

Yale Divinity School Summer Course

Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurialism in Church Leadership

Course Description

In the book of Genesis God's first act is one of creation; in the book of Revelation God promises to make all things new. Developing a rich theology of creation is at the heart of this course, which will invite you to consider what God is making new in your own ministry context, as well as develop tools to move vision toward reality. Together, we will explore a six-part process of creation: void, hunger, vision, reality, identity, and growth. Rooted in the instructor's experience as a church planter, the content of this course is applicable to any situation in which a new thing is coming into being: a new ministry at an established congregation, a community project, a non-for-profit startup, a church plant, or an established congregation that seeks to be more outwardly-focused.

The course will be highly participative, including class discussion, experiential learning, case studies, and theological reflection. Readings will include selected chapters from *Ancient Faith, Future Mission: Fresh Expressions in the Sacramental Tradition* (Croft, Mosby, Spellers), *Created and Led by the Spirit: Planting Missional Congregations*, (Dehmlow Dreier) and *The Art of the Start* (Kawasaki).

A Note About The Readings

In this course, we'll be drawing on a variety of sources and contexts to piece together a picture of what innovation and the creative process can look like in the congregational setting. You'll be reading theological texts, chapters from books for entrepreneurs in the business field, and how-to guides from church planters from the evangelical tradition. We can learn from each of these influences, drawing on what is useful and resonant, while acknowledging the difference perspectives from which these books are written.

Read with the question, "what do I notice?" in mind. Ask how the experiences of these authors might intersect with your context. Engage the texts with curiosity, and we'll integrate them together.

The only books you need to purchase are Leski's *The Storm of Creativity* and Griffith and Easum's *Ten Most Common Mistakes Made By New Church Starts*. All the other articles are available online or provided as PDF's. However, you are welcome to purchase any of the recommended books to further your learning!

Monday: Void, Hunger

Monday's class will focus on the account of God's creative impulse in Genesis 1. We reflect on the process of creation with the help of Leski's *The Storm of Creativity*, observe the relationship of the creative process to the surrounding environment documented in *Rivers and Tides*, and engage in our own creative process.

We will then turn to the hungers that inform a new thing coming into being, turning to God's dream for our communities as outlined by Hetzel and Salvatierra.

Readings for Monday

- Genesis 1:1-31
- Leski, Kyna. *The Storm of Creativity*. MIT Press, 2015. Introduction, parts 1, 2, 4, 7, 9, and 10.
- Griffith, Jim and Easum, Bill. *Ten Most Common Mistakes Made by New Church Starts*. Chalice Press, 2008. chapter 3
- *Rivers and Tides*. Thomas Riedelsheimer. Roxie Releasing, 2001. Film, available on amazon.com. Watch from the beginning of the film to minute 54
- Salvatierra, Alexia and Heltzel, Peter. *Faith-Rooted Organizing: Mobilizing the Church in Service to the World*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014. chapter 2

Journal Question (to be completed before class)

- As you view *Rivers and Tides*, write down what you notice about the creative process taking place, and its relationship to the environment around it.

Tuesday: Hunger, Vision

On Tuesday we will continue our discussion on the hungers that lead to a new thing coming into being. As a part of this process, we will reflect on the hungers present in our communities, with the help of tools drawn from the world of community organizing.

We'll then transition to thinking together about the vision, reading accounts of this vision-making in two chapters from *Ancient Faith, Future Mission*, as examples. Kawasaki's *Art of the Start* will give us a practical framework for how vision emerges.

Readings for Tuesday

- Croft, Steven; Mosby, Ian; Spellman, Stephanie. *Ancient Faith, Future Mission: Fresh Expressions in the Sacramental Tradition*. Seabury Books, 2010. chapters 13 and 15
- Kawasaki, Guy. *The Art of the Start*. Penguin Group, 2004. chapter 1

Journal Question (to be completed after class, in preparation for Wednesday)

- Write down the vision for the community/project you feel called to create. How does it extend from the hungers you see present around you? You don't need to have all the answers!

Wednesday: Reality

Today we will spend some time presenting our project ideas to one another. We'll then transition to investigate the place where God's dream meets the reality of the world. Walter Wink's analysis of "the powers" will provide us with a theological framework for the role institutions play in new things coming into being, while Parker Palmer's notion of the Tragic Gap will give us a posture with which to stand. We'll read case studies and learn about Clayton Christensen's theory of disruptive innovation.

Readings for Wednesday

- Wink, Walter, "Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination." Fortress Press: 1992. chapter 4
- Palmer, Parker, "Standing in the Tragic Gap." Short video, available here: <http://www.couragerenewal.org/723/>

Recommended:

- Lambert, Craig, "Disruptive Genius: Innovation guru Clayton Christensen on spreading his gospel, the Gospel, and how to win with the electric car." Harvard Magazine, July-August, 2014. available online
- Video on Disruptive Innovation at: <http://www.claytonchristensen.com/key-concepts>
- Video on Disruptive Innovation at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbPiAzzGap0>

Journal Question (to be completed after class)

- When have you bumped into realities that have kept a vision from coming into being? How did you address those realities? Which strategies were successful, and why? What are your own tendencies when it comes to power structures?

Thursday: Identity

On Thursday we'll discuss the identity of a new project or community, especially in relationship to the culture and context from which it emerges. Susan Tjornehoj's chapter in Dreier's *Created and Led by the Spirit* gives a very specific, very Lutheran example of what she terms a "contextual missiology," located in the Twin Cities area.

As a part of our discussion on identity, we'll also explore practical capacities such as branding necessary to communicate our vision to the world.

Readings for Thursday

- Dehmlow Dreier, Mary Sue. *Created and Led By the Spirit: Planting Missional Congregations*. Grand Rapids/Cambridge, 2013. chapter 5

Journal Question (to be completed after class)

- Write down some ideas about a branding strategy for your project. What are you hoping to communicate to the world about why your project exists? How do you want it to look and feel? Are there colors or images that comes to mind? What about a name and a tag line? What would the “mantra” (described by Kawasaki) be?

Friday: Growth

Friday will provide a time for us to focus on the practical needs if a new project is to grow. Real-world stuff like sustainable business plans, good leadership, and appropriate staffing make the difference between a good start and a strong future. We'll touch on some techniques drawn from the startup world, such as pivoting and boot-strapping. Then we'll spend time presenting our projects to one another.

Readings for Friday

- Griffith, Jim and Easum, Bill. *Ten Most Common Mistakes Made by New Church Starts*. Chalice Press, 2008. any chapters you find interesting!

Additional Reading:

- Christensen, Clayton. *The Innovators Dillema*.
- Ries, Eric. *The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses*. Crown Business, 2011
- Tickle, Phyllis. *The Great Emergence*. Baker Books, 2008
- Croft, Steven; Mosby, Ian, Spellers, Stephanie, eds. *Ancient Faith, Future Mission: Fresh Expressions in the Sacramental Tradition*. Canterbury Press, 2009

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