

***Belonging Before Believing:
New Communities and Emerging Forms of Church (Min 407)
McCormick Theological Seminary, May 2013***

DRAFT SYLLABUS--final syllabus will be handed out on the first day of class.

Instructors:

Rev. Dr. Alise Barrymore

Dr. Alise is one of the founding pastors of The Emmaus Community (TEC), a non-denominational Christian community that is a unique fusion of post-modern and traditional African-American worship traditions. TEC grew out of the vision of creating a place for those who are “distant, disconnected, or disenfranchised.”

Rev. Nanette Sawyer

Rev. Nanette is the founding pastor of Grace Commons, a Missional Faith Community in the Presbytery of Chicago. Grace Commons is a community centered in a generous and dynamic Christianity, rooted in the arts with a contemplative and participatory spirit. She is also pastor at St. James Presbyterian Church in West Rogers Park, Chicago.

Course hours: May 13-June 3

M/W/F 6-8:50 p.m. (9 weekly sessions & 3 Sunday visits)

May 13, 15, 17, 19 (on-line “visit”), 20, 22, 24, 26 (visit), 29, 31, June 2 (visit), June 3

Description: This class will explore emerging forms of Christian life and practice and examine a range of theological understandings and liturgical practices found in emerging faith communities throughout the U.S. and around the globe. This class will raise the questions that church leaders need to consider in order to engage their own communities in authentic and relevant ways. Pastors will also be equipped to transition a community of faith from a traditional context to a postmodern expression.

Course goals/learning outcomes:

By the end of the class, students will be able to:

- Discuss and analyze some of the current understandings of the emergent, emerging, and/or missional church and the cultural shifts which have served as catalysts for these changes in “being church.”
- Identify, describe and analyze the emerging theology, ecclesiology and practice that is characteristic of emerging communities in a variety of denominational and ecclesial traditions.
- Develop strategies and model practices that facilitate the creation of new churches and faith communities which are committed to vitality, relevance, and authenticity.
- Understand the historical development of the emergent conversation and be able to identify key thought leaders.

In addition, students will be expected to attend at least two worship services and engage one online worship service at churches which would be considered “emergent” or “emerging” and examine the ways in which theology, ecclesiology, and spirituality is expressed.

REQUIRED READING

1. Bass, Diana Butler. *Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening*, New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2012
2. McLaren, Brian. *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008.
3. Pagitt, Doug. *Church in the Inventive Age*, Minneapolis, MN: Sparkhouse Press, 2011.
4. Snider, Phil, ed: *The Hyphenateds: How Emergence Christianity is Re-traditioning Mainline Practices*, Chalice Press, 2011
5. Tickle, Phyllis. *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why*, Baker Books, 2008 (Reprint 2012)

Additional readings posted on Moodle

Chapters from:

- Pagitt, Doug & Jones, Tony, eds. *An Emergent Manifesto Of Hope*.
- Rose, Lucy Atkinson. *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church*.
- Spellers, Stephanie. *Radical Welcome: Embracing God, The Other, and the Spirit of Transformation*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Thoughtful and prepared participation in class discussions and activities. 25%

We are a class of adult learners representative of different styles of thinking and learning. It is the responsibility of each class member to come prepared to discuss the assigned readings for the session. You are expected to arrive on time and stay to the end of class. Please commit to hold all personal conversations in the strictest confidence.

2. Review and Reflection Papers 25%

Several short and informal reflections and worksheets will be required.

- Worksheets will be due after each church visit (3). (Worksheets for debriefing provided.)
- Mapping trends in your own congregation, due May 15, to be discussed in class that day.
- One-page proposal for final project due, May 24.
- Reflection on nurturing spiritual awakening, due May 29.

3. Presentation of Final Project on the last day of class (5-10 minutes). 10%

The actual completed project will be due two weeks later, June 17. We will have time for each person to present the beginnings of the course project that you will complete over the next two weeks. A form for your reflection on this will be given in class.

4. Final Project –Due June 17, 2013 40%

A handout will be provided with questions and guidelines for developing your final project, which will be 10-15 page paper with a theoretical or practical focus.

Each day's class will include:

- Experiential learning and spiritual practice
- Presentation and discussion in a variety of formats
- Opportunities to interact with other students around the material presented
- Opportunities to reflect on your context in light of class lectures and discussions

Class Sessions

Week One: History and Development

Monday, May 13th “Who and What is an Emerging/Emergent Community of Faith?”

Focus:

- Become familiar with who we are as a new community
- Share hopes for learning; review the syllabus
- History and Language of Emerging/Emergent Communities of Faith
- Lexicons in our own communities of faith: Why and how words matter

Reading for Discussion:

A New Kind of Christian, (all) by Brian McLaren

Wednesday, May 15th Cultural Shifts and Historical Changes

Focus:

- Changes in the nature of authority (singular, networked, relational authority)
- Shifting concepts of community (bounded sets, centered sets, relational sets)
- The Role of Narrative in Truth Claims
- The Role of Doctrine in Salvation
- Cultural orientations toward wholism and dualism

Reading for Discussion:

The Great Emergence, (all) by Phyllis Tickle

Assignment: Bring to class to discuss....Mapping trends in your own congregation (this is who I am and what I bring to the table--more of “my story”, getting to know each other and grounding our thinking in our contexts) (interrogate and interpret our own contexts)

Friday, May 17th Racial Considerations in the Emerging Conversations

Focus:

- The Role of the Historical Black Church in Shaping Community and Theology
- The Complexity of cultural identities (hybridity and multi-layered identities)
- Racial fragmentation and healing as a salvation issue
- Challenges to crossing cultures in faith communities
- Tools for spiritual practice of radical welcome in postmodern, postcolonial contexts
- Theological multilingualism--speaking of God in a variety of cultural languages

Readings:

1. “More Than ‘Just Us’: Justice in African American Churches in a Post Civil Rights Era” by Alise Barrymore in *The Justice Project*, edited by Brian McLaren, Elisa Padilla and Ashley Bunting Seeber, chapter 28.
2. “Monocultural Church in a Hybrid World” by Stephanie Spellers, in *The Hyphenateds*, chapter 2.
3. “Practicing Pentecost: Discovering the Kingdom of G-d Amid Racial Fragmentation” by Anthony Smith, *An Emergent Manifesto Of Hope*, chapter 24.

Sunday, May 19th On-line worship service: Solomon’s Porch, Minneapolis, MN

Assignment: one-page reflection on Solomon’s Porch experience, due Wednesday May 22 in class.

Note: We will discuss this experience in class on Monday.

Worksheet handout will be given with questions to consider, to guide debriefing discussion.

Week Two: Theology and Practices

Monday, May 20th Belonging and Believing: The Great Reversal

Focus:

- Debrief Sunday experience (bring worksheet to class)
- Comparing religion-as-institution and *religio* as a spiritually vital faith
- Considering journeys from belonging through believing
- Experiential reading of the bible and conservative/liberal categories
- Relational community, intentional practice, and experiential belief

Reading for Discussion:

Christianity After Religion, Part II: “Believing” “Behaving” “Belonging” and “The Great Reversal” by Diana Butler Bass

Wednesday, May 22th Theology as Shaping Vision

Focus:

- How does “story” constitute our identity as Christians?
- Present and discuss findings from interviews
- Atonement theologies, old and new
- Atonement as identification for incorporation
- Identifying and engaging core theological questions

Readings for Discussion:

1. *A Community Called Atonement*, by Scot McKnight (chs 6, 14, 18, excerpts on Moodle - 22 pages)

2. *The Hyphenateds*, chapters 6, 7:

“Net-A-Narratives: Evolution of Story in Our Culture, Philosophy, & Faith”, Carol Howard Merritt

“The Imperative of Imagination” by Nanette Sawyer

Additional Readings:

The Hyphenateds, chapters 4, 5:

“Why Luthermergent? Because We Always Have Been and Better Be Now and Forevermore, or We Probably Aren’t Really Lutheran,” by Nate Frombach

“Satanism in the Suburbs: Ordination as Insubordination,” by Christopher D. Rodkey

Friday, May 24th Practice as Identity Formation

Focus:

- How corporate and individual practices make us Christian
- Public performance of faith
- Identifying particular *charisms* of leaders and communities
- Integrating arts and artists in worship and practice (visual, musical, linguistic)
- Practice as transfiguration and transformation
- Being Christian in an Interfaith Awakening

Readings for Discussion:

“Awakening and Romantic Religion: Self, Practices, and Community”, through “Prepare, Practice, Play, Participate”, in *Christianity After Religion*, by Diana Butler Bass. (pgs 236-268)

Assignments: Proposal for final project due.

Additional Readings:

The Hyphenateds, chapters 10, 12, 13

“Mobius Operandi: Ambiguity and the Challenge of Radical Discipleship”, by Brandon Gilvin

“Improvising with Tradition: A Case (Self) Study,” by Timothy Snyder

“Emerging from the Jersey Shore: Secular, Generational, and Theological Frontiers,” by Mike Baughman

Sunday, May 26th Worship at The Emmaus Community

925 MacArthur Drive, Chicago Heights, 60411

9:00 - 10:00 am Fellowship

10:00 - 11:00 Worship

11:00 - 12:00 Debrief and discussion

Week Three: Strategies, Preaching & Worship

Monday, May 27th No Class -- Memorial Day

Wednesday, May 29th Creating New Communities

Focus:

- Debrief Sunday experience (bring worksheet to class)
- Stories and Case Studies of new forms of faith communities
- Practicing Getting Outside the Box (small group work on case studies)
- Relationships between traditional and emerging communities

Readings:

1. *Church in the Inventive Age*, (all) by Doug Pagitt
2. *The Hyphenateds*, Chapters 1 & 3, “Innovating with Integrity: Exploring the Core and Innovative Edges of Postmodern Ministry”, by Nadia Bolz-Weber; “A New Day Rising in the Church”, by Elaine A. Heath.
3. *Radical Welcome*, by Stephanie Spellers, selections posted on Moodle. “Defining Radical Welcome” and “Eight Radically Welcoming Congregations”, pgs 11-26.

Assignments:

Reflection due at the beginning of class on how you might nurture spiritual awakening, according to the categories proposed by Diana Butler Bass: *prepare, practice, play, participate* (pgs ??), as discussed in Friday’s class, May 24.

Friday, May 31st Preaching Practicum

Focus:

- Preacher as poet and artist
- Sermon Creation in Community
- Teaching the D3 and the C1s
- Practice and present different styles of preaching in class

Readings:

1. *The Hyphenateds*, chapters 9, 11: "Peekaboo Jesus", by Ross Lockhart, "Emerging from the Lectionary," by Emily Bowen

Posted on Moodle:

2. *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church*, Lucy Atkinson Rose, chap 1

3. *Preaching in the Inventive Age*, by Doug Pagitt, **selections**.

Sunday, June 2nd Grace Commons

at St. James Presbyterian Church, 6554 N. Rockwell St, Chicago 60645

5:30 pm Spiritual Practice

6:30 Community Meal

7:30 Debrief and discussion

Monday, June 3rd How Now Shall You Live?**Focus:**

- Students present an introduction to their final projects
- Considering Vocation given what we have learned
- Being caretakers of institutions or apostles for a movement (or both)
- Sharing learnings, highlights, and remaining questions
- Spiritual Closing through shared practice

Readings: TBA