

**Wesley Theological Seminary  
Doctor of Ministry Program**

**Wesley, Mission, and Evangelism (Nashville Episcopal Area)  
January 11-15, 2016**

**Session 3: *Engaging the Powers: The Gospel and Fallen Institutions***

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**Course Overview**

God created humans to live together in community. The ways we live together are intended, like all of creation, to be good in God's eyes. Yet our institutions, communities, social systems and culture are all fallen, just as we are as individuals. This course examines the "powers and principalities" and their fallen state, leading them to be forces for evil in the world. We examine how power operates institutionally—politically, economically, culturally—at the community level and how the message of the gospel can redeem such fallen institutions. We understand that our role as the church is to be engaged in God's redeeming work as signs, agents and witnesses of God's redemptive work. We explore what this means in terms of the Christian faith practices of community engagement, including advocacy, solidarity, prophetic engagement in the public square, Christian Community Development, and faith-rooted organizing.

During our time together, January 11-15, 2016, we will be discussing the required readings (below) and applying them to your particular ministry contexts. In order to facilitate the best use of our time, it will be essential that you read the required texts (below) and come to class prepared to discuss how the authors' analyses can help you better understand your missional engagement in your setting. In particular, I encourage you to apply the analyses found in the required readings to your own ministry, if possible.<sup>1</sup> Suggestions for how to do this are offered below, but you are free to develop your own applications as they best fit your own ministry setting.

During class time, we will share responsibilities for leading discussions and offering devotions to start each session. We will ask for one or two people to share the facilitator role for each book/session and to start the session with a devotion that is somehow tied to that topic. The devotion should include a scriptural reference and may (although not necessarily) include another commentator's insights on the scripture in addition to your own. The leaders will be responsible for presenting the main ideas of the author(s) and facilitating a discussion of the book. Please prepare a powerpoint presentation to help you present the ideas clearly to your classmates and facilitate the discussion. **Please let me know by December 1<sup>st</sup> your top three choices for the book on which you would like to lead the discussion.** I will collect your preferences and arrange a schedule and return the assignments to you by December 4<sup>th</sup>. That will give you a full month to prepare your presentation. This should take the form of a powerpoint presentation that also should be submitted in advance (by 1/11/2016, 9 am).

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<sup>1</sup> If you (or your congregation) is not involved in a missional initiative, you will have to develop a conceptual model of such a ministry that you might like to implement in the future, given your context. The written exercises described below will then be translated to apply to your hypothetical, proposed missional ministry initiative.

**Advance assignments:** You should read the required texts prior to our first gathering, on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Prior to the first class (deadline, 9 am, January 11, 2016) you should submit online via Blackboard a two page (500 words, double-spaced) summary and analysis for **each** of the six assigned books. The format for your review should follow this suggested outline—although you are free to adapt this format as appropriate to fit your analysis and your ministry needs:

**I. Summary**—what is the author’s main argument or thesis? How does the author understand the fallen nature of the structures of this world? How is God at work in the world, according to this author, redeeming the world? How would you summarize the author’s overall vision of how the church is/can/should be in ministry with the world as the Body of Christ, redeeming the world? This summary should be about one page.

**II. Applied analysis**—How does this apply to your ministry setting? How can you apply this author’s analysis to the community or political context in which your church or ministry is located? Does the author describe a practice or form of engagement that you can implement in your ministry? What would that look like? If the author’s analysis does not apply, please explain how and why it does not apply.

For this second part of your paper, let me encourage you to consider how you could actually apply a ministry practice described by the author in your setting and possibly even to use this as the basis of your presentation or final course project. More broadly stated, how is it that your church or ministry is being part of God’s redeeming work in your community, in light of this particular author’s analysis?

Here are some suggestions as to how you might want to apply our authors’ analyses and practices. *Please do not feel limited by these, but rather treat these as initial suggestions and an invitation for you to develop your own application that is most appropriate to your own ministry setting.*

**Daniels, *Walking with Nehemiah***—do a walk around your neighborhood—as described in chapter 5—to undertake your own asset mapping and needs assessment of your community.

**Rans and Altman, *Asset-Based Strategies for Faith Communities***—do an asset mapping of your community related to an important ministry in your church. What are some of the important assets at each level (individual, associational, institutional, physical, economic) that could support this ministry?

**Salvatierra and Heltzel, *Faith-Rooted Organizing***: describe the local faith based organizing network in your area, if there is one. How does it match up with the model Salvatierra and Heltzel? What is it doing well? Where is it falling short? How might you connect with this organizing effort to magnify the redemptive work ongoing in your community?

**Taylor, *Mobilizing Hope***: Share your faith story as a transformed nonconformist? How has this shaped your ministry? Who is Jesus to you? How does your Jesus help you to understand social justice?

**Volf, *A Public Faith*:** Given Volf's descriptions of maladaptations of faith, how would you describe your congregation's ascent and return? Do you see any maladaptations in your community's faith practices? How might you address such maladaptations?

**Wink, *Engaging the Powers*:** Do you see your faith community engaging the powers of domination in your community? How is it engaging nonviolently? Prayerfully? With Love? **Required texts** are listed below. I would suggest you **start by reading Wink first** for the conceptual framework he provides. The other authors may be read in any order:

Daniels, Joseph. *Walking with Nehemiah: Your Community is your Congregation*. Abingdon, 2014. ISBN: 9781426781933.

Rans, Susan and Hilary Altman. *Asset-Based Strategies for Faith Communities*. Acta Publications, 2002. Available on-line (free) in PDF format.

Salvatierra, Alexia and Peter Heltzel. *Faith-Rooted Organizing: Mobilizing the Church in Service to the World*. ISBN: 9780830836611.

Taylor, Adam. *Mobilizing Hope: Faith-Inspired Activism for a Post-Civil Rights Generation*. Intervarsity Press, 2010. ISBN: 9780830838370

Volf, Miraslov. *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good*. Brazos Press, 2013. ISBN: 9781587433436.

Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*. Augsburg Fortress, 1992. ISBN: 9780800626464.