecting on Emerging Church</i> Emerging Church Strengths	Carson, ch 1-2
Apr 20	Emerging Church Cultural Analysis	Carson, ch 3
Apr 25	Evaluating Postmodernism	Carson, ch 4
Apr 27	Emerging Church Postmodern Critique	Carson, ch 5
May 2	Two Cases of Emerging Church Weaknesses	Carson, ch 6
May 4	Scripture and Reflection on Emerging Church	Carson, ch 7-8
May 11	No Final Exam	<u>Integration Paper Due</u>

Guidelines for Book Analysis #1:

(1500 words / 100 points / Due Jan 31)

Compare and contrast the essays from Scott Smith, Kevin Vanhoozer, and John Franke in Penner, ed., *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn*. Your essay should cite, integrate, and interact with assigned essays, as well as show further research -- do not use course texts exclusively as your resources. You may wish, for example, to do further research on “metanarrative” or “foundationalism” or Heidegger (or Rorty, Derrida, etc). The extent of your research should be reflected in your bibliography. Students will be evaluated according to their overall grasp of the subject matter, the clarity of explanation, the fairness and depth of analysis, and the quality of research demonstrated in their paper. Grammar and spelling are important. See [Writing and](#)

Guidelines for Book Analysis #2:

(1500 words / 100 points / Due Mar 16)

Demonstrate the ways in which distinct themes and claims of (1) postmodernism and (2) emerging church are represented in McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian*. Be as specific as possible. Your essay should cite, integrate, and interact with assigned texts (such as Penner and Gibbs/Bolger), as well as show further research -- do not use course texts exclusively as your resources. You may also wish to use emerging church internet sites and blogs as resources. The extent of your research should be reflected in your bibliography. Students will be evaluated according to their overall grasp of the subject matter, the clarity of explanation, the fairness and depth of analysis, and the quality of research demonstrated in their paper. Grammar and spelling are important. See [Writing and Submission Guidelines](#).

Guidelines for Oral Presentation:

(30 minute max. / 100 points):

The objective of the oral presentation is to *teach your classmates* about your given subject. Therefore your presentation should be clear, concise, persuasive, and informative. Demonstrate your superior grasp of the subject, and be prepared to respond to questions. Please pass out a handout with an outline and any other pertinent information covered in your presentation; at top of handout include your name, REL 472, date, and title of presentation (give me a copy *at least one half hour in advance* of class time and I will copy it free of charge). You may use OHP, video, PowerPoint, marker board, or any other media available to enhance the learning process. Students may be graded on the material you present to them, so strive for accuracy.

In preparation you should *thoroughly research* your subject. You should consult theological dictionaries and encyclopedias, works treating your subject, and journal articles. Read various sources; be sure to read sources from alternate viewpoints on your subject (e.g. there are differing views on the nature, limits, and value of natural theology). You should also read relevant portions of primary sources (e.g. actually read relevant parts of Calvin's *Institutes* and commentaries)! You may use a few key quotations but do not flood your presentation with quotes. As always, do not plagiarize! You must explain the subject in your own words.

Pick out and focus on key, crucial areas in your subject. Be discerning. Put emphasis on main themes ("best") rather than less-central ("good/interesting") issues; you do not need to say everything there is to say on your subject. Include very brief historical background only if necessary, but omit if unnecessary. Historical background, *if given at all, should be at most five minutes* of oral presentation. Focus on the views and arguments of your subject. Be fair, nuanced, and sensitive to all views on your subject. This presentation is not designed to be an assault on "false views." Carefully present your subject, noting various differing views, then analyze and evaluate (e.g. specify the strengths and weaknesses of Moltmann on creation). Try to empathize with and understand the persuasive power of the view you are evaluating, even if you do not finally agree with it. However, do not be afraid to state any fair criticisms of the view. Evaluation should be based on Scripture, church tradition (key theologians, creeds, and confessions), reasonable

arguments, findings from general revelation (other disciplines, science, etc.), and Christian experience (but take care that you do not lapse into mere feelings or opinions).

This is a 400 level, capstone course – the standard is high! Demonstrate excellence in your presentation. Be well prepared. If you have difficulties come see Prof. Andres ASAP.

Guidelines for Integration Paper #3:

(3000 words / 200 points / Due May 11)

TBA

This paper consists in two parts: (1) state and argue for *your own view* of the emergent church and theology, including the relation of Christianity to postmodernism and to epistemology, and (2) demonstrate how *your view* relates, integrates, and influences the appropriation of postmodernity in other subjects in both religion and the liberal arts. You need not discuss every single topic and issue listed below, but you should discuss several of the most significant from each paragraph.

(1) Articulate carefully *your* evaluation of the emergent church and theology. Make sure to include discussion of postmodern thought and culture, epistemology, (meta)narratives, ecclesiology and community, mission (kingdom of God), view of Jesus, and so on.

(2) Explain and demonstrate how your view of the key themes of the emergent church interacts, integrates, supports, challenges, forms and is formed by the following, and give at least *one fully developed example of each*:

(a) one *theological doctrine* (God, humanity, sin, Christ, salvation, sanctification, last things, etc.);

(b) by other *disciplines within the study of religion*; e.g. church history, missiology, New and Old Testament studies, Christian ethics, Christian education, youth ministry, philosophy of religion, and so on;

(c) other *disciplines in the liberal arts* (e.g. world or American history, psychology, sociology, political science, philosophy, literature, music, arts, and hard sciences like biology, chemistry physics, etc.).

Your essay should show significant research, do not use only course texts as resources. The extent of your research should be reflected in your bibliography. Students will be evaluated according to their overall grasp of the subject matter, the clarity of explanation, the extent and depth of integration, and the quality of research demonstrated in their paper. See [Writing and Submission Guidelines](#).