

University of Dubuque Theological Seminary  
MN630 STARTING MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES  
2 Credits | Letter Grade | Residential | Spring 2023

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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

Everything in this course—lectures, experiments, assignments, posts—is designed to help students accomplish the course objectives below, in support of the curricular goals that follow. Moreover, grades in the course are determined by students' demonstrated ability to complete these objectives throughout the course of the semester through the submitted work. As a result of this course, engaged 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

### 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
- 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* (2018)



## Assignments

1. Forum: Posts and Replies
2. Quote and Comment or Questions (QCQ)
3. Chapter Quotes, Summary & Response (CSQR)
4. Speaking Good News in Context
5. Practice Log
6. Praxis Journal
7. Missional Initiative Canvas
8. Prospectus

## Course Rhythm

- A typical week in this course will include you doing three things:
  - 1) engage fresh content for your imagination (readings, lectures or interviews)
  - 2) experiment with one or more of the four core practices for the class
  - 3) integrate the above into a written reflection (written assignments, posts)
- In Forums, you will reply to at least two classmates' posts. Replies are typically due one week after the original posts are due (you will engage with a single forum over a two-week period). Your reply should go beyond "Great insight!" or "I agree" to include a question, a related anecdote, a note about what you learned from the post, or a connection to our course materials.

## Specifications Grading

This class uses what is called specifications or "specs" grading. Final grades are not determined by the collective score of weighted items. Rather, they are determined by the number of grade items that you successfully complete (which serve to demonstrate your achievement of the course objectives). All assignments are graded on a pass/fail basis. The instructions for each assignment have detailed specifications for how to complete the assignment at an acceptable level. Two assignments also specify what is included in demonstrating "advanced" achievement. Below is a chart indicating all the assignments at each grade level. You are encouraged to decide in advance which grade you will work towards.

Assignment	QCQ /2	CSQR	Forum /11	Speaking Good News in Context	Practice Log: Presence /10	Practice Log: Examen /10	Practice Log: Hospitality /1	Practice Log: Conversation /2	Missional Initiative Canvas	Praxis Journal Selections & Reflection	Missional Initiative Prospectus
A	2	1	11	1	9	9	1	2	1	Advanced	Advanced
A-	2	0	10	1	9	8	1	2	1	Advanced	Advanced
B+	2	0	10	1	8	8	1	2	1	Advanced	Acceptable
B	2	0	9	1	8	7	1	2	1	Acceptable	Acceptable
B-	2	0	9	1	7	7	1	2	1	Acceptable	Acceptable
C+	2	0	8	1	7	6	1	2	1	Acceptable	Acceptable
C	2	0	8	1	6	6	1	1	1	Acceptable	Acceptable
C-	2	0	7	1	6	6	0	1	0	Acceptable	Acceptable
D+	1	0	7	0	6	6	0	1	0	Acceptable	Acceptable

D	1	0	7	0	6	5	0	1	0	Acceptable	Acceptable
D-	1	0	6	0	6	5	0	1	0	Acceptable	Acceptable
F	1	0	6	0	6	5	0	0	0	Acceptable	Acceptable

It is a bit overwhelming to look at the table all at once, but once you select your grade goal, you can focus simply on exactly what is required to earn it. In order to earn the listed grade, you need to satisfy **all** of the assignment requirements on that row. For example, if you complete all the requirements for an “A” but do not complete the Hospitality practice, you will earn a “C”.

### Important Course Policies

1. Late work: Spark Sheets and CSQRs submitted late are not acceptable since they do not contribute to the learning community. However, you may make up for one late Spark Sheet by signing up for and completing a CSQR *on time*.
2. Due Dates: All assignments, including forum posts, are due at 11:55pm on the due date listed, usually Mondays. If in doubt, trust the syllabus rather than the Moodle due date.
3. Practice Deadlines: While there is considerable flexibility regarding when you engage in the four practices of the course, the schedule on Moodle is designed to move us along at a reasonable pace, and forums assume you are doing so. In addition, there are several important practice deadlines (for hospitality, the interview, and the contextual testimony) and you should *pursue opportunities to complete these assigned practices well before you are running up against the deadline*, allowing for the possibility that you will need to reschedule.
4. Moodle: Engaging with less than two-thirds of posted materials (videos, links) and forums is an automatic “F” for the course, per seminary policy.
5. Academic Integrity Statement: Be sure you know what plagiarism is. There is no good reason to plagiarize. Do not plagiarize.
6. Students with Disabilities (ADA statement): Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. Please notify the instructor during the first week of class of any accommodations needed for the course. Late notification may cause the requested accommodations to be unavailable. Confidentiality of all requests will be maintained. All requested accommodations must be approved through the Academic Success Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Myers Library ([589-3262](tel:589-3262) or [ASC@dbq.edu](mailto:ASC@dbq.edu)).

