

Course MS340SW

Public Ministry of the Church

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Overview

This class is a study of how the church exists, functions and is viewed in the public square. Emphasis is given to the expression and application of Christian beliefs, doctrines, and values through the practices called “missions”, social ministry, outreach and evangelism. How does the Christian community relate to the state, engage in culture, and address matters of society and culture at large?

Goals

- To become knowledgeable of the key concepts of Public Theology
- To understand the public role and mission of the Church and its various means of engagement in society
- To understand the various and distinctive forms public theology is embodied, expressed and incarnated including worship, discipleship, fellowship, “missions”, evangelism, social ministry and social action
- To Identify and gain awareness of the challenges and opportunities the church faces in its engagement in the public square
- To develop a personal approach to public theology, understanding what it means to be a public theologian of the church for the sake of the world

Evaluation

1. Attendance – 15%
2. Class participation – 15%
3. Four reflection papers - 40%
4. Final Public Theology position paper – 30%

Required Texts

Hauerwas, S. and Willimon, W.H., *Resident Aliens* (2014)
Hessel, Dieter T., *The Church's Public Role* (2002)
Robert E. Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World?* (IVP Books, 2008)

Milestones

Jan 22
Spring 2024 Term Begins

Feb 16
Reflection Paper #1 Due

Mar 9
Reflection Paper #2 Due

Mar 25-29th
Holy Week – no classes

Apr 6
Reflection Paper # 3 Due

Apr 27
Reflection Paper #4 Due

May 6
Final Public Theology
Reflection Paper due

Course Format and Procedures

This class will consist of a combination of lecture and discussion as designed by the instructor. Lectures will present related course material as well as to review and clarify assigned readings. The instructor will facilitate class discussion of assigned readings and materials. Students are required to complete all assigned readings and assignments prior to class sessions.

Guidelines for Reflection Papers

- Four reflection papers will be assigned to cover specific course material that has been covered.
- Reflection papers should be at least 3 pages typed (double spaced) responses to the reflection paper subject.
- Demonstrate your knowledge of the subject matter, authors, publications and prominent theologians.
- Include lecture notes, reading materials and discussions to support your work.
- Include your “theological perspective” relating to the subject matter.
- Be prepared to present and defend your work.
- Timely submission of reflection paper should be made both by email and by hand in class.

Course Schedule

Week 1 – Jan 22th : Course Overview and Introduction

Week 2 – Jan 29 : What is Public Theology?
Hauerwas & Willimon: Chapters 1 & 2

Week 3 – Feb 5th :The Church’s Public Theological and Ethical Claims
Hauerwas & Willimon: Chapters 3 & 4

Week 4 – Feb 12th :The Mission of the Church in Public Life
Hauerwas & Willimon: Chapters 5 & 6

Week 5 – Feb 19th :The Church Regaining its Public Impact
Hauerwas & Willimon: Chapter 7
Hessel: Chapter 1 – Making a Public Difference After the Eclipse

Week 6 – Feb 26th : Does the Church Change the World or Does the World Change the Church?
Hessel: Chapter 2 – The Church as Sign and Agent of Transformation

Week 7 – Mar 4th : Does the Church Change the World or the World Change the Church?
Hessel: Chapter 4 – Public Theology and the Future of Democratic Society

Week 8 – Mar 11th :The Church’s Public Witness
Hessel: Chapter 8 – Changes in Ecumenical Public Witness

Week 9 – Mar 18th : The Church and State
Hessel: Chapters 13 – The Churches on Church and State

Week 10 – Mar 25-29th : Holy Week
No Class

Week 11 – April 1st : The Church and State
Hessel: Chapter 14 – Church and State Revisited

Week 12 - April 8th The Church and Social Activism
Hessel: Chapter 12 – Mainline Protestants and the Social Gospel Impulse

Week 13 – April 15th : The Church and Social Activism
Hessel: Chapter 3 – The Public Role of Black Churches

Week 14 – April 22nd : Public Ministry and the Local Church. Webber Chap 1-6

Week 15 – April 29th : Public Ministry and its Future
Hessel: Chapter 15 –
