

Cultural Values in Congregational Life

Course #: DM-701x

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Course Description: The purpose of this course is to help students develop the skills necessary to assess and negotiate the cultures and values present in a ministry site and begin considering a research project. The course will consider basic tools of cultural analysis from a congregational studies and sociological perspective and will attend both to the internal and external cultural influences present in a given ministry site. In addition, students will consider their own cultural location and how it might influence ministry. The course will also help students recognize the impact of cultural differences on conflicts within local ministry sites and explore ways to negotiate such differences in a way that can lead to a more fruitful ministry.

Course Objectives:

In the area of knowing...

- Define the words “culture,” “society,” and “community” in relation to a local ministry site
- Articulate key cultural differences present in churches in the United States

In the area of being...

- Claim and live an ethnographic disposition as a ministry leader
- Understand the culture of a particular ministry site within a broader context
- Articulate how one’s own cultural context impacts ministry in a local ministry site

In the area of doing...

- Utilize various research methodologies to study the culture of a local ministry site
- Identify cultural differences within a local ministry site
- Develop skills for effective ministry site analysis for the students’ final DMin projects
- Develop skills for articulating a ministry site’s identity through marketing tools
- Develop skills for recommending changes to a ministry site’s culture.

Our Learning Community: Our online sessions will focus on course readings, short lectures, and various group activities connected to your ministry context. The activities and readings are designed to help you understand and integrate the material from the course into your own thoughts and practices, so please participate with your own questions and insights to help inform our time together. Lack of engagement within the class will impoverish all of us. **Arrange your life so you can be fully present.**

Technology Notes

Given the lack of personal contact during the course, you will need to be certain you have sufficient technological ability to access and participate in this course. **It is the student's responsibility to have sufficient technology to access and participate in the course.**

The instructor will assume this, and is not obligated to take technological difficulties into account when assessing the student's work.

Minimum technological requirements:

- Web Browser – You will need the latest version of the web browser you are using (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari, Google Chrome, etc.). Note that not all browsers work equally well with Moodle, so you may need to experiment with them if you have difficulty using all the functions on the site. (I use Firefox and have never had issues.)
- Operating System – In order to use the latest browser, you will need to have an operating system (Windows, Mac OS, etc.) that is up-to-date enough to handle it. Please be certain you have such an operating system.
- Internet Connection – You will need a high-speed internet connection that is sufficient to run streaming video with no difficulty. Usually cable and dsl connections can do this. Dial up cannot. If your home internet connection is not sufficient to provide this kind of connection, you will need to find access to a computer that does have this connection.
- Hardware – Bear in mind that you will need sufficient computing power in terms of memory, speed, audio, and video for the different aspects of this course to work well. Make certain that you have all of these in place so that you can run the necessary software and fully participate on-line.

Texts

Ammerman, Nancy T., Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, eds. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998. ISBN 978-0687006519. \$23.82. Amazon.

Bjoraker, William. "How Do Cultures Really Change? A Challenge to the Conventional Culture Wisdom in *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 28:1, Spring 2011, 13-22. **Free – Posted online**

_____. "How Do Cultures Really Change? A Challenge to the Conventional Culture Wisdom: pt. 2" in *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 28:2 Summer 2011, 75-88. **Free – Posted online**

Branson, Mark Lau & Juan F. Martinez. *Churches, Cultures & Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011. ISBN 978-0830839261. \$24.98. Amazon.

Crain, Margaret Ann. "Looking at People and Asking "Why?": An Ethnographic Approach to Religious Education" in *Religious Education* 96:3, 386-394. **Free – Posted online**

Court, Deborah. "Qualitative Research As Cultural and Religious mirror: What Do Researchers Really Learn?" *Religious Education* 103:4, 410-426. **Free – Posted online**

Kang, S. Steve. "Reflections upon Methodology: Research on Themes of Self Construction and Self Integration in the Narrative of Second Generation Korean American Young Adults," in *Religious Education* 96:3, 408-415. **Free – Posted online**

Your choice of substantive text that deals with your context (e.g., a text by Robert Wuthnow).

Assignments

Lectures and Readings

There are lectures and readings posted that relate to each session. You are expected to engage with these prior to completing the written assignment for that session.

You have one personal choice in the readings: In the third week, you need to track down some quantitative data about your ministry context. You may read any text that helps you interpret that data (not just something that gives you hard data). For example, Robert Wuthnow is a well-known American sociologist who has studied multiple segments of American culture. You are required to choose a single text he has written that fits best with the cultural context of your ministry site and to read it. Any book authored or co-authored by Wuthnow is acceptable. Other similar authors or texts that make sense of your context are also acceptable. Be certain to refer to your text in your paper for the week!

Writing Assignments

See Course Schedule following for details on all assignments. The assignments are:

- One 10-20 page, double spaced paper that includes three distinct parts: a personal assessment, a qualitative assessment of your ministry site, and a quantitative assessment of your ministry site.
- One 3-5 page paper that reflects on the information in your first paper and suggests a possible ministry intervention.
- One survey for your ministry site developed on <http://www.Surveymonkey.com> (does not need to be administered). Register for the free version of Surveymonkey and send everyone in your group the survey. Beware! You are only allowed ten questions in a free survey. Make them count!
- A draft proposal you would make to your ministry site to engage in a ministry initiative based on the information you gathered during the course. This should take the form of a presentation, *not* a paper (Power Point, Prezi, a video, etc.). Before developing this proposal, you will work through the process on the website <http://www.umcom.org/learn/market-your-church>.

Peer Review

In the course you will be placed in groups. These groups are so that you can provide peer feedback on your assignments to one another.

- By 10 a.m. on the date assigned, email your assignment to your group mates.
 - To email your group mates, use the “Quickmail” link that is on the course Moodle site. It will give you the ability to add everyone in your group as email recipients and to attach your assignment.
- When you receive the work from your group mates, read through it and provide no more than a 300-word comment offering feedback to your group mate(s). The feedback can be both practical and academic, drawing on your personal experience as a pastor and on your studies in the DMin program. The goal of the feedback is to give your group mate(s) an outside, expert opinion on how the person is making sense of and relating to his or her ministry site.

- This feedback should be returned to your group mates by the time the final document is due to be submitted to the professor.
- You should do two things with this feedback:
 - Email your group mates with it so they can benefit from it
 - Copy and paste it at the end of your own assignment for final submission.

How to Submit Your Work

- All assignments for each session should be saved in a single document.
 - *The document should include both the paper you have written as well as the peer feedback that you wrote for your other group mates.* Please copy and paste the feedback into the document after the assignment you wrote. You DO NOT need to include feedback given to you.
- The final document must be submitted through the submission link on Moodle for the session in which the assignment is due.
- In the case of the survey and the presentation (the last two assignments), you do not need to submit your peer review work as part of the final document. Emailing each other through the Quickmail link is sufficient.

Course Schedule

Focus	Assignment	Readings
<p>Assessing yourself, your church, and your neighborhood.</p>	<p>Write a 10-20 page, double-spaced, paper that has three parts to it:</p> <p>Part 1 (approx. 5 pages), an ethnic autobiography using the questions on pages 24-25 and 111 of <i>Churches, Cultures, and Leadership</i> by Branson and Martínez to stimulate your thinking. As Branson and Martínez suggest, craft a narrative. Your paper should show clear understanding of the notion of ethnic identity.</p> <p>Part 2 (approx. 5 pages) an analysis of your ministry site in terms of the culture/society/ community model (Branson and Martínez, p. 83). This should view the ministry site as a “community” and include an analysis of how the community interacts with the surrounding culture and society.</p> <p>Part 3 (however many pages you need up to a total of 20 pages for the paper): Develop a quantitative report about your church and the appropriate demographic/ psychographic area outside the church. It must include tables and/or graphs that demonstrate the most important statistics for telling the story about your ministry site and the context in which your ministry site is set. It must also include explanations of all the data you provide, drawing from the text you choose for the week, as well as from your own observations. You can use as many pages as you need to share your graphs and tables.</p> <p>Due to group mate(s): Wed 23 September @ 10 a.m. CST Feedback due back and submit to prof: Fri 25 September @ 10 a.m. CST</p>	<p>Ammerman, et al, Introduction and chapters 1-3, 5.</p> <p>Branson and Martínez, Introduction and Parts 1-2.</p> <p>Court article</p> <p>Choice of text.</p>

<p>Changing culture</p>	<p>Write a 3-5 page, double-spaced reflection paper. Reflect on the data you have collected about yourself, your church, and your larger context. Based on what you have learned, what strengths and/or weaknesses do you see? What would you like to change? How might you incorporate this into your final project for the DMin?</p> <p>Based on what you would like to change, develop a survey (you do not need to administer it) that you might use to explore the possibility of moving your ministry site in the direction you identified as needing change in your previous paper. The survey itself should be sent via http://www.Surveymonkey.com. On the introductory page for the survey (a feature that the free Surveymonkey account allows you to add), explain who you would administer the survey to, what information you want to collect with the survey, and how you would use the collected data to move forward in making the change.</p> <p>Due to group mate(s): Wed 7 October @ 10 a.m. CST Feedback due back and submit to prof: Fri 9 October @ 10 a.m. CST</p>	<p>Ammerman, et al, chapters 4, 6-7</p> <p>Branson and Martínez, Part 3</p> <p>Bjoraker articles 1 & 2</p> <p>Crain article</p> <p>Kang article</p> <p>Links posted on Moodle that explain how to develop good surveys. Surveymonkey also has several helpful articles on its website.</p>
<p>Developing a Proposal</p>	<p>This last assignment is meant to be an integrative one that pulls together the data you have collected and helps you organize it. It also gives you a sense for what it looks like to develop the proposal the DMin thesis project.</p> <p>This assignment has two parts:</p> <p>1) Read through the website http://www.umcom.org/learn/market-your-church. While the United Methodist Church provides it, the tools are not denominationally specific. As you go through it, it will give you a sense for how to take the information that you have gathered during this course and use it for launching a new church activity. While you do NOT need to gather a group to work with you for this assignment, it is helpful for you to</p>	<p>Read through the umcom website.</p> <p>You are welcome to consult any additional resources that are provided in each session online, but are not required to read any specific ones.</p>

	<p>see how a group would operate in developing and launching an activity.</p> <p>While not required, I do encourage you to download the two worksheets and fill them out using your own data. They may help you organize your thinking. You do not need to get anyone else to fill them out with you and do not need to submit them.</p> <p>Values and Visions Worksheet Strengths/Challenges/Opportunities Worksheet</p> <p>2) Develop a presentation to the people in your ministry site in which you share the central learnings you have gained about your ministry site and its context throughout this course. Propose a direction you would like them to go based on this information, explaining why this is an appropriate shift in ministry and what outcomes you hope to come from making the shift. This should be turned in as a presentation using Power Point (either narrated or with sufficient notes so that your group mates and I can understand contextual comments you make), Prezi, a video you upload, or another form of presentation. It should not just be a written paper.</p> <p>Due to group mate(s): Wed 21 October @ 10 a.m. CST Feedback due back and submit to prof: Fri 23 October @ 10 a.m. CST</p>	
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Academic Policies

All students are required to abide by the academic policies detailed in the Academic Handbook for the current academic year. The following policies are of particular importance to the successful completion of one's coursework:

Writing

- **Academic integrity and plagiarism:** (See 19-20 Handbook, 12, 78-83) All professors are required to respond to all suspected incidents of academic dishonesty, especially plagiarism. Repeated incidents of plagiarism or academic dishonesty may result in dismissal from the school.
- **Writing and citations:** The Turabian Manual for Writers and the Chicago Manual of Style footnote/bibliography format provide the standard formats for all introductory courses. Basic information on these formats is available online here. In advanced courses an instructor may require another style guide appropriate to the discipline (such as APA). (19-20 Handbook, 84)
- **Writing Support:** The Writing Center at Garrett-Evangelical offers programs to support all students' theological research and writing. See <https://www.garrett.edu/student-life/student-services> "Writing Center" for more detailed information.

Attendance and Class Participation

- **Inclusivity/Diversity:** The basic commitments of the seminary to mutual love and searching for the truth in Christ lead to a principle that in the classroom and in course assignments, persons are always to be respected and ideas are to be freely discussed....All participants in the teaching-learning process have an obligation to honor and respect varying perspectives on relevant issues. (See 19-20 Handbook, 9)
- **Attendance and lateness policies:** Attendance is required. Students who miss more than 20% of the class sessions (e.g., more than 2 classes in the weekly schedule, a proportionate amount for other class formats) should not expect to pass the class. (19-20 Handbook, 19)
- Some faculty may limit on the usage of electronic devices such as cell phones during class. At the least, all cell phones should be silenced during the whole of a class session.

Academic Accommodations

- Student accommodations for documented conditions should be developed and requested before the beginning of the semester. See the Accessibility, Special Needs, and Disabilities policy and process set out in the Academic Handbook (19-

20 Handbook, 12). Such accommodations are developed in consultation with the Registrar.

- **Extensions:** For Masters students, extensions, if granted, are normally for four weeks following the last day of class in spring and fall semesters or the final due date for coursework for January and summer terms. Extensions may not exceed three months following the end of the term. (19-20 Handbook, 20)

Course Policies

1. **Excellence in Writing:** Even though this is an UM Studies course, everything you have learned about good writing style still counts! Obtuse or inelegant writing in your essays will be reason for a reduced grade. If you need help with your writing, please contact the instructor.

2. **Intellectual Virtue:** We are striving not only to learn about a subject, but to sharpen our abilities to think critically. To do this, we must practice intellectual virtue by being open-minded, straightforward and thoughtful in our spoken and written work. We show our Christian scholarship not only by considering issues and questions that are central to our faith, but by being careful and respectful in our treatment of the authors of our texts, the ideas we discuss, and the thoughts of our fellow classmates.

3. **Late Work:** Late work is not accepted in this course.