



SCHOOL FOR MINISTRY

The Episcopal Diocese of San Diego

Church Mission and Society Spring 2019 John McAteer

Course Description: This course is a theological exploration of the purpose and nature of the Church. We will examine sociological data about changing cultural attitudes towards Christianity in the U.S. and explore what these data suggest about how the Church might respond. Throughout the course we will focus particularly on evangelism: how Christians can articulate the “good news” of Christ for our contemporary cultural context and how the Church can be a witness to the truth of this message.

Texts:

1. Stone, Bryan. *Evangelism After Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness* (Brazos, 2007) = \$30
2. Hunter, James Davison. *To Change the Word: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford University Press, 2010) = \$30
3. Bass, Diana Butler. *Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening* (Harper One, 2012) = \$16
4. Roxburgh, Alan J. *Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World: The New Shape of the Church in Our Time* (Morehouse, 2015) = \$16

NOTE - All books total \$92 at publisher’s list price, but they can be purchased for less on Amazon, especially if you purchase used copies. For example, the day I looked up the prices, you could get used copies of all four books on Amazon for \$44, including shipping.

Schedule:

- 1 The Church and the Good News for Society
Read: Stone, *Evangelism after Christendom*, Introduction and Part 1
Write: What is the “good news” of Christ and why should San Diegans care? Try to contextualize the timeless truth of Christ in a way that your non-Christian neighbors can understand (500 words).
- 2 Evangelism and the Mission of God

- Read: Stone, Parts 2-3
- 3 Evangelism and The Mission of the Church
Read: Stone, Parts 4-5
Write: Reflect on what you learned from *Evangelism After Christendom*. For example, you might consider such question as: What did you find most helpful about the book? What points from the book most challenged your previous ways of thinking? What questions do you have, which you hope to explore further? Etc. (500 Words)
- 4 Christianity and Culture, Part 1
Read: Hunter, *To Change the World*, Essay 1
Write: Revise the short essay you wrote about the “good news” in Week 1, based on what you have learned since then. It is okay if your core beliefs have not changed, but perhaps your way of articulating those beliefs has changed. *What is the “good news” of Christ and why should San Diegans care?* (500 words).
- 5 Christianity and Culture, Part 2
Read: Hunter, Essay 2
- 6 Christianity and Culture, Part 3
Read: Hunter, Essay 3
Write: Reflect on what you learned from *To Change the World*. For example, you might consider such question as: What did you find most helpful about the book? What points from the book most challenged your previous ways of thinking? What questions do you have, which you hope to explore further? Etc. (500 Words)
- 7 Religion in Contemporary Social Context
Read: Bass, *Christianity After Religion*, Chapters 1-3
Write: Revise again the short essay you wrote about the “good news” in Weeks 1 and 4, based on what you have learned since then. *What is the “good news” of Christ and why should San Diegans care?* (500 words).
- 8 New Ways of Being Religious
Read: Bass, Chapters 4-6
Write: Interview someone who does not self-identify as a “Christian” and does not currently attend any organized religious gathering. It could be a friend, neighbor, co-worker, relative, or stranger, but ideally it would be someone from the neighborhood around your local parish church. Ask them to share their thoughts and feelings about God, Jesus, Christianity, church attendance, religion, spirituality, etc. Try to get a sense of their openness to spirituality and what barriers prevent them from connecting with an

organized religious community. Reflect on your conversation. What did you learn about un-churched people from your conversation? What do you think your local parish needs to learn about this sort of person? What barriers prevent your local parish from connecting with this sort of person? How could your parish begin to overcome those barriers? (1500-2000 words)

9 New Opportunities for Mission

Read: Bass, Chapters 7-9

Write: Reflect on what you learned from *Christianity After Religion*. For example, you might consider such question as: What did you find most helpful about the book? What points from the book most challenged your previous ways of thinking? What questions do you have, which you hope to explore further? Etc. (500 words)

10 The Missional Church: Theory

Read: Roxburgh, Part I (Chapters 1-4)

Write: Write a 2-3 page reflection on what you learned from Part I of *Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World*. For example, you might consider such question as: What did you find most helpful about the book? What points from the book most challenged your previous ways of thinking? What questions do you have, which you hope to explore further? Etc.

11 The Missional Church: Practice

Read: Roxburgh, Part II (Chapters 5-11)

Write: Practice “listening” to the neighborhood around your church as described in Chapter 6, using “Practice Guide B”. Then brainstorm some possible “experiments” as described in Chapter 8, using “Practice Guide D”. Type up your notes and be ready to share in class.

12 The Missional Church: Communicating the Vision

Read: None

Write: Revise one final time the short essay you wrote about the “good news”, based on what you have learned throughout the entire course. *What is the “good news” of Christ and why should San Diegans care?* (500 words).

Present: Imagine you are leading a rector’s forum on “the Church’s Mission” at your local parish. Create a PowerPoint presentation to explain what God’s Mission is, what the role of local churches is in that mission, and how your particular parish can begin to engage in mission. Use engaging visuals and ground your presentation in Scripture, Tradition, and Reason (including demographic and sociological research). Try to keep the text minimal in the slides. Put your detailed comments in the “notes” section of the PowerPoint presentation. You may also use Keynote (for Mac) or any similar program. If

your program doesn't have a notes section, then use a separate Word document.