

**Wesley Theological Seminary  
Course of Study School  
2021**

COS 124 Transformative Leadership  
Upper New York Satellite School  
March 19-20 and April 23-24, 2021  
Faculty: Rev. Dr. Timothy R. Baer  
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Please Note: Originally, we were to meet together as a class over the course of two weekends at the Conference Center in Liverpool, New York. Due to the COVID19 Pandemic, we will meet through (hopefully) an audio/video digital classroom where we can interact with each other in real time through ZOOM! Once the class roster is set, we will try to work out the details. Please keep the original dates of March 19-20 and April 23-24 (and the days around them) open for some virtual class time!!!

**Objectives and Goals**

This course seeks to form the student's identity as a pastoral leader and change agent within congregations, the United Methodist Church, and the world; by helping students:

1. Identify and understand the attributes of good leaders, biblically and theologically;
2. Learn how discerning and communicating a vision and narrative leadership are essential to effectuating change in congregations;
3. Understand the dynamics of change in congregational life;
4. See leadership as an interactive, collaborative process that inherently involves group processes and forms others as leaders.

**Required Texts:**

*The Strategically Small Church* (Bethany House, 2010) by Brandon J. O'Brien.

*Ducking Spears, Dancing Madly: A Biblical Model of Church Leadership* (Abingdon Press, 2004) by Lewis A Parks and Bruce C. Birch.

*Finding Our Story: Narrative Leadership and Congregational Change* (Alban Institute, 2010) Larry Goleman, Editor.

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**Reading Assignments:**

Reading all required texts should be completed prior to the first day of class.

**Pre-Class Written Assignments:**

Assignment One: Due March 19, 2021. You may send in ahead of time by posting to Blackboard and by emailing directly to [tbaer@susumc.org](mailto:tbaer@susumc.org). Must be received by due date in order to receive full credit.

- ◆ Read *Ducking Spears Dancing Madly* by Lewis Parks and Bruce Birch. Write a five page paper (double spaced, twelve point, one inch margins) identifying the three to five most important learnings related to leadership that you gleaned from the book. Discuss how they relate to your personal leadership in your current ministry setting.
- ◆ Read *Finding Our Story, Narrative Leadership and Congregational Change* by Larry Goleman, Editor. Write a five page paper (double spaced, twelve point, one inch margins) identifying and describing specific clues and/or strategies you gleaned from the book that you might use to communicate more effectively in your current ministry setting.

Assignment Two: Due April 23, 2021. You may send in ahead of time by posting to Blackboard and by emailing directly to [tbaer@susumc.org](mailto:tbaer@susumc.org). Must be received by due date in order to receive full credit.

- ◆ Read *The Strategically Small Church* by Brandon J. O'Brien. Based on your reading, discuss each of the four key elements (intimate, nimble, authentic, effective) highlighted in this book. Describe why each is critical to effective leadership. Provide specific clues and/or strategies you might use to deploy each aspect of leadership more effectively in your current ministry context. This assignment should be ten pages (double spaced, twelve point, one inch margins).

**Grading:**

Assignment One – 40%  
Assignment Two – 40%  
Attendance and Participation – 20%

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## **Criteria for Evaluating Course Work:**

Regardless of whether you write a paper, answer an essay question, voice an oral presentation, or create any original project, the academic context requires that certain minimal requirements characterize your work. While there are subjective components in the grading process, most professors are concerned that you become well educated in four basic qualities of excellent academic work.

- ◆ 1. Demonstration of an empathetic understanding of the content of texts and resources. Your topic should not only be well researched in the library, through interviews and observations, and/or from assigned readings and class discussions, but you should be able to provide a fair description and a clear understanding of texts and resources. This is apparent in the ability to describe and discuss precisely and accurately what an author has written or a speaker has said. Evaluation, response, and critique follow accurate representation of another's ideas—earn the privilege of criticizing a viewpoint by showing that you really understand it.
- ◆ 2. Clear critical thinking that provides appropriate specific evidence for conclusions. Use the most precise historical, empirical, or contemporary data or information to support the claims of your thesis and paragraphs. Conclusions follow from and are supported by evidence. Be sure that your evidence is relevant, accurate, and detailed. Adherence to clear critical thinking, relevant and accurate evidence, and logical organization constitute sound arguments. Even creative writing requires logical relationships among ideas to assist your readers in following the plot or main point.
- ◆ 3. Creativity that moves beyond reporting someone else's ideas. Your creative addition to academic discourse might include questioning, evaluating, applying, criticizing (positively or negatively), developing, or responding. You might see a connection between two or more ideas. You might see information from a unique perspective. The minimal requirement of academic work is correctly repeating what is read or discussed. Excellent work moves beyond repetition to unique insights, organization, correlations, and theses. Work to find your own scholarly and professional voice.
- ◆ 4. Grammar, spelling, and form. Excellent written work is conscious of proofreading and good communication. Oral presentations are equally accountable for careful expression. A brilliant thesis can be lost in a paper or project that obscures its ideas with careless communication. Your readers and listeners should not have to guess what you mean—help them by speaking and writing well.

## **Grading:**

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The instructor assumes that everyone in the class is capable of the work required to receive a “B” grade for each assignment. The following interpretations of the meaning of each grade have been developed to help class members review their work to identify strengths and problems.

- ◆ A “B” means that the basic elements of the assignment have been faithfully included, the argument is internally coherent, and clearly articulated.
- ◆ A “B+” means the assignment is also well crafted.
- ◆ An “A-“ means that the assignment is not only well crafted, but it also probes the issues with considerable insight.
- ◆ An “A” means the assignment is well crafted, reveals considerable insight, and moves beyond the range of the student’s prior knowledge to begin to construct new perspectives and meanings for the subject. In other words, it shows the student’s imagination at work; it has a creative edge.
- ◆ A “C+” means that the assignment lacks clarity or focus, tends to reveal more the writer’s opinions than the results of the writer’s analysis, and lacks reflective insight into the issues being discussed.
- ◆ A “C” means that the assignment does not move beyond the reporting of information from readings and/or class discussions to engaging them with issues being discussed; it may indicate inappropriate or misuse of data and readings.
- ◆ A “C-“ means that despite some moments of focused discussion and insight, major gaps exist in the development of the argument or discussion.
- ◆ An “F” means the individual needs to see me immediately.
- ◆ Grades will be reduced a step (e.g. from B to a B-) for assignments handed in after the start of class, and a full letter grade for any assignments 24 hours past due. Assignments over 48 hours past due will be lowered two letter grades. We need to talk if an assignment is over 72 hours past due. Please note only two unexcused absences are allowed before grade is lowered one step. Final course grades are mailed to the student, GBHEM in Nashville and the student’s conference representative by September 30. Grades are not posted on-line.

### **Inclusive Language:**

In both oral and written contributions to the course, students are expected to be conscious of the power of language in theology. Inclusive language respects both gender and racial diversity, and students should demonstrate awareness that language about persons and God expresses values and impacts theological ideas in the details of race and gender connotations. Both gender and race are socially-constructed categories, and changing language is part of bringing justice to theological discourse.

### **Academic Policies:**

- ◆ **Attendance:** Students are expected to attend all classes in their entirety. Faculty members have the authority to set attendance policies for particular courses and those policies will be included in the course syllabus. Deviation from the attendance policy may result in reduction of grade or loss of credit for the course.

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- ◆ **Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is regarded as a serious offense and will result in substantial penalties, including the possibility of academic dismissal. The faculty regards the following as form of plagiarism or dishonesty: • Copying from another student's paper • Giving or receiving unauthorized assistance to or from another student during an examination • Using unauthorized material during an examination • Borrowing or presenting as one's own (i.e. without proper attribution) the composition or ideas of another.

Please refer to your Wesley Student Handbook (on-line) for more information about Wesley's academic policies or contact the Course of Study office 202-885-8688.