

**Syllabus**  
**AM-673: Building an Intentional Strategy for the (Post-Pandemic) Future**  
**Spring 2021**

The purpose of this series of class sessions is to explore the tools needed to analyze and assess your congregation's strengths and build an intentional strategy for ministry in the post-pandemic reality. The goal of this course is to ground your planning and practice of ministry in a realistic understanding of your church's contextual and organizational realities and the impact of larger cultural and societal changes on their specific ministry context. Students will be introduced to various field research tools, practice using them and then reflect strategically and systematically on the insights gathered through their use. The final product will be a workable plan for bridging from your current ministry reality to one that moves beyond the COVID-19 restrictions.

Meeting dates: Meets by Zoom on Tuesday 10-12 PM for five sessions, dates yet to be determined. Additional online Canvas discussion, reading and exercises as well. Doctor of Ministry students will also meet at additional times for check-in.

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Assisted by Scott Thumma Professor of Sociology of Religion, other faculty and consultants.

**Objectives:**

- To establish a research-based foundation to be used throughout one's ministry;
- To explore a handful of fieldwork methods in order to more accurately understand the contextual and cultural dynamics of one's ministry setting and surrounding community;
- To interpret results gathered from a realistic assessment of one's ministry setting in a discerning manner that recognizes alternative points of view and strategic implications;
- To practice the discipline of credible, evidence based reflection and planning in support of strategic, ministry proposals for change.

**To demonstrate the ability to assess with concrete evidence the local contextual, identity, process dynamics to formulate new approaches by:**

- a. Understanding the tools necessary to collect evidence of social, identity, process and leadership dynamics that affect the ministry setting.
- b. Demonstrating the ability to use these tools to analyze a particular ministry setting
- c. Evaluate a particular challenge or problem within a particular ministry context using these tools in order to identify alternative leadership approaches to the problem.

**Procedure:**

The course alternates between five class sessions (see "Schedule") and the intervening periods for individual exploration by students in their own settings. The class sessions rely on group discussions, instructor presentations, and fieldwork exercises to introduce new tools and deepen the insights

emerging through previous sessions. The intervening periods rely on assigned readings, fieldwork assignments, and written work to extend the class topics and prepare for ensuing sessions. Additionally, between class times we will continue the classroom conversation online in the discussion board at the course website. A final paper provides an occasion to integrate work from the entire semester into a practical analysis of the dynamics of one's ministry setting and the strategic implications and challenges inherent in leading change into a new post-pandemic reality.

### **Process Expectations:**

- Timely and regular attendance. If an emergency comes up, call or email me or call the main seminary number (860/509-9500) and leave word.
- Prepared and active participation in class presentations and discussions (in a sense, this course is a peer learning group with the instructor as coach)
- Commitment to dialogical engagement of one's colleagues:
  - Open sharing of one's own perspectives and respectful probing of other's perspectives
  - Appreciative understanding of other's perspective/argument before offering suggestions for further consideration
  - Appreciative consideration of other's suggestions.

**Office Hours:** By Appointment. Email is the best way to contact me, even for scheduling appointments to talk on the phone or meet at the seminary.

### **Class Grade:**

#### **Class participation 35% of grade**

Attendance at and active participation in every class session is expected of all students. Exceptions are only allowed if advance permission has been granted by the instructor, and only for unavoidable absences. In all cases, failure to be in attendance at more than one class session automatically precludes successful completion of the course. This portion of the grade includes the five discussion topic periods and fieldwork exercises in class. Additionally, between class times we will continue the conversation online in the discussion section of the course website.

#### **Writing assignments 30% of grade**

Completion of all of the five fieldwork exercise assignments is essential to advance the learning in this course. All writing assignments must be posted on the discussion section and/or be sent by e-mail to the instructor by the Friday immediately before the class session for which they are assigned.

#### **Final paper 35% of grade**

The final paper integrates the central methods, insights, readings, and research findings from the semester into a practical and analytical paper on one's ministry placement. This paper will discuss learnings and research from the course and address strategies and challenges in preparing for bridging to a post-pandemic reality. Details for the final paper, including focus and format, will be provided during a class session. Final papers must be sent by e-mail to the instructor within 4 weeks after the last class session.

#### **Course Extensions**

Past experience has shown that timely completion of all assignments and the entire course is

essential to successful completion course. As a result, late writing assignments are strongly discouraged and course extensions are not permitted except in dire emergencies.

**Required Texts: (Readings are subject to change before the course begins)**

*Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* by Nancy T. Ammerman, et al. (editors) (Abingdon, 1998)

*Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* by Tim Sensing (Wipf & Stock, 2011)

*Projects that Matter: Successful Planning & Evaluation for Religious Organizations* by Kathleen Cahalan (Alban Institute, 2003)

**Additional readings are required but will be posted to the Canvas Course Site.**

**Class Schedule & Assignments** – Specific assignments will be handed out in class.

Written assignments are to be brought to class on the indicated date and posted on the course website Friday before class.

**Session 1– Exploring the Social Dimensions of your Ministry Setting – Informed Reflective Practice of Ministry. Research based planning.**

Reading:

Read Introduction and Chapter 1 in *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* by Nancy T. Ammerman, et al.  
Chapter 2 & 3 in *Qualitative Research* by Tim Sensing  
Part One pg. 1-29 *Projects that Matter: Successful Planning & Evaluation for Religious Organizations* by Kathleen Cahalan

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Chapter 7 in *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* by Nancy T. Ammerman, et al.  
and Chapter 4 in *Qualitative Research* by Tim Sensing.

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Optional Web Document:

Chapter 1 from Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, William McKinney (editors), *Handbook of Congregational Studies* (Abingdon: 1986 – online version available in the out of print book section of the books & articles section of the Hartford Institute website [www.hartfordinstitute.org](http://www.hartfordinstitute.org) )

[hirr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/Congstudieshandbook/congstdhbk-ch1.pdf](http://hirr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/Congstudieshandbook/congstdhbk-ch1.pdf)

Skills: Demographic Context Analysis - Assignment

Possible Survey Assignment – can use the PPI Inventories with your congregation for free since you are taking this course. Contact Sheryl Wiggins at [swiggins@hartsem.edu](mailto:swiggins@hartsem.edu) See example at [http://hirr.hartsem.edu/leadership/church\\_inventory.html](http://hirr.hartsem.edu/leadership/church_inventory.html)

**Session 2 & 3: Assessing our Community Needs in the midst of a Pandemic** – (Describing the Local Ecology of One’s Ministry Setting – where are your people at, services being done, what isn’t happening, creating networks of supportive congregations, organizations, church-state collaboration.)

Reading:

- Chapter 2 “Ecology: Seeing the Congregation in Context” in *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*.

- Web Documents: Handbook of Congregational Studies Chapter 3 (Context) – <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/Congstudieshandbook/congstdhbk-ch3.pdf>

Read at least one of these:

- Williams, *Community in a Black Pentecostal Church*, chs. 1 & 2
- Eiesland, “Contending with a Giant” in *Contemporary American Religion*
- Walbridge, L. S. *Without Forgetting the Imam: Lebanese Shi'ism in an American Community. A study of a Mosque in Dearborn Michigan* Introduction, pp. 1-26 and skim 129-200.

Skills: Participant Observation - *Participant Observation Assignment*

Written Assignment: Demographic Context Assignment due

**Session 4 & 5: What do we have to work with: Identifying our present assets we can use to build with** – (assessment of resources, human, financial, reputational, technology and identifying the networks with which the congregation has connections.)

Reading:

- Chapter 5 “Process & Resources” in *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*.
- Other readings.

Skills: Artifact, Place, Resource and Document Analysis *Artifact, Place and Document Assignment*

Written Assignment: Interview Assignment due

**Session 6 & 7: Rebuilding our Community: Cultural competencies and Brand identity – (What are the strengths of our congregation’s culture, narrative, artifacts, building, and past activities to use to rebuild.)**

Reading:

- Chapter 3 “Culture and Identity in the Congregation” in *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*.
- Web Documents: Handbook of Congregational Studies Chapter 2 (Identity) – <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/Congstudieshandbook/congstdhbk-ch2.pdf>

Read at least one of these:

- Williams, *Community in a Black Pentecostal Church*, chs. 7 & 5
- Heilman, *Synagogue Life* chapter on Joking
- Thumma and Gray, “Gospel Hour” in Eiesland and Becker – think about it for the research methods and culture this time.

Skills: Individual and Group Interviewing - *Individual and Group Interviewing Assignment*

Written Assignment: Cultural Assessment Assignment due

**Session 8 & 9: Reworking our Process in New Healthy Ways** – (taking an inventory of the dysfunctional ways of doing things in the past, how to fix those as you reconstitute your ministry.)

- Chapter 4 “Process” in *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*.
- Web Documents: Handbook of Congregational Studies Chapter 4 (Process) – <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/Congstudieshandbook/congstdhbk-ch4.pdf>
- Read at least one of these:

- Marti, *A Mosaic of Believers* chapter 2 & 4
  - Thumma, *The Kingdom, the Power and the Glory* <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/dissertation.html> chapter 10  
“The Spoiling of the Kingdom” <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/CHAPTEN.doc>
- Skills: Artifact, Place, Resource and Document Analysis *Artifact, Place and Document Assignment*

**Session 10 - Intentionally Envisioning a Better Tomorrow** – (Creating the future ministerial reality – what to bring with you from the past, from the pandemic and what needs innovation.)

Reading:

- Chapter 6 “Leadership and the Study of the Congregation,” in *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*
- *Leading Change* Summary by Kotter  
Written Assignment: Artifact, Place and Document Assignment & Analysis of Survey Results due

**Final Paper Assignment – Paper due one month from the last day of class.**