

University of Dubuque Theological Seminary
MN630 STARTING MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES
3 Credits | Letter Grade | Spring 2025

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Course Description

In our changing contexts, it is not enough for Christian leaders to be trained to maintain existing ministries. This course equips students to cultivate new Christian communities that can discern and join in the Spirit's initiatives. Students will engage in practices of presence, hospitality, conversation, and examen, study innovative forms of Christian community, and develop the 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, practices, assignments, posts—is designed to help students accomplish the course objectives below, in support of the curricular program goals that follow. Moreover, grades in the course are determined by students' demonstrated ability to complete these objectives 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

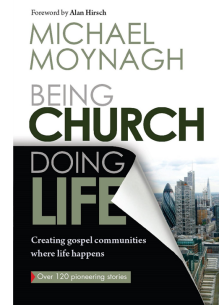
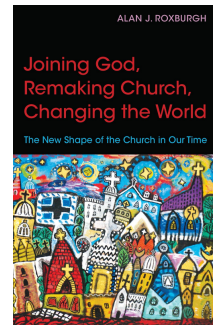
Program Goals

- Evangelize the world with faithfulness and contextual sensitivity (MDiv)
- 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 (MDiv)
- Nurture habits & disciplines of study that increase love of God & neighbor & shape personal & professional lives (MDiv)
- Integrate theology & practice in all areas of life and ministry (MDiv)
- Develop, implement, & assess strategies for missional living in a specific cultural context (MAMD)
- Articulate and reflect critically & constructively on the biblical and theological foundations of God's mission to the world (MAMD)

- Adopt spiritual practices that nurture their personal lives as faithful disciples & witnesses (MAMD)
- Develop skills & capacities for faithful & competent Christian witness (MAMD)
- Articulate and interpret key themes from the Christian scriptures in conversation with contemporary and ecclesial contexts (MAM)
- Develop pastoral and practical theological methods and strategies for cultivating renewed and transformative ministry contexts (MAM)
- Apply key practices for personal, communal, and ministerial flourishing and compose a coherent plan for life and ministry (MAM)

Required Texts

- Roxburgh, *Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World* (2015)
- Moynagh, *Being Church, Doing Life: Creating Gospel Communities Where Life Happens* (2014)
- Two additional texts of choice from list (wait for sign-up)
- Selected chapters available as PDFs



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)
- Assignments will be submitted on Moodle by 11:59pm on Sunday nights.

COURSE OUTLINE

Unit One: Presence, Examen, & Fresh Imagination

Unit Two: Hospitality, Conversation and Witness

Unit Three: New Wineskins for the Gospel

Assignments

1. Quotes + Comment or Questions Sheet (QCQ)
2. Chapter Quotes, Summary & Response (CSQR)
3. Speaking Good News in Context
4. Practice Log
5. Praxis Journal
6. Missional Initiative Canvas
7. Prospectus

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.

Important Course Policies

1. Moodle: Course materials, schedules, and announcements will be posted at the course site on moodle.dbq.edu. It is the responsibility of each student to keep themselves current with this material.
2. Electronic Communication: Students are expected to check their UD e-mail accounts regularly for course updates. Instructions for forwarding e-mail from a dbq.edu account can be found at the Technology Services link on the UD Web Page.
3. Late work: QCOs and CSQRs submitted late are not accepted or graded since they do not contribute to the learning community. However, you may make up for one late or missing QCO by signing up for and completing an additional CSQR and submitting it *on time*.
4. Due Dates: All assignments are due at 11:59pm on the due date listed, usually Sundays. If in doubt, trust the syllabus rather than the Moodle due date.
5. 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). 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.
6. Attendance: Attending less than two-thirds of classes is an automatic "F" for the course, per seminary policy. Attendance for distance courses is assessed via Moodle engagement.
7. Academic Integrity: Be sure you know what plagiarism is. There is no good reason to plagiarize. Do not plagiarize. Also, do not use AI to assist with writing your assignments without explicit instructor permission. Written assignments will be processed by a plagiarism and AI detector. All suspected cases of lapses of academic integrity will be referred to the Academic and Student Affairs Committee of the Seminary.
8. 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 ([589-3262](tel:589-3262) or ASC@dbq.edu).

Title IX and Jeanne Clery Act Policy Information

Title IX: The University of Dubuque is committed to providing a learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect in an environment free of discrimination on the basis of sex; which includes all forms of sexual misconduct. More information may be found at <https://www.dbq.edu/AboutUD/TitleIX/>

Jeanne Clery Act: The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act requires the distribution of an Annual Security Report and Annual Fire Safety Report to all current faculty, staff, and students and notice of its availability to prospective students, faculty, and staff no later than October 1st of each year. More information may be found at <https://www.dbq.edu/SafetySecurity/JeanneCleryAct/>

When the sign-up is available, you will sign up for one book from each category. For one you will write a QCQ and the other a CSQR.

Evangelism Books

Graceful Evangelism: Christian Witness in a Complex World by Frances Adeney
Models of Evangelism by Priscilla Pope-Levinson
Disruptive Witness: Speaking Truth in a Distracted Age by Alan Noble
How to Talk about Jesus (Without Being That Guy) by Sam Chan
The Art of Neighboring by Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon
Gospel Witness by David Gustafson
Liberating News: A Theology of Contextual Evangelization by Orlando Costas
Evangelism for Non-Evangelists: Sharing the Gospel Authentically by Mark Teasdale
Friendship at the Margins: Discovering Mutuality in Service & Mission by Chris Heuertz & Christine Pohl
Trauma-Informed Evangelism: Cultivating Communities of Wounded Healers by Charles Kiser & Elaine Heath

Innovative and Contextual Mission Books

We Will Feast: Rethinking Dinner, Worship, & the Community of God by Kendall Vanderslice
The Innovative Church by Scott Cormode
Faithful Presence by David Fitch
First Expressions: Innovation and the Mission of God by Steve Taylor
Deconstructing Church Planting by Nick Warnes
The Agile Church: Spirit-led Innovation in an Uncertain Age by Dwight Zscheile
Underground Church by Brian Sanders
Pilgrims & Priests: Christian Mission in a Post-Christian Society by Stefan Paas
Dinner Church: Building Bridges by Breaking Bread by Verlon Fosner
Buried Seeds: Learning from the Vibrant Resistance of Marginalized Christian Communities by Alexia Salvatierra and Brandon Wrencher
Slow Church: Cultivating Church in the Patient Way of Jesus by C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison
Missional. Mainline. Monastic: A Guide to Starting Missional Micro-Communities in Historically Mainline Traditions by Elaine Heath and Larry Duggins