

University of Dubuque Theological Seminary
MN630 STARTING MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES
2 Credits | Letter Grade | Online

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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 and 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

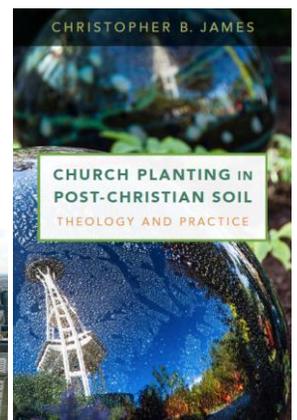
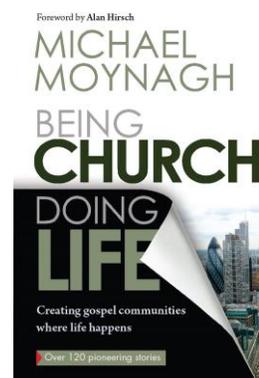
- Evangelize the world with faithfulness and contextual sensitivity
- Lead & nurture congregations to promote peace and justice in the public arena & encourage the witness and service of the church in mission to the world
- Nurture habits & disciplines of study that increase love of God & neighbor &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

MAMC 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 (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 written **reflection** (written assignments, posts)
- Work is due on Monday at 11:55pm: Almost every Monday you will submit either a Reflection (post) on a practice or a Spark Sheet (paper).
- You will respond to at least two classmates' posts in each Reflection forum within one week after the due date of the original post. 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.

Assignment Descriptions

Spark Sheets

A Spark Sheet is a single-spaced page with three selected quotes, a thoughtful reflection and a question for discussion. Begin by reviewing what you underlined, and choosing three short quotations from the book that: 1) feature ideas that are important to the author and 2) you also found thought-provoking. These quotes should be spread out rather than all from a short page range. Include them at the top, centered and italicized with page numbers at the end. Do not use up more than 1/3 of the page with quotations so you have adequate space for your response. In the paper, briefly identify which *one* of three quotes you will respond to in the reflection. Then explain what you found particularly helpful, intriguing, problematic, challenging, inspiring, or naïve about it—and why. It can be helpful to draw connections between your experiences and the reading, but don't wander off into unrelated associations. Carefully explore what the author is proposing. Be sure to *respond* to the author's ideas rather than simply summarize what they have argued. Conclude with a thoughtful, provocative question you believe can stimulate fruitful conversation. (Don't forget the question, since it is an important part of the assignment grade). Formatting should follow the posted Sample Spark Sheet Format document. A few Spark Sheets will be selected for forum discussion, based on quality, engagement with a range of key ideas and potential for sparking generative conversation and reflection.

Book Précis and Response (optional, for extra credit)

You may sign up on Moodle for an extra credit assignment related to one of the listed books. Before choosing a book, you will want to consider the due dates as well as preview the books, since their writing style and focus vary (only one slot is available for each book). After you have signed up, you will read *at least 200 pages* of the book. A précis is a concise summary that preserves the core ideas, argument, and language of the book itself. Its purpose is to serve as a functional substitute for reading the book in its entirety. It should clearly identify the topic, thesis, main points of each chapter and section, conclusion and the practical implications it suggests. Make every sentence count. The précis section of this paper should be *three double-spaced pages*. In a single, concluding page, tell us what value you think the book has for students in this class. Instead of saying "It's a great book!" answer questions like: How does the author's unique approach add to what we're learning? What new insights does it contribute? How might these be useful for Christian ministry? These assignments can be completed any time before their assigned due dates.

Praxis Journal

Throughout the Praxis Journey you will be making entries in your Praxis Journal. At the end of the course, you submit a 7-10 page document, with three elements: a log, several journal selections, and a concluding reflection. **Practice Log:** The first ½ -1 page will be a single-spaced listing of your practices, including dates and times you practiced presence, examen, hospitality, and conversation (ex. 4/2: Presence at Starbucks, 3-4pm). In addition to the two Conversation entries and 1 Hospitality entry, I am looking for at least 7 presence entries and 8 discernment entries in the log. **Curated Selections:** The largest part of the journal you turn in will be made up of selections from the reflections you have written through out the semester. You won't have space within the page limit to turn in everything you wrote, or even excerpts from every journal entry, so you should choose selections that you consider significant. Curate selections like a reporter or historian that stumbled on your journal and is wanting to tell the story of your journey with excerpts. In addition, you should definitely include selections from the hospitality and conversation practices (entries of ½ - 1 page for each one). The selections you include can be edited down for length. The excerpts and entries should be single spaced. **Summative Reflection:** Conclude with 3-4 double-spaced pages synthesizing what you learned through the Journey itself and also through the process of reviewing and curating your journal entries.

Missional Initiative Canvas

You must limit your text to the size of the box, so that the canvas can be printed and include all the relevant info.

Missional Initiative Prospectus

See Guidelines for Prospectus.

Course Policies

1. **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.
2. **Late work:** Spark Sheets submitted late can earn only 50% of credit, as they do not contribute to shared learning. All other assignments will receive a one grade-step deduction (A to A-) for each 24-hrs of lateness up to five grade-steps.
3. **Planning & Flexibility:** I realize that relationships and lives have 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.
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).