

Wesley Theological Seminary
Course of Study | Summer Weekend Program 2015
August on-line & on campus September 18-19, 2015

CS-423 Mission

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Course Description

This course introduces the theology and scope of mission, and the pastor's role in leading congregations in their mission as agents of God's transforming redemption.

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a biblical and theological framework for Christian mission.
2. Explain the Wesleyan relationship of personal piety and social holiness.
3. Examine and reflect on unjust social realities and the response of the church locally and globally.
4. Analyze their ministry context and develop strategies for transforming mission.

Required texts:

Dana Robert. *Christian Mission*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. ISBN: 978-0631236207.

Miroslav Volf. *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good*. Brazos Press, 2013. ISBN 978-1587433436.

Lance Ford and Brad Brisco. *The Missional Quest: Becoming a Church of the Long Run*. Intersity Press, 2013. ISBN: 9780830841059.

This course provides an introduction to church mission. The term “mission” conveys a number of meanings and through this course, we will explore the richness, complexity, and diversity of how this term is used. Mission is deeply scriptural, found in the gospels with Jesus commissioning his followers to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ... and teaching them ...” (Mt 28:19-20). As United Methodists, our mission is to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” Through missions, Christianity has spread from a tiny Jewish sect to become the largest religion in the world. And today, the missional church movement is a renewal effort for the church in the West to reclaim its mission to be the

people of God engaged in the world through witness, worship and service, being the Body of Christ in the world to embody the *missio Dei*—reconciling all things to God through Christ.

We will start, with Dana Robert’s book, *Christian Mission*, to gain a better understanding of the history and theology of Christian missions. Although clichéd understandings of missions can be fairly negative—i.e. they reflect Western colonialism and cultural imperialism—we will learn the complexity and sensitivity of church missions throughout the church’s history. And at the same time, we will not ignore the negative consequences and unintended harms that have resulted from church missions. All of this history, both good and bad, will help to inform us about how we are to be God’s missional people.

Then, through Miraslov Volf’s book, *A Public Faith*, we will explore the challenge of what it means to be a prophetic witness to the gospel in our present location. Volf explains why it is that Christians must be engaged in sharing our understanding of the good news in the world, and how we might go about this in a way that is respectful of those with other (or no) faiths. He also cautions us about religious extremism, of any and all faiths, and how we should respond to them.

Finally, through Ford and Brisco’s book, *The Missional Quest*, we look at contemporary practices of missional engagement in our culture. Starting with the critique of the contemporary Western church as one that has succumbed to an “attractional” model, Ford and Brisco encourage us to take on a missional mindset reminiscent of the early church through which a countercultural community of followers of Christ proclaim their faith through words and deeds in a world indifferent to, if not downright hostile towards, our witness. They offer suggestions for practices as to how the missional church can be developed and sustained in our current culture.

Hybrid Course Model

As a hybrid course, this course relies on your diligence and timeliness in completing assignments and participating as fully as possible through on-line discussions through Blackboard. Also, because of the course’s compressed time frame, it is essential that you complete the readings before August 1 and have your initial assignment ready for submission by 5 pm on August 1. This initial assignment, described more fully below, is a summary of each of the three books using the format described below.

During the month of August, we will “meet” online in an asynchronous manner using the blog feature of Blackboard. We will carry on our conversation about church mission by responding to initial questions that I will post each week; and then by responding to each other’s posts. It will be important for you to do your postings by the due dates each week so that the others in the class will have time to read and respond to your postings, and you in turn may respond to their comments (if you choose). Through our online conversation, we want to practice our Christian virtues of grace, generosity, patience, and loving-kindness toward one another. I have no doubt that you all care for one another deeply and want to be supportive of the group’s learning process. This is why it is so important for you to complete assignments in a timely manner, so

that you and your colleagues will be able to read and respond to one another in a timely fashion throughout the August on-line portion of the class and everyone will benefit from each other's insights and learnings.

Once we complete the discussion of the books over the first three weeks of August, I will ask you for a preliminary proposal as to how you might apply these readings in your context. This might take the form of you developing a proposal for a missional church initiative that you might like to implement in your church setting. OR it might take the form of a missional church sermon series that you might like to preach at some future date in your church. OR you may have another creative idea that you would like to try out in your church. This will be your assignment for the fourth week of August—to develop a one page proposal for how you would like to apply your learnings from this course in your church setting.

Assignments: Grades will be based on the following assignments:

Due date	Assignment	# of pages	Percent of Grade:
8/1/15 5 pm Submit on-line	<p>Three short summary papers—one page for each book—that contains the following parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overall summary of the main arguments of the book (basically in one paragraph, about half a page); • Three key takeaways that you have gained from the book (please limit yourself to 1-2 sentences for each takeaway); • Two questions you would like to discuss about the book (I will draw on these to shape our on-line discussion about each book); and • One actionable idea that you have garnered from the book. <p>These will be posted so that they are visible to everyone in the class. This way, everyone will benefit from the insights and inspirations you have attained from each of the books.</p>	3	15%
8/3/15	<p>What is your favorite missional passage in Scripture? Please cite your scripture verses and offer a brief explanation of why you have selected this passage.</p>	1	5%
Each Wednesday 5 pm; 8/5 8/12 8/19	<p>Initial responses: On Monday mornings (8/3, 8/10, and 8/17), I will post two discussion questions for the week. Please read these and respond to each question in about a half-page response. (Total of one page per week in response to my posted question.) Please post your response by Wednesday at 5 pm. Everyone in the class will be able to read your responses.</p>	3	15%
Each	<p>Follow-up responses: Based on your classmates'</p>	3	15%

<p>Saturday 5 pm 8/8 8/15 8/22</p>	<p>responses, please respond to their thought and comments. Please make four of these follow-up responses (I am approximating these to be about ¼ page each). You should respond to at least three other people’s responses and you may choose to respond to others’ responses to your initial posts. Let me encourage you all to be thoughtful and respectful in your responses and try to include everyone in the responses and follow-up conversations. Please keep in mind Wesley’s dictum that although we may not all think alike, we are called to love alike.</p>		
<p>8/28/15</p>	<p>Integrative project proposal: After we complete the course, I will be asking you to write a paper for an integrative project (see below). I would like you to start thinking about this project now—how might you integrate your learnings from this course into your ministry? Please submit a one page proposal for the project you would like to develop for your ministry.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>5%</p>
<p>9/18-19</p>	<p>In-person sessions: We will have follow-up conversations growing out of our on-line discussions; share our project ideas; and provide feedback and support for one another’s projects during our time together.</p>		<p>15%</p>
<p>9/25/15 5 pm</p>	<p>Integrative project due: This will be an 8-10 page paper describing how you would like to integrate your learning from this course into your ministry. Some possibilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. preaching a sermon series on mission—you can outline your sermons and begin to develop them as your final project; b. developing a missional project for your community—you may be inspired to develop a missional initiative for your congregation to engage in the community. Use this opportunity to devise a plan and/or develop materials that you would like to use. c. small group formation—as a way of doing leadership development for your church, you may want to develop a small group study for missional leadership formation. You can use this as an opportunity to search and/or develop appropriate resources for your congregational use. d. youth or young adult mission project—you may want to target a group of your congregation to undertake a mission project. Use this opportunity to develop the resources and plans for how you might do this. e. other initiative—this may integrate the arts, a public forum or event, or any other initiative that you feel called 	<p>8-10</p>	<p>30%</p>

	<p>to live out as a gospel witness in your community or elsewhere in the world. <i>However you decide to proceed, please pray over this and allow the Holy Spirit to guide you.</i> In your project description, please include the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Scriptural basis or inspiration for your work; • A description of the community or context in which your missional project will take place; • A narrative describing your inspiration as to how and why you believe this project is the moving of the Holy Spirit in and through you and your community to be a witness to God’s mission of reconciling all things to Godself. • A narrative or description of the activities or initiatives or sermons or resources you plan to undertake or develop. • A vision of what you hope will be the outcomes. What are the fruit you would hope to see as a result of this missional initiative? 		
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Seminary Policies

Wesley is a covenantal community of care, committed to your formation and preparation for Christian ministry. We seek to provide the best educational opportunities possible in our context and to do so in a way that is faithful to the gospel, the church, and Wesley’s mission. This syllabus is my best effort to be transparent in establishing learning goals and expectations for this course. I would add, however, that the classroom teaching and learning process is a dynamic one and subject to change, based on our ongoing discernment throughout the course as to how the course assignments can be most helpful in equipping you for ministry. Therefore, the contents of this syllabus may be changed at any point during the semester. You will be given ample notice, in class and/or via email. I wish to be held accountable to these goals and expectations, and I expect the same from each participant in the course. Please let me know if you have any additional expectations or believe that any of these requirements are unreasonable.

The seminary has formulated the following policies to further specify these expectations.

Attendance Policy

Students are required to attend all classes in their entirety.

Academic Integrity

Honesty in academic work is of utmost importance. Please be careful to document all sources thoroughly. Plagiarism is a most serious academic offense. It includes improper paraphrasing, quoting a source without using quotation marks and citing it, copying from

another's work or presenting another's ideas as one's own. Plagiarism will be reported to the Dean's Office, and will result in dismissal from this course with an "F" in the course and possibly dismissal from Course of Study. If you have any question about what plagiarism is, be sure to review the student manual. Please note that all assignments are submitted online via "safe-assign" which automatically checks for possible plagiarism.

Disabilities

If you have a physical, psychological or learning disability and might require accommodation in this course, please contact Rev. Dr. Asa Lee, Associate Dean for Community Life immediately regarding Wesley's policies and procedures for documenting and accommodating disabilities, x8612 or alee@wesleyseminary.edu. The seminary allows for accommodations only through this policy. Please do this immediately at the beginning of the semester.

Inclusive Language

Bearing in mind that language reflects, reinforces, and creates social reality, the Seminary expects class conversations and written work to employ language that respects the equal dignity and worth of all human beings. In particular, linguistic sexism, racism, and homophobia are to be avoided.

Weather Policy

If the seminary is open we will have class. If the seminary is closed, class is cancelled. Call the main switchboard at 202-885-8600 to determine if the Seminary is closed. Closure announcements will be posted by 6:30 am. If you have hazardous driving conditions please do not come to class, even if the seminary is open.