

GS 5110—Contemporary Issues in Mission
Providence Theological Seminary
Winter 2010
Instructor: Daryl R. Climenhaga
Syllabus

Course Description

An examination of contemporary issues in the study and practice of Christian mission, focussing on issues identified by practitioners of mission as well as those identified in the academy.

Objectives

1. To survey significant issues in the study and practice of mission today.
2. To discern basic shifts in the contemporary world context for Christian mission.
3. To discover fruitful directions for the future of Christian mission.

Required Text

Muck, Terry and Frances S. Adeney

2009 *Christianity Encountering World Religions: The Practice of Mission in the Twenty-first Century*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Pocock, Michael, Gailyn van Rhee, and Douglas McConnell

2005 *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Taylor, William D., editor

2000 *Global Missiology for the 21st Century: The Iguassu Dialogue*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Assignments

1. Review of Taylor. The student will write a 1500 word interactive review of *Global Missiology*. Part one should briefly summarize the book's content, part two state significant observations based on the reading, and part three give questions and critique of Taylor's ideas.
2. Review of Pocock, Van Rhee, and McConnell. The student will write a 1500 word interactive review of *The Changing Face of World Missions*. Part one should briefly summarize the book's content, part two state significant observations based on the reading, and part three give questions and critique of Taylor's ideas.
3. Review of Muck and Adeney. The student will write a 1500 word interactive review of *Christianity Encountering World Religions*. Part one should briefly summarize the book's content, part two state significant observations based on the reading, and part three give questions and critique of Taylor's ideas.

4. Final essay. The student will write an essay (approximately 3000 words) on the subject: “The Future of the Christian Missionary Task in the New Millennium.” The essay will cover the issues that the class has decided are most important for us to consider.

5. Class participation. Although not a percentage of the grade, non-participation can lead to a lower course grade, or failure of the course as a whole. Non-participation includes not coming to class and not doing assignments.

Grades

Taylor Review	25%
Pocock et al Review	20%
Muck and Adeney Review	20%
Essay	35%

Calendar

Jan 12	Current Issues. The issues listed come from the instructor. We also seek to find what issues others say are critical today.	
19	The Bible and Mission	
26	Motives and Models for Mission	
Feb 2	Dependence, Independence, and Interdependence	Pocock et al Review due
9	Mission Dei	
16	Group Reporting	
23	Indigenization: forms and meanings	Muck and Adeney Review due
Mar 1	Contextualization: theology as well as church	
8	March Intrasession	
15	Theology of Religions	Taylor Review due
22	Christology and Mission	
29	Theology in the Two-Thirds World; New Religious Movements	
Apr 5	Issues Arising	
12	Issues Arising	Major Essay due
19	Exam Week	

As part of the preparation for the 2003 version of the course, I contacted a number of Mission Organizations. Below are those I contacted who responded to me, and their “current issues”

1. Avant (Don Pickel)

- The immensity of the task of training national leadership on our fields - while GMU [Avant’s old name] is committed to this and always has been in its 110 year history, the task is enormous. Take for instance, the highlands of Bolivia where, with national help, we have planted some 325 churches. The big problem that faces us there is that the average number of national pastors among those churches is 1-25. Then, too, the percentage of those who know how to read and write in those churches is approximately one per church. You can imagine the immense task just there alone in getting people who will go in and commit themselves to a five-year commitment, learn the language and work in a team to train national leadership. Not many are available to do that today.
- As GMU refocuses on its initial mandate of church planting and seeks for excellence in those who are applying, we find there to be a paucity of potential workers who will go on a long-term basis. Just an added thought here. That those that are applying to us today, of course, must be convinced of the lostness of man without the Gospel. We are finding quite a lot of feeling against that particular Biblical belief today.
- We are seeking to build innovative teams that can think strategically to go in among an unreached people group and there plant a church within a five-year period. This is necessitating further training of our appointees as well before they go.
- The funding and paying for the process of putting such teams into place and “re-inventing” GMU in these days is another area where we have need. The old paradigm of funding is just not going to work in what GMU envisions needing to be done over the next few years.

2. BICWM (John Brubaker)

- Bridging to cross-cultural ministry with a post-modern generation (screening, nurture, preparation, deployment, oversight, support).
- Understanding the new global dimensions of our work (everywhere to everywhere).
- Dealing with Muslim/Christian culture challenges given current global dynamics.

3. EMC/EMMC (Lester Olfert)

- Dependency/Paternalism.
- Partnerships (developing partnerships with national churches in doing foreign missions).
- Recruitment of long term personnel (it is easy to get short term workers but we need workers for the long haul [Bible translation, Effective leadership training and mentoring]).
- Developing new visions while dealing with rising costs of missions and decreased financial support.
- Missionary care (that is probably a separate topic).

4. MBMSInternational (Gerald Hilderbrand)

- Christology – the way that we (agency and denomination) work out our Christology and its implications for mission. Weak Christology derived from pluralistic North American culture.
- Missionary relationships with the constituency – we have to make more and more of a case to our constituency for support. Competing with the plethora of faith agencies.
- Theological identity and integrity – that we speak with one voice an agency. Howard Snyder, *Models of the Kingdom*, as a resource for understanding what we are talking about.
- International partners – Mennonite Brethren churches around the world learning to work together. How do we do theology and mission when the largest church is in India (250,000 worshipping on a Sunday morning)? Learning how to sit at the table, but not as a power block, rather as a global community of churches.
- Dependency and interdependency – how do we move into an interdependent partnership.

- Strategic orientation – evangelism and church planting, leadership, and social ministry are three prongs of MBMSI. The first takes place especially among unreached peoples, the second among mission planted churches, and the third generally as part of the wholistic gospel.

5. MC Witness (Peter Rempel)

For a denominational mission agency some questions are:

- Shall we plant churches for our own denomination or work with the denominations/ churches already present in or closest to the region?
- How shall we prepare a church we have planted to function on its own resources and with indigeneous leadership?
- How much do we encourage local congregations to initiate and administer their "own" cross-cultural missions?
- Can we embrace a range of ministries to non-Christians as mission?
- How should a denomination relate to a mission agency/mission agencies (sodality vs. modality)?
- How can we regard and steward all resources for mission in partnership and not only focus on the money which gives the North the apparent power?

I've just read *Earthing the Vision* by Kai Funkschmidt (in German) who reviews the transformations of the London, Paris and Bethel Mission societies into CMS, CEVAA and UEM respectively. Very interesting.

6. OM Canada (Harvey Thiessen)

- The main issue is that the Great Commission remains an active, present task. It is not “finished” or near to being finished. No parts of the body of Christ have been decommissioned or absolved of any more responsibility.
- There is a general disparity of wealth in missions (even in the same mission agencies) and typically those who have the wealth have the voice.
- In terms of denominations, western leadership of main denominations tends to run toward liberalism while 2/3rds world leadership in the same denomination reflects an evangelical perspective. The western leaders still have greater sway within the denominations and hold the key international leadership positions, but the 2/3rds have the weight of a greater number of active adherents.
- The international agenda is still set by western issues, while those faced by the Indian, African, East Asian etc... church are given short shrift.

7. SIM Canada (Tim Jacobson)

Issues of concern to me:

- Under-prepared people. Preparation that has lacked rigorous experiential dimension.
- How to relate to the national church. Missions have yet to shed their paternalistic structures, attitudes, and policies. Mature partnerships between missions and national churches are rare.
- Inter-personal skill development. People lack the theoretical as well as the experiential preparation necessary for effective relations, conflict management, etc.
- Internationalization. Missions are moving into a “from anywhere to anywhere” mode and this is requiring them to plan how to change to effectively incorporate multi-cultural teams.
- Responding to human need. Missionaries need to learn to respond to the needs of their generation. One of those needs is AIDS. New missionaries for Africa and Asia should all know how to minister in a society where one out of every ten people (or even one out of every three people) will die of AIDS.
- Missions need to think about the full import of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment, not merely about the one-dimensional emphasis on the missiological fads of the day rather than costly, long-term, full-orbed missions that transforms a society. Some of the missiological fads relate to geography. We are neglecting emphasis in some areas where continued investment will begin to yield a multiplied effect for the kingdom.

- Effectively using short-term missions is huge. It affects missions organization and strategy and recruitment and longevity. New missionaries need to know how to host short-termers and enlist their help in the global task.

I have a copy of a paper by Geoff Tunnicliffe on “Where is Global Mission in the Local Church?” I resonate with most of what he is saying. I would highlight the following: 1) more effective partnering (agencies and sending churches, agencies and receiving churches, agencies with other agencies, agencies with training programs e.g. Bible colleges and seminaries); 2) Kingdom-building vs. empire-building; 3) the changing role of agencies and their ability to adapt; 4) the changing role of many western missionaries to being servant facilitators and trainers rather than the primary front-line doers; 5) unplugging the mobilization pipeline -- recruitment and support-raising; 6) making a prominent role for short term mission involvement, especially teams; 7) the focus on self rather than others in the western church; 8) the problem of churches sending inexperienced people who have not developed the necessary competencies.

8. Action International (Wayne Whitbourne)

- The relevance of missions in the 21st century (a pluralistic, multicultural, global world).
- What does the contemporary missionary look like? What kind of person do we need?
- How does the national church and the foreign missionary work together to advance the kingdom.
- How does the national missionary and the western foreign missionary work together?
- The issue of supporting traditional western missionaries or national missionaries (which are less expensive).
- What is the value of short term missions for reaching the world with the gospel? It takes long term commitment to effectively do the job.

(Further from Ben Ichikawa)

- interdependency and dependency.
- role of the expat missionary.
- career in missions.
- long term leadership in missions organizations.
- “how” missions is being done today.
- rising cost of missionary support and doing missions.
- the missionary family coping with the issue of security.

9. Africa Inland Mission (John Brown)

The core goals of AIM are evangelism, church planting and leadership development among African peoples around the world. In rapidly changing societies both in Africa and our “Sending Countries”, our goals haven't changed in 108 years. But the CONTEXT of all our ministry is very rapidly changing. I would say the top 5 issues AIM is facing today are:

- AIDS. AIDS. AIDS.
- War and suffering.
- Massive urbanization.
- Youth explosion.
- Unreached peoples - moving from relatively open, formerly animist nations sub-Saharan Africa to closed, Muslim nations in northern Africa.

10. Greater Europe Mission (Neil Rempel)

- Postmodernism (Total Secularization of Society).
- Advance of Islam.
- The “Europeanization” of Europe.
- Saturation Church Planting.