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# IS 501 Christian Formation: Kingdom, Church, and World

Ruth Anne Reese

Ronald R. Crandall

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# IS501 Christian Formation: Kingdom, Church, and World

Dr. Ron Crandall

x. 2252 MC 312

Dr. Ruth Anne Reese

x. 2184 FM 109

Room: M 104—Royal Auditorium

Spring 2004

Office Hours: Crandall W 10-11, Th 1:30-2:30; Reese T 10-11; W 10-11 also by appointment

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**Introduction:** Welcome to the spring session of Kingdom, Church, and World. We are Professor of Evangelism (Ron Crandall—ESJ School) and Assistant Professor of New Testament (Ruth Anne Reese—School of Theology) at Asbury Seminary. This is a course that excites us! This course gives us an opportunity to critically examine our presuppositions and commitments regarding the nature of the kingdom of God and its relationship to the concepts of Church and world. These are three distinct, but intimately related aspects of the reality in which we all live and engage in ministry—whether we be laypersons or clergy—and they are aspects that need to be examined.

In this course we will have the opportunity to reflect on a number of questions and issues including:

1. What is the kingdom of God?
2. What is the Church?
3. How does and should the Church engage the world?
4. What do we mean when we speak of “the world?”
5. What relationship exists between the kingdom, the Church, and the world?

There will be other questions that you will raise as well. This class is an introduction to various aspects of theology, biblical study, philosophy, and mission. As such the topics that the course can touch upon are vast. In light of this, it is good to remember that this is an introductory course that is designed to give you a taste of the curriculum that lies ahead in theological study.

**Course Rationale:** It is altogether reasonable to ask why a particular course is required. There is a sense in which this entire syllabus is intended to answer that question, but we would characterize this course as having at least two over-arching intentions. First, an essential skill for all engaged in Christian ministry is the ability to “think theologically.” To think theologically is not merely to be able to appropriate certain proof texts in order to give “biblical” answers to given questions. Rather, it involves the ability to begin to “get our arms around” the biblical message *as a canonical whole*, to be able to inquire of the biblical narratives in an integrative way, and to be able to develop our answers in a more holistic fashion. Already, we have referenced our ability to properly appropriate the biblical texts, and this brings us to the second over-arching intention: to begin to see the scriptures as organized around certain integrative motifs. In this regard, this course integrates theological reflection and biblically informed practice and demonstrates its significance for the faithful performance of scripture by God’s people.

Important issues include:

1. What constitutes a biblical narrative? Is there more than one?
2. What role does narrative play in the scripture?
3. How is one to understand the relationship of “part” and “whole” when interpreting biblical narrative?
4. What is the role of culture in shaping our own understanding of mission and ministry?
5. How does biblical narrative subvert our familiar ways of being, thinking and acting in the world?

By engaging these questions, we will be undertaking a critical examination of some of our fundamental assumptions about who we are and what God calls us to be, not simply as individuals, but as members of his Church. This may be dis-orienting from time to time, but keep in mind our end goal: to understand more fully who we are as the people of God and what it means to be in his service in the world as representatives of his kingdom.

**Course Objectives:** Having successfully completed this course, students should be able to

1. Articulate their understanding of the biblical narrative that comes to focus for us best in Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of God;
2. Identify the particular contribution of the Wesleyan tradition to our understanding of this narrative;
3. Draw out major theological, moral, and philosophical implications of this narrative, especially as these are related to the nature and mission of the people of God;
4. Evaluate cultural products (e.g., literature, television, movies, advertisements, print media, music) in light of major theological, moral, and philosophical implications of this narrative;
5. Exercise criticism with respect to one’s own cultural context and discernment with respect to the context of others vis-à-vis major theological, moral, and philosophical implications of this narrative;
6. Articulate the ecclesial and missional implications of this narrative – specifically for one’s own context and generally for our shared global context; and
7. Exhibit a heightened sense of commitment to serving the kingdom of God in mission in the world.

**Required Reading:**

- Donovan, Vincent. *Christianity Rediscovered*. Orbis Books, 2003.
- Hart, Trevor. *Faith Thinking: The Dynamics of Christian Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1995.
- Hauerwas, Stanley and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, Abingdon, 1989.
- McLaren, Brian D. *The Story We Find Ourselves In*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.
- Snyder, Howard. *Kingdom, Church, and World*. Wipf and Stock, 2001.
- Wesley Reading Packet available at Cokesbury

**Recommended Reading:**

- Clapp, Rodney. *Border Crossings: Christian Trespasses on Popular Culture and Public Affairs*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2000.
- Newbigin, Leslie. *The Open Secret*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- McLaren, Brian. *A New Kind of Christian*. Jossey-Bass, 2001.
- Middleton & Walsh. *Truth is Stranger than it Used to Be*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1995.

**Evaluation:**

- **Active and Substantive Participation in Small Groups (10 points)**  
The small group will meet every Wednesday from 4:25–5:15 p.m. for reflection and discussion of the small group material. Each person in the group is expected to lead the group’s work twice during the semester.
- **One Page Book Evaluations (10 points)**  
Each student will turn in a one page single spaced reflection paper for each book that is read. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the day assigned. Instructions for these papers: 1. Give a one-sentence statement of what the book is about. 2. Write a short paragraph describing the author’s argument? 3. Explain how the book relates to the course objectives. 4. What did you learn from this book? 5. What issues concerns or questions would you like to see discussed? 6. Give 3 consequences or implications for ministry.
- **Kingdom Project and Presentation (10 points)**  
Each student in each group is required to spend 12 hours of personal work/involvement in a “Kingdom Project.” This project is a group project that must be completed together. In order to facilitate this project, a list of local ministries and resources will be provided. However, groups are also encouraged to find other suitable (in consultation with professor) churches, para-church organizations, social service agencies, and community related organizations where they may complete the Kingdom Project. After completion of Kingdom Project, each group will share its experience with the class.
- **Kingdom Project reflection (written): (10 points)**  
Each member of each group will write a personal reflection of his/her experience in the project in the light of class readings and lectures. The goal of this paper is to integrate your experience of doing the kingdom project with the theological reading and work done in class. Please write no less than 3 (three) and no more than 5 (five) pages and the reflection must be typed or printed with 12 point type, one inch margins on all four sides, and true double spacing. Any paper receiving less than 5 points can be rewritten as instructed by the professor.
- **Mid-Term (30 points)**  
Take-home, open-book exam;
- **Final-Exam (30 points)**

**Grading:** Work for IS501 will be evaluated at a graduate/professional school level. The grading scale is as follows

A = 94-100	Exceptional Work
A- = 90–93	
B+ = 87–89	
B = 83–86	Good Work
B- = 80–82	
C+ = 77–79	
C = 73–76	Acceptable Work
C- = 70–72	
D+ = 67–69	
D = 63–66	Marginal Work
D- = 60–62	
F = 59 and below	Failing Work

**Incomplete Work:** “A grade of ‘I’ denotes that the work of a course has not been completed due to an *unavoidable emergency*, which does not include delinquency or attending to church work or other employment. If the work of the course is incomplete at the end of a term without an emergency, a letter grade will be given based on the grades of work done, with incomplete work counted as ‘F.’ ” From ATS 2003-05 Catalog, page 28 (emphasis added).

**Attendance Policy:** One week of class may be missed without makeup. After one week, extra reading is required (50 pages per day missed: from the recommended reading list) and a one page single-spaced paper summarizing the extra reading. If three weeks are missed, a conversation with the professors is needed and there will be a reduction of grade. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that the attendance sheet is marked prior to leaving class. The professors will not change the record after the class has been marked as missed. Any questions arising should be addressed to one of the professors immediately and should not be left until the end of the semester.

**Small Groups:** In the first week of class you will be assigned to a small group. This group will be an essential part of the class. These five people will: (1) share in a “Wesley-type” accountability group, (2) discuss small group reading material, and (3) work together on a Kingdom Project.

The purpose of small groups in KCW is to provide formation in the Wesleyan tradition of nurture and accountability and to be a place where academic discussion and growth in spiritual disciplines mutually inform each other and contribute to how we manifest a kingdom witness in the Church and in the world.

### **Guidelines for Group Meetings:**

1. Because Christian living and witness are important aspects of this course, the group experience is built into our weekly class time so that no one has to find time for an additional meeting outside of class.
2. The purpose of this group is to hold each other accountable for growth in grace, to share insights from the weekly disciplines, and to encourage each other toward living faithfully as witnesses to the kingdom and the lordship of Christ in our lives.
3. One student in each group will take attendance and email it to Ron\_Crandall@asburyseminary.edu. Please note that if you miss more than three sessions (for whatever reasons), you will not receive credit for this component of the course.
4. Each person should complete the assigned readings before coming to class.
5. Each group should covenant to keep group conversations confidential.

## **Course Schedule**

### **Introduction**

Week 1. Introduction and Organization of the Course

- Small Groups: Selection, Process, Leadership, and Expectations
- Course Objectives
- Course Procedures

## **Module One: Kingdom – Living the Biblical Story**

Weeks 2-5

### *Objectives*

Having completed this module, students should be able to:

1. Articulate the importance of “story;”
2. Discern how cultural products participate in inviting us into certain stories;
3. Articulate the basis for the unity of Scripture in the overarching plan of God, from Creation to New Creation;
4. Articulate the hermeneutical importance of the kingdom and of the incarnation for understanding the biblical story;
5. Articulate how Wesley’s understanding of the way of salvation serves as a helpful guide for reading the biblical story;

### *Small Groups*

- Meet 50 min/week within the course schedule and follow the small group guidelines.

## **Module Two: Kingdom and Church**

Weeks 6-8

### *Objectives*

Having completed this module, students should be able to:

1. Enumerate significant ways in which the ongoing life of the people of God participates in and extends the biblical story;
2. Articulate how kingdom-living relates to a community of believers;
3. Articulate an ecclesiology oriented around participation in the kingdom;
4. Articulate basic forms of ecclesial practice (e.g., hospitality, mission) that are a necessary outgrowth of an ecclesial commitment to living in the kingdom.

### *Small Groups*

- Meet 50 min/week within the course schedule and follow the small group guidelines.

## **Module Three: Kingdom, Church, and World**

Weeks 9-13

### *Objectives*

Having completed this module, students should be able to:

1. Articulate the significance of the kingdom in terms of its cosmological and eschatological significance (rather than in individual and subjective terms);
2. Demonstrate that they have begun the process of thinking theologically – i.e., situating life within the interpretive and critical horizons of a theological vision of the purpose of God for creation that comes into focus best in Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom;
3. Draw out inferences of this view of the kingdom with respect to a range of social-ethical issues (e.g., money, justice, nationalism);
4. Demonstrate the importance of understanding one’s world in performing the kingdom;

### *Small Groups*

- Meet 50 min/week within the course schedule and follow the small group guidelines.

## Reading and Assignment Schedule

Week 1—Feb 11

Introduction

Reading to be completed for Feb 18: Read Snyder

Small Group Assignment for Feb 18: Read Wesley's *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodist* and come prepared for discussion with your group

### Module One: Kingdom

Week 2 — Feb 18

Kingdom: Introduction to Postmodernism and Narrative

Due: 1 page book review of Snyder

Reading to be completed for Feb 25: Begin reading McLaren

Small Group Assignment for Feb 25: Read Deut 5; Psalm 106; Acts 7; Hebrews 11

Week 3 — Feb 25

Kingdom: The Old Testament Narrative

Reading to be completed for Mar 3: Finish reading McLaren

Small Group Assignment for Mar 3: Read Luke 4:1-3; Isaiah

Week 4 — Mar 3

Kingdom: The New Testament Narrative

Due: 1 page book review of McLaren

Reading to be completed for Mar 10: Begin reading Hart

Small Group Assignment for Mar 10: Read selections from Wesley's *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* and *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*

Week 5 — Mar 10

Kingdom: The Trinity and the Wesleyan Order of Salvation

Reading to be completed for Mar 17: Finish reading Hart

Small Group Assignment for Mar 17: Read Exodus 19; Acts 2; 1 Corinthians 12

### Module Two: Church

Week 6 — Mar 17

Church: Who are the People of God?

Due: 1 page book review of Hart

Reading to be completed for Mar 24: Begin reading Hauerwas and Willimon

Small Group Assignment for Mar 24: Work through questions on Hauerwas

Week 7 — Mar 24

Church: The People of God through History

Reading to be completed for Apr 7: Finish reading Hauerwas and Willimon

Small Group Assignment for Apr 7: Work through questions on Hauerwas and Willimon

**Reading Week – March 29-April 2**

Week 8 — Apr 7

Church: The People of God in the Contemporary Context

Due: 1 page book review of Hauerwas and Willimon

Reading to be completed for Apr 14: Begin reading Donovan

Small Group Assignment for Apr 14: Read Genesis 1-2; John 1:1-18; Acts 10-11 and come prepared for discussion with your group

**Module Three: World**

Week 9 — Apr 14

World: Listening to the world

Reading to be completed for Apr 21: Finish reading Donovan

Small Group Assignment for Apr 21: Reread the last 8 pages of *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodist* and read Wesley's *Thoughts Upon Methodism* and come prepared for discussion with your group

Week 10 — Apr 21

World: Acting in the world – Justice

Due: 1 page book review of Donovan

Reading: No Reading

Small Group Assignment for April 28: Work on Kingdom Project Presentations

Week 11 — Apr 28

World: Acting in the world

Due: Kingdom Project presentations and papers.

Small Group Assignment: For Wednesday, May 5, read Mathew 28:16-20; John 13; Acts 4 and Wesley's sermon *The General Spread of the Gospel*

Week 12 — May 5

World: Speaking to the world

Reading: Prepare for Final Exam

Final Small Group Meeting

Week 13 — May 12

World: Speaking in the world–The Witness of the Worshipping Community

Reading: Prepare for Final Exam