

This syllabus was used previously for this course and can be used as a guide for students choosing courses. The syllabus changes each semester and may be different upon students' arrival.

Messiah College – Philadelphia Campus
URB319 / THEO 225 Practical Theology of the Urban Church
Spring Semester 2007

Course Description

This course examines how Christian beliefs and institutions have been shaped by and help to direct community life within urban locations. Course content focuses on current methods and skills of urban church ministry, community organizing, and social change within the city. Attention is given to how theological perspectives relate to social service to and in an urban neighborhood.

Course Goals

- To understand the impact of the urban context on the form and function of neighborhood churches
- To become familiar with the articulation of a distinct practical theology within the urban context
- To appreciate the interaction of theology and practice in urban faith communities
- To observe and reflect on the congregational life in and service to an urban neighborhood of an ethnic church
- To analyze to how a particular urban church engages in theological praxis

Course Texts

- The Meaning of the City; Jacques Ellul; Eerdmans Publishing, 1970
- The Shape of Practical Theology: empowering ministry with theological praxis; Ray Anderson; IVP Academic, 2001
- The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical; Shane Claiborne; Zondervan, 2006

Course Requirements

- **Attendance and Participation:** This course will be conducted in a *seminar-style* where everyone comes to class having read assigned material and accomplished assignments in order to contribute to discussion and analysis of topics. An emphasis is placed on class participation. The smaller size of our class enables us to place a higher emphasis on individual leadership in this course and contribution to each other's acquisition and application of knowledge. Class-time will focus on student discussion of course readings. Emphasis is placed on having carefully read all assigned materials and being prepared to engage in thoughtful discussion and analysis.
- **Quizzes and Final Examination:** Each week at the beginning of class a short quiz will be given that comes from The Meaning of the City readings. At the end of the semester there will be a final examination that is comprehensive.
- **Weekly Reading Assignment:** Each week specific readings will serve as the basis for discussion of weekly assignments and semester-long projects. *Reading Responses (RR)* are to be structured on the basis of five standard questions (format: approximately one typed page in length, single spaced with 1" margins in 10-pitch font). *Reading Responses* are due at the beginning of each class period.

Questions for each week's *Reading Response* are as follows:

- *Summarize the central thesis of this assigned reading. (4-5 sentences)*
- *What key point do you find most compelling? (4-5 sentences)*
- *What relationship can be made between this idea and readings from Meaning of the City? (4-5 sentences)*
- *How has this chapter altered and/or expanded your understanding and view of urban ministry and service to a neighborhood? (2-3 sentences)*
- *What connection can be made to a person's Christian faith and practice? (4-5 sentences)*

- **Common Text Reflection Essay:** During the first month of the semester we will be reading and discussing in class Shane Claiborne's book Irresistible Revolution. Students will use course material to compose a three page essay on his book, our interaction with him. Format for this paper is to be as follows: three typed pages, single spaced, 1" margins, 10-pitch font. This essay is due at the beginning of class on March 22nd.
- **Small Group Work:** Throughout the semester students from both Bible and Practical Theology classes will work together in small groups to study specific aspects of biblical analysis and practical theology. Three times groups will present material for in-class discussion and review. Assigned readings and questions for each of these presentations is outlined in the Addendum.
- **Practical Theology Case Study:** During the semester each student will develop a case study of a local ethnic church. This project will include: attending worship services at least four times during the semester and writing a paper. See Addendum for full description.

CLASS SCHEDULE

January 18th – Course Introduction

Readings

Ellul – Introduction and Preface
 Anderson – Preface and Introduction to Practical Theology (Chapter 1)
 Claiborne – Forward and Introduction

Assignment: Form small groups

Jan 25th – Discipline of Practical Theology

Readings

Ellul – Cain and Nimrod (pages 1-23)
 Anderson – The Discipline of Practical Theology (Chapter 2) **RR**
 Claiborne – pages 31-51

Assignment Due: Confirm church information and select church for observation

February 1st - Practical Theology as Christopraxis

Readings

Ellul – Israel (pages 23-38)
 Anderson – A Trinitarian Model of Practical Theology (Chapter 3) and Practical
 Theology as Christopraxis (Chapter 4) **RR** (one response incorporating both chapters)
 Claiborne – pages 51-90

Assignment Due: Church Visit #1

Feb 8th – Practical Theology of *Urban Ministry* – small group presentations

Readings

Ellul – Let Us Build (pages 38-43)
 Anderson – A Practical Theology of Ministry (Chapter 5) **RR**
 Claiborne – pages 91-153

Feb 15th – The Urban Curse

Readings

Ellul – The Curse (pages 44-62)
 Anderson – The Resurrection of Jesus as Hermeneutical Criterion (Chapter 6) **RR**
 Claiborne – pages 155-222

Feb 22nd – Praxis of the Spirit in the City

Readings

Ellul – Sodom and Nineveh (pages 62-72)
 Anderson – The Praxis of the Spirit (Chapter 7) and Church & Its Ministry (Chapter 8)
RR (one response incorporating both chapters)

Claiborne – pages 223-266

Assignment: Discussion of church case studies

March 1st – Good Neighbors

Readings

Ellul – But in these Cities... (pages 72-84)
 Anderson – The Concept of Neighbor (Chapter 9) and Sociocultural Implications of a
 Christian Perspective of Humanity (Chapter 10) **RR** (one response incorporating both
 chapters)

Claiborne – pages 267-314

Assignment Due: Church Visit #2

Mar 8th – Spring Break

Mar 15th – Soul of the City - *Small Group Presentations*

Readings

Ellul – Long We Wait for the Coming of the Dawn (pages 85-112)
 Anderson – The Humanity of God and the Soul of the City (Chapter 11) **RR**
 Claiborne – pages 315-367

Mar 22nd – Finding Hearth and Home**Readings**

Ellul – The Fulfillment (pages 113-124)
 Anderson – Practical Theology as Paraclesis (Chapter 12) **RR**

Assignment Due: *Common Text Reflection Essay*

Mar 29th – Jesus and Jerusalem**Readings**

Ellul – The Multitude (pages 124-146)
 Anderson – Theological Ethics (Chapter 13) and the Kingdom of God as a Therapeutic Context (Chapter 14) **RR** (one response incorporating both chapters)

April 5th – History of the City**Readings**

Ellul – The History of the City (pages 147-163)
 Anderson – The Church's Mission to the Family (Chapter 15) and Homosexuality (Chapter 16) **RR** (one response incorporating both chapters)

Assignment Due: Church Visit #3

Apr 12th – To Jerusalem and Forgiveness - *Theology Small Group***Readings**

Ellul – From Cain to Jerusalem / From Eden to Jerusalem (pages 163-182)
 Anderson – Clergy Burnout (Chapter 17) and A Practical Theology of Forgiveness (Chapter 18) **RR** (one response incorporating both chapters)

Apr 19th – The New City**Readings**

Ellul – Yahweh-Shammah (pages 183-209)
 Anderson – The Little Man on the Cross (Chapter 19) and Memo to Theological Educators (Chapter 20) **RR** (one response incorporating both chapters)

Apr 26th – No Class**May 3rd – Final Examination**

Assignments Due: *Practical Theology Case Study*

Office Hours: Mondays from 10am-11am, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 1-4pm – located in room #3011 of the 2030 Building (ext. 7504).

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT: Any student whose disability falls within ADA guidelines should inform the instructor within the first two weeks of any special accommodations or equipment needs necessary to complete the requirements for this course. Students must register documentation with the Office of Disability Services (Hoffman 101). If you have questions, call ext. 5387.

Common Text Reflection Essay

During the first month of the semester we will be reading and discussing in class Shane Claiborne's book Irresistible Revolution. Students will use course material to compose a three page essay on his book, our interaction with him. Use course readings and materials as substantive support for key points, perspectives and conclusions as you construct this essay. Format for this paper is to be as follows: three typed pages, single spaced, 1" margins, 10-pitch font. This essay is due at the beginning of class on March 22nd.

Your essay will be graded on the basis of the following criteria:

1. MECHANICS (10 points)

- 1.1. **Basic Criteria:** Typed, single-spaced, 1" margins, 10 pitch font, 3 pages
- 1.2. **Grammar** and correct word usage
- 1.3. **Spelling**
- 1.4. **Punctuation**
- 1.5. **Quotations** - length and proper introduction of quote
- 1.6. **Overall Presentation**

2. ORGANIZATION (40 points)

- 2.1. **Logical, Well Designed, and Developed** - approach to and communication of this topic: ALogical@ - one point leads to and provides support for another; AWell Designed@ - each part fit and work together: ADeveloped@ - goes from simple to complex
- 2.2. **Thesis Statement** - a defensible interpretation of the text material; an analytical statement regarding a theme within the text(s): Is it clearly stated? Is it plausible?
- 2.3. **Development of Thesis Statement** - The writer=s approach to this topic is clear and well articulated or writer inadequately covered selected topic (paper is too short). The writer stayed focused on the topic and the Atask@ or writer needs to be properly focused (paper is too long and rambles). Thesis statement is developed from and supported by frequent evidence within the text(s). AFrequent@ - (1) the idea, perspective, or topic, occurs repeatedly throughout the text; and (2) the writer makes repeated use of quotes from the text(s) thereby supporting this idea, perspective, or topic.
- 2.4. **Paragraphs** - Introductory paragraph: states the thesis and offers a Amap@ to the essay=s conclusion, suggesting how the writer will take the reader to that end.
 - Paragraphs should be at least three sentences and not more than a page in length.
 - Paragraphs should enable the reader to easily follow and understand each phase and part of the essay.
 - Paragraphs should suggest a development of the writer=s ideas into a unified whole. Every part of the essay-every sentence and paragraph-needs to demonstrate a clear relationship to your thesis statement.

3. ARGUMENT & SUPPORT (50 points)

- 3.1. **Use of Facts** - objective, inarguable information or data that comes from the text. Valid and effective use of assigned reading material: quotes means what you are suggesting; quotes support your thesis statement; each point is supported by valid quotes; quotations are not to be used for Aplot summary@; quote supports the analysis; use of quotations helps to clarify, support, or make a point in articulating and arguing for the thesis statement.
- 3.2. **Good Argumentation** - interpretations about the meaning of the >facts@: good and proper use of facts from the text(s) to support the writer=s thesis statement. Is the reader drawn into the argument? Does he/she want to read further to learn more about what the writer is going to tell her/him? Stay focused on your topic. Be clear regarding what you want the reader to know. Write as concisely as possible.
- 3.3. **Evidence of Curiosity** - Make good points and offer compelling interpretations without having to explicitly state each idea in the form of a question that would be answered. Did not simply summarize the text. You are attempting to critique the action and/or subject of the text. You are suggesting a specific way of interpreting the facts. You are creating a way of Areading@ and Aseeing@ the story in this text. Support for this particular view is to come from the text itself. Your essay should reflect your own uniqueness and express ideas that you are able to draw from reading this material. Your essay should be more about why something happens, rather than what happens in the text.

Small Group Projects

Students will work in three inter-class groups of four students each (self-selected with a mix of students from both classes) to accomplish three projects/presentations on topics that relate to both classes and our engagement in the city. Each student is expected to provide insight and perspective on project questions based on relevant course material relevant. Written and presented material is to identify individual student contributions. Provide Dr. Peterson with an electronic copy of project material before the beginning of class.

Small Group Project #1: Defining Practical Theology

- Readings
 - Ellul, *Chapter One: The Builders*
 - Anderson, *Part One: The Shape of Practical Theology*
 - With emphasis on the following readings:
 - Ellul – Let Us Build (pages 38-43)
 - Anderson – A Practical Theology of Ministry (Chapter 5)
 - Claiborne – pages 91-153
- Questions for Response
 - Define the term *practical theology*
 - What does it mean to have the “*mind of Christ*”?
 - What is the meaning of “*being filled with the Spirit*” (Anderson, 45)?
 - What is the biblical significance of *poiesis* (ποιεσις), *telos* (τελειοσ) and *praxis* (πραξις of church and society) (Anderson, 49-51)?
 - What significance does the biblical meaning of “city” (*ityr*; see Ellul, p9 and note #1) have to *practical theology*?
 - Identify other terms to could be used in defining the concept of *practical theology*
 - When do we know it is occurring? What criteria can be used for evaluating the presence and strength of churches engaging in *practical theology*?
 - What is the reciprocal relationship between what is believed (*dogma*) and what is lived (*experienced*)?
- Examples and Illustrations
 - Provide examples and illustrations of creative urban *practical theology* (be visual).
 - How does the church you are visiting reflect aspects of this definition of *practical theology*?

Second Project #2: Current Praxis of the Urban Church

- Readings
 - Ellul, *Chapter Two: Thunder Over the City*
 - Anderson, *Part Two: The Praxis of Practical Theology*
 - With emphasis on the following readings:
 - Ellul – Long We Wait for the Coming of the Dawn (pages 85-112)
 - Anderson – The Humanity of God and the Soul of the City (Chapter 11)
 - Claiborne – pages 315-367
- Questions
 - What significance does *diakonia* (διακονια) have for practical theology (Anderson, p. 119)?
 - How is the local church and are Christians to be a *neighbor* to others in the neighborhood, the city and the world?
 - Explain the significance of the divine Logos (Jesus Christ) takes on “the flesh” (John 1.14; Anderson, page 168)
 - What does it mean “*to not be conformed to this world*” (Romans 12.1; Anderson, page 180)?
 - Identify other terms to could be used in defining the praxis of the urban church
- Examples and Illustrations
 - Provide examples and illustrations of ecclesial praxis (be visual).

- How do you think members of your church would respond to these questions?

Small Group #3: Suffering, the City and God's Presence

- Readings
 - Ellul,
 - Anderson, *Part Three: Practical Pastoral Theology*
 - With emphasis on the following readings:
 - Ellul – From Cain to Jerusalem / From Eden to Jerusalem (pages 163-182)
 - Anderson – Clergy Burnout (Chapter 17) and A Practical Theology of Forgiveness (Chapter 18)
- Questions
 - What forms of urban suffering (human, social, economic, material and ecological) exist in and through the city?
 - Role of urban institutions and infrastructure in causing and perpetuating human suffering
 - What is the significance of I John 3.16-17 (Anderson, pages 312-313)?
 - Action by churches and faith-based organizations to identify with and alleviate suffering in urban neighborhoods – God's presence with and response to those who suffer economic impoverishment, social marginalization and political disenfranchisement (especially within urban locations).
 - Where is God in the midst of suffering in and by the city?
- Examples and Illustrations
 - Provide examples and illustrations of creative urban *practical theology* (be visual).
 - How is your church responding to specific aspects of human suffering in its community?

Practical Theology Case Study

During the semester each student will develop a case study of a local ethnic church. This project will include: attending worship services at least four times during the semester and writing a paper.

Project Components

- Select a church to attend (January 25th). Suggested churches include the following:
 - African-American
 - Bible Fellowship Church, Church of God – Pastor Benjamin Graves, 1545 W. Jefferson, 215-763-2633 (Sunday Services @ 11:30am)
 - Bright Hope Baptist – 12th and Cecil B. Moore, 215-232-6004 (Sunday Services @ 10:30am)
 - Greater Exodus Baptist Church – Rev. Lusk, 714 N. Broad Street, 215-235-1394 (Sunday Service @ 11:00am)
 - Second Mennonite Church – Rev. Darryl Wallace, 2962 N. Franklin (and Indiana) Sts., 215-223-3577 (Sunday Service @ 11:15am)
 - African
 - Ethiopian Evangelic Church of Philadelphia – Rev. Endalkatchew Sahle (endalks@yahoo.com), worship at Woodland Presbyterian Church Annex 42nd and Pine Streets, 19104, 610-506-4619 (Sunday Service @ 11:00am)
 - Asian-American
 - Abundant Life Chinese Mennonite Church – David Kang, 1731 S. Broad Street, 19148, 215-423-7642 (Sunday Service @ 10:00am)
 - Indonesian Fellowship – Rev. Tju Pau San, 1731 S. Broad Streets (meets at Abundant Life Chinese Mennonite Church), 19148, 267-997-9095 (Sunday Service @ 4:00pm)
 - Love Truth Chinese Mennonite Church – Rev. Lemuel So (lemuelso@netscape.net), 600 W. Chew, 19120, 215-924-2248 (Sunday Services @ 9:30am)
 - Philadelphia Cambodian Mennonite Church – Rev. Sarin Lay, 2421 S. 5th Street, 19148, 215-374-6635 (Sunday Services @ 10:00am)
 - Vietnamese Mennonite Church – Tuyen Nguyen (Interim Pastor), 63rd and Woodland, 19142, 215-769-2440 (Sunday Services @ 11:00am)
 - Latin-American
 - Arca de Salvacion Movimiento Mennonita – Rev. Juan Carmona - 2147 N. Howard Street (Front and Diamond Sts.), 19122, 215-423-7642 (Sunday Service @ 11:00am)
 - Comunidad de Amor / Community of Love – Rve. Juan Naranjo (messiahisrael@aol.com), 4617 N. 5th Street, 19160, 215-368-5839
 - Comunidad de Gozo / Community of Joy (Mennonite) – Rev. Efrain Cotto (efcotto@aol.com), 531 W. Chew Ave, 19120, 215-768-6429 (Sunday Service @ 10:00am)
 - Iglesia de Dios, Church of God – 2826 N. Palethorp Street, 215-232-3750
 - Spirit and Truth Fellowship – Rev. Manny Ortiz 4400 N. 6th Street, 215-329-2023 (Sunday Service @ 10:00am)
- Each student will call a selection (2-3) of these churches to confirm location, time of Sunday service and neighborhood service activities. This information will be provided to other class-members on January 25th.

- Select one church and attend Sunday worship service (four or more times, at least once during January, February and March)
- *Church Visit Responses*: Each time you visit this church respond to the following items:
 - Provide date, message outline, Sunday Service bulletin of that service
 - Identify specific church activities that reflect a practical theology of community engagement.
 - During each visit ask a different member about how the church is involved in the neighborhood. Questions include:
 - What types of activities does the church provide for people who live in the neighborhood?
 - How long has the church been doing this work?
 - How many church members are involved?
 - How important is this work to the church?
 - Responses to your first three visits will be discussed in class and due on Feb 1st, March 1st and April 5th.
- Final Project includes the followings:
 - Four Church Visit Responses
 - Write a three page paper (single-space, 10-pitch font, 1” margins) assessing how this church is engaged in a practical theology to the city. Use course material (Anderson, Ellul and Claiborne) to construct a brief paper that highlights how this work performed by members of this church fit with and support concepts relevant to a practical theology. This paper should build on work you have accomplished in and through your small group projects.
 - Completed project due on May 2nd.