

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

THEO 651 THE CHURCH TODAY: ITS NATURE, MISSION, AND TASKS
Spring 2022

Instructor:

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MODALITY: Classroom/In-Person, Tuesdays, 1:00 pm-4:00 pm

Course Description

This course examines the nature, mission, and tasks of the church today in the context of Christianity as a global faith. We study the diverse ways in which Christians around the world seek to live out their witness in contexts shaped by deep differences in culture, worldview, socioeconomic conditions, and interreligious relationships. We examine how biblical and theological images of the church (ex., body of Christ, fellowship of the Spirit, people of God, connectional covenant) are interpreted and reconstructed in light of different cultural and contextual realities, and how new images emerge to challenge and enrich the global church. We explore the ways such images shape how different communities interpret the church's identity and mission, the nature of its worship, leadership and governance, sacraments, and the form of its ministry in the world. We then examine how the realities of a globalizing world—migration, religious pluralism, economic disparities, racial conflict, poverty, and more—raise profound theological and moral challenges today for the church's ecumenical confession that we are one in Christ: "one body and one Spirit, . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism." (Eph. 4:4)

Course Outcomes:

At the end of the course, the student should be empowered to:

- Understand how deep differences in culture, worldview, context, and sociopolitical, economic, and religious realities prompt different theological formulations of the church's nature, mission, and ministry;
- Explain basic features of theological reflection on the church (ecclesiology), such as the church's identity and calling in God's reign, the nature and purpose of its worship, sacraments, ordering (governance, leadership), and its ministry in the world as instrument of God's love and justice;
- Take up the spiritual, moral, and theological obligation to embrace Christ's church across cultures in solidarity, support, and mutual learning;
- Cultivate the theological imagination, virtues, and skills to enable Christian communities to live out their calling with compassion and courage as part of Christ's global church.

Required Texts:

Field, David N. *Bid Our Jarring Conflicts Cease: A Wesleyan Theology and Praxis of Church Unity*. Nashville: Foundery Books, 2017. ISBN: 978-0938162247. List price (Amazon): \$39.99.

Green, Gene L., Stephen T. Pardue, Khiok-Khng Yeo, eds. *The Church from Every Tribe and Tongue: Ecclesiology In the Majority World*. Langham Global Library, 2018. ISBN: 978-1783684489. List price (Amazon): \$24.99.

Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti. *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Historical, Global, and Interreligious Perspectives*. Revised and Expanded. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021. ISBN: 978-0830841899. List price (Amazon): \$30.00