

COS 423 – Mission

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Course Description

This course will explore what it means for contemporary Christian congregations to be engaged in Christian mission that is scripturally based, ecumenically responsible, and integrated with the resources and strategies of The United Methodist Church. It will examine the historical challenges of mission and critically ponder current mission trends, asking which genuinely reflect Gospel values. It will look at mission as our partnership with God in loving the world, and encourage those who engage in mission to ask the right questions so as to respect John Wesley's first general rule that we do no harm.

Required Reading:

1. *Mission: An Essential Guide*, Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi (Abingdon, 2002)
2. *Christian Mission, How Christianity Became a World Religion*, Dana Robert (Wiley-Blackwell 2009)
3. *Good News to the Poor, John Wesley's Evangelical Economics*, Theodore Jennings (Abingdon, 1990)

Recommended Reading:

1. *In the Company of the Poor, Conversations with Dr. Paul Farmer and Fr. Gustavo Gutierrez* (Orbis, Maryknoll, NY 2013)
2. *The Next Christendom: the Coming of Global Christianity*, Philip Jenkins (Oxford University Press, 2007)
3. *Wisdom from a Rainforest, The Spiritual Journey of an Anthropologist*, Stuart Schlegel (University of Georgia Press, 2003)
4. *Saving Christianity from Empire*, Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer (Continuum, 2005).
5. *The Poisonwood Bible*, Barbara Kingsolver (Harper, 2008)
6. *When Helping Hurts*, Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert (Moody, 2009)
7. *A Public Faith: How followers of Christ should serve the common good*, Miroslav Volf (Brasos Press, 2013)

Pre-Class Assignments

1. Read the required books.
2. Write a response to each required book. Mention two new things you learned, two things you disagreed with, and two questions that the reading provoked for you. Each paper should be roughly 1000 words (two pages) in length. More words do not equal more credit.
3. Read at least two of the recommended books. Write the same 1000 word response as described in assignment number one. On the first day of class, be prepared to briefly describe these books, including sharing two things you learned from it.

4. These papers will be sent by email to the instructor before the class. His email address is pauljeffrey@earthlink.net. Papers that arrive by July 1 will have the possibility of receiving an A grade. Papers that arrive between July 1 and the first day of class will have the possibility of receiving a B grade. Papers turned in after the first day of class will unnecessarily aggravate the teacher, and you don't want to do that. These papers comprise 35 percent of your course grade.
5. Come prepared to make a brief (five minutes or less) oral presentation on the first day of class describing the context of mission in the congregation or other ministry setting where you live and work. In particular, your presentation should address these questions:

What is the group that's the focus of mission? What do you know about them? How do you know this about them? What do you not know? How can you find out more? Where do power and the lack of power manifest themselves in this context? What is the Biblical basis of your engagement with them in mission? How have faith groups related to these persons in the past? How can you harm them with mission? What are the questions you have about what it would mean to be in mission with them? How can you bridge seeing "them" as other, and thus make mission more about "us"?

Class participation

Forty percent of your final grade will be determined by your participation in class, including this initial assignment. The class will be conducted as a seminar, and you are expected to participate actively and honestly, asking questions both of others and yourself. You will be respectful of others, but you will also challenge them to think critically, just as you will graciously accept their challenges to you. You will bring lessons and questions from your reading assignments to bear on the issues we discuss during the class sessions. At the end of each session, you will be given instructions on how to prepare for the following class, including reviewing pertinent portions of the required reading. You will show up on time for each day's session.

Class schedule

We will have seven three-hour class sessions. The sessions will include discussion, lecture, the use of film and other media, and live Skype interviews with mission practitioners around the world.

The first two days will include a discussion of the Biblical foundation of mission and the forms that mission has taken over the centuries. What do the scriptures tell us about mission? What was Jesus' mission? What was the mission of the apostles? What can John Wesley teach us about mission?

The next three sessions will look at the challenges of contemporary mission. How does globalization affect mission? How do we do mission in a world where others believe in other Gods? How do we wrestle with the problems of colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism? What tools of analysis are helpful to us as we engage in mission? How do gender, race, and class affect how we understand and engage in mission? What do the rapidly changing ways in which people communicate with each other have to do with mission? How does mission relate to evangelism? How are we personally transformed by our engagement with mission?

On days seven and eight we will look at practical matters of mission in the local church. How do we motivate people for mission? How do we respond to the movement of short-term mission volunteers? How do we recruit, nurture and support persons in mission? How do we relate to humanitarian work as carried out by faith-based organizations?

During the last two sessions you will also focus on perfecting a mission project, possibly related to the context you described on the first day of class. This will involve both a brief verbal presentation to the whole class as well as a 1000 word paper due the final day of class. Your paper and presentation on this project will conform 25 percent of your final grade.

Outcomes

At the end of the class, if you did the reading and paid attention, you will be able to (1) articulate a biblical and theological framework for Christian missions, (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 globally and locally, and (4) analyze your ministry context and develop strategies for transforming mission.

Questions about the course may be directed to the instructor at pauljeffrey@earthlink.net.