

University of Dubuque Theological Seminary
MN630 STARTING MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES
2 Credits | Letter Grade | Online & Residential | Spring 2021

Instructor: Rev. Dr. Christopher B. James
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Course Description

In our changing contexts, today's Christian leaders need, more than ever, to be able to cultivate new communities that can discern and join in the Spirit's initiatives. This course is built on practices of presence, hospitality, conversation, and examen, includes study of innovative forms of Christian community and equips students with the missional imagination and habits needed to develop and lead new Christian communities that are contextually-appropriate, spiritually-vibrant, and theologically-grounded.



Course Objectives: As a result of this course, successful students will:

- Imagine faithful fresh expressions of church as communities joining the *missio Dei*
- Cultivate habits of missional life and spiritual discernment in context
- Develop skills for forming new initiatives in Christian community and mission

MDiv Curricular Goals

- Evangelize the world with faithfulness and contextual sensitivity
- Lead & nurture congregations to promote peace and justice in the public arena & encourage the witness and service of the church in mission to the world
- Nurture habits & disciplines of study that increase love of God & neighbor & shape personal & professional lives
- Integrate theology & practice in all areas of life and ministry

MAMD Curricular Goals

- Develop, implement, & assess strategies for missional living in a specific cultural context
- Articulate and reflect critically & constructively on the biblical and theological foundations of God's mission to the world
- Adopt spiritual practices that nurture their personal lives as faithful disciples & witnesses
- Develop skills & capacities for faithful & competent Christian witness

Required Texts

- Moynagh, *Being Church, Doing Life: Creating Gospel Communities Where Life Happens* (2014)
- James, *Church Planting in Post-Christian Soil: Theology and Practice* (2017)



Course Requirements & Weighting

1. **Conscientious preparation and engaged participation:** This will be evaluated on the basis of an analysis of your Moodle engagement in posted lectures and reflections, participation in forums, downloading required documents, etc. Engaging with less than two-thirds of posted materials and forums is an automatic "F" for the course, per seminary policy -- 20%
2. **Spark Sheets:** Key quotes, personal engagement & question (1 pg x 2) -- 15%
3. **Optional/Extra Credit Book Précis and Response** (4 pgs) -- 3%
4. **Praxis Journey & Journal:** Practices of, and reflection on, presence, examen, hospitality, & conversation practices (7 pgs) -- 35%
5. **Missional Initiative Canvas:** See instructional video on Moodle -- 5%
6. **Prospectus:** A visually engaging, 9-11 page document proposing a new missional community for your chosen context. See posted Prospectus Guidelines for detailed instructions. -- 25%

Course Rhythm

- Every week you will do three things:
 - 1) engage fresh fuel for your **imagination** (readings, lectures, interviews)
 - 2) **experiment** with one or more of the four core practices for the class
 - 3) integrate these into a **reflection** (written assignments, posts, residential discussions)
- Residential students: assignments are due one hour before our Monday class, and you will bring one printed copy of each Reflection, Spark Sheet, and Précis that is due.
- Distance students: Assignments will be submitted by Monday, 11:55pm of each Reflection, Spark Sheet, and Précis that is due to class. As noted on the Moodle course page, you will respond to at least two classmates' posts in each Reflection forum. Your response should go beyond "Great insight!" and should include either a question, a related anecdote, a note about what you learned from the post, or a connection to our course materials.

Course Policies

1. **Due Dates:** All assignments are due at 11:55pm on the due date listed, usually Mondays. If in doubt, trust the syllabus rather than the Moodle due date.
2. **Late work:** Spark Sheets submitted late can earn only 50% of credit, as they do not

contribute to the shared learning community. All other assignments will receive a one grade-step deduction (A to A-) for each 24-hrs of lateness up to a full grade reduction (A to B).

3. Planning & Flexibility: I realize that life has a tendency to defy even careful planning and schedules. For that reason, I encourage you to pursue opportunities to complete the assigned practices *before* you are running up against the deadline. That said, I understand that there may be some cases where circumstances out of your control result in fulfilling practice assignments late.
4. Academic Integrity Statement: Be sure you know what plagiarism is. Do not plagiarize. Spotting plagiarism is my superpower. No, seriously.
5. Students with Disabilities (ADA statement): Any student who believes he/she has a disability that may affect his/her performance in this course should consult with the instructor and the campus ADA compliance office, in confidence, by the second class session. UD's ADA compliance office can be found in the Academic Support Center (ext. 3570).