

Wesley Theological Seminary Course of Study
Intro to Mission
March 15&16 and April 12&13, 2019

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Course Objectives

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 Books

Dana Robert. *Christian Mission*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

Samuel Wells. *A Nazareth Manifesto: Being with God*. Wiley Blackwell, 2015.

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

Additional Assigned Readings

John Wesley. "The Use of Money" Sermon 50. (available for free via umcmission.org)

John Wesley. "On Visiting the Sick" Sermon 98. (available for free via umcmission.org)

Christena Cleveland. "How to be Last: Towards a Practical Theology for Privileged People"
<http://www.christenacleveland.com/blog/2016/12/new-series-how-to-be-last-a-practical-theology-for-privileged-people>

Radi-Aid and Barbie Savior. "Social Media Guide for Volunteers and Travelers"
<https://www.radiaid.com/social-media-guide/>

Course Summary

This class is designed as an opening to the conversation on God's mission (*Missio Dei*) and the roles we as individuals, congregations, the Church, and people of faith are invited to play in it.

Weekend #1:

Arrive to class prepared to engage in discussions about the content of the three assigned books. I strongly suggest bringing notes (for your own use) about aspects of these books you would like to raise.

Dana Robert's book, *Christian Mission*, provides a sweeping overview of the complex history of how Christianity has spread throughout the world. This book challenges narratives that frame the work of evangelism as a unidirectional linear expansion of the Church. Miroslav Volf's *A Public Faith* offers conceptual frameworks to discuss the appropriate roles of Christians when speaking about their faith in public interactions. Samuel Wells' *A Nazareth Manifesto* overturns much of what is taught in America about Christian service. I hope this powerful book will impact your understanding of mission as much as it has impacted mine.

Over the first weekend, we will use the semantic tool of *mission as _____* (e.g. *mission as evangelism, mission as outreach, mission as inreach*, etc.) to identify different ways in which the term mission is understood and used. We will also discuss historic Methodist teachings (including John Wesley's sermons) and praxis and how these inform how we teach and live out our missional callings today.

Weekend #2

Arrive to class having reviewed the sermons and articles listed under "Additional Assigned Readings" and be prepared to discuss what you submitted for Assignment #2. I suggest bringing a copy of what you submitted with you.

This weekend we will continue the conversations from the previous weekend, focusing on the pragmatic aspects of applying healthy missiology to each person's ministry setting.

Assignments

There are two writing assignments for this class. Each paper should be approximately 10 pages long (12pt font; double spaced). If a crisis prevents you from meeting an assignment due date, contact me as soon as possible to discuss.

Assignment #1:

Due date: Monday, March 11, 2019 uploaded to Blackboard

Having read each of the three assigned books, write a reflection that addresses all of the following:

- 1) What is “Christian mission”? Cite examples from each of the three books of different aspects of what it means to be a person who practices her/his Christian faith. Include at least three passages from scripture.
- 2) How has your understanding of mission been expanded, challenged, and/or affirmed by reading the assigned books? Are there any changes you would like to make in your approach to ministry that came from having read one or all of these books?
- 3) How does the congregation you serve (or plan to serve) understand and live out its God-given mission?
- 4) What lessons/assertions made in the assigned readings do you think would be the most beneficial to share with the members of your congregation?
- 5) What questions pertaining to mission would you most like to explore in this class?

Assignment #2

Due Date: April 8, 2019 uploaded to Blackboard

Having completed the additional assigned readings and reflected on the class discussions from the first weekend, devote as much time as you can to learning more about your ministry setting. You can explore census data, spend a day literally walking or driving around the streets of your town, and interview persons who are most knowledgeable about the challenges faced in your community (e.g. social workers, homeless persons, prison chaplains, public school teachers, Legal Aid volunteers, recent immigrants, community organizers, employees of neighborhood shops, etc.). Make and nurture new boundary-crossing friendships. Reach out to leaders of other faiths and demographic groups in your community. Identify what groups/programs already exist that are trying to do good in your community. Reflect on who is and isn't in leadership roles in these programs (for example: If there is a program to help the homeless, are there any homeless or formerly homeless persons in its leadership?) What points of relational disconnect (i.e. alienation and/or marginalization) call out to you? Write about the research you conducted, what you learned, and what you suspect God is inviting you, members of your congregation, and your new friends to do together. Incorporate in your paper references to the two assigned sermons by John Wesley as well as the articles about awareness of privilege and the ethics of using social media. Note that while the social media guide uses examples of persons going on “mission trips,” its guidance is also applicable when talking about relationships and initiatives in your congregation's neighborhood.

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.

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.