CS 05: Ministry, Culture, and Contextual Analysis
Term 3, 2016 - 2017
R. Drew Smith, Professor

Class meetings: Wednesdays, 1:30-4:00 p.m.
Office hours: by appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course is intended to familiarize students with social research methods, and especially ethnographic and sociological methodologies that enhance student capacities for contextual analysis useful to academic and practical assessments of ministry settings. The readings, lectures, field research, and written assignments are designed to assist students in reading and interpreting interpersonal, cultural, organizational, and situational dynamics operative within institutional and neighborhood ministry contexts, including within the context of Pittsburgh Seminary and its immediate neighborhood environs.

CLASS OBJECTIVES:
- To strengthen student capacities for observing and interpreting ministry contexts;
- To expand and deepen student cross-cultural awareness and analysis;
- To immerse students in literatures and academic dialogue that cut across disciplinary boundaries;
- To increase student familiarity and engagement with the Seminary’s surrounding neighborhoods.

These course objectives align with the following Master of Divinity stated learning outcomes:
- Learning outcome 3: Demonstrate the capacity to exegete and interpret the church’s various contexts as the location of God’s mission;
- Learning outcome 4: Demonstrate the capacity to reflect theologically on cultural, social, and ethical issues and how they shape the life of the church;
- Learning outcome 5: Demonstrate a practical knowledge of and ongoing participation in the habits and practices of personal and corporate Christian piety.

TEXTS:

ASSIGNMENTS AND FIELD WORK ASSIGNMENTS:
1. Three 2-page write-ups of field notes, observations, and learnings;
2. Final 10-12 page ethnographic research paper,
COURSE POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS

ASSIGNMENTS: Your grade in this course will be based on completion of requirements worth a total of 100 points, as follows:

1. Three 2-page write-ups of field notes: 40 points

2. Final research paper, drawing on material throughout the course: 60 points, due on “final paper” date, comprised of the following:
   - a clearly defined thesis, hypothesis, or problem, appropriately situated in the research literature;
   - systematic description of research site/context;
   - detailed explanation of research methodology, including how research sites, informants, and information were accessed—and with what challenges and limitations;
   - clear and systematic discussion of research evidence and findings and of implications for ministry.

3. Attendance: More than one unexcused absence will result in point deductions from the final grade in the amount of a 5 point deduction for each unexcused absence beyond the first.

Late assignments will lose points, generally by 1 grading increment (e.g., from B+ to a B) per day late.

Academic honesty: Plagiarism is absolutely forbidden in this course. Plagiarism effectively steals the work of another person and cheats plagiarizers of the opportunity to present and develop their own voice and viewpoint. The goals of this course include learning to fairly assess the arguments of others and to support each student’s vocation as an active, reflective participant in the work of the church, and plagiarism is contrary to those goals. Please review the sections on academic honesty and “papers, examinations, and extensions” in the student handbook, which specify that “[E]ach student bears responsibility for honor and honesty in taking examinations, writing papers and in fulfilling all other academic requirements.

The Seminary’s writing tutor is available to help in the writing process. Please use the Chicago footnote/bibliography style of citation (also known as “Turabian”); for guidance on citation according to this method, see: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html. Written work with unclear or inadequate citation of sources will, at a minimum, be returned ungraded and will require rewriting.

(Students will need e-mail and Internet access for this course, and may use the Seminary computer room for this access. E-mail communications for this course will be sent to students’ PTS e-mail addresses, and students are expected to check that account regularly.)

ADA and other accommodation: If you have an ongoing condition that may affect your ability to succeed in this course, please let us know so that we may work with the PTS administration to arrange documentation and needed accommodation. More generally, if you experience an
extended illness or other emergency during the term, please let me know so that we can work with you to adjust assignment deadlines in advance if necessary.

Classroom expectations: Attendance and participation are important parts of success in the course. If you will be absent, please make arrangements to get notes from another student; lecture material will be needed for both the midterm and final essays. Please refrain from other conversations during lecture, turn off cell phone ringers and refrain from other messaging, web surfing and e-mail. If there is an emergency situation that might require you to be reached during our class time or to leave early, please let me know at the beginning of class. Students may record lectures and use laptops for note taking during lectures.

COURSE OUTLINE:

March 15: Ministry, culture, and boundary-crossing
- Soong-Chan Rah, *Many Colors* (Chapters 1, 4, and 5) 19-38, 83-110

March 22: Systematic observations within congregational contexts
- Nancy Ammerman et al, *Studying Congregations*, (Intro; Chap.1: Theology in the Congregation; Chap. 2: Ecology: Seeing the Congregation in Context, 7-76
- Soong-Chan Rah, *Many Colors* (Chapter 3: Church and Culture)

March 29: Church worship visits and observations (no in-class session)
- Congregational setting vastly different than your own, including Saturday worship visits where appropriate (teams of two persons)

April 5: Social research tools and approaches
- Nancy Ammerman et al, *Studying Congregations*, Chapter 7: Methods, 196-238

April 12: Neighborhood field observation options, teams of 3 (no in-class session)
- West Penn Hospital Emergency Room, 4800 Friendship Avenue;
- APRIL 6 meeting of Larimer Consensus Group, (at Kingsley Association, 6435 Frankstown Ave., [Frankstown Ave. and East Liberty Blvd.], 6:00-8:00)

April 19: Reading institutional power dynamics
- Nancy Ammerman et al, *Studying Congregations*, Chap. 5: Resources; Chap. 6: Leadership, 132-195

April 26: ‘Ecologies of Struggle’ observations (no in-class session)
- Neighborhood surrounding the church visited during Week Three (same teams of two)
May 3: Between subjectivity and solidarity
  - Soong-Chan Rah, Many Colors. Chapter 8: Journeying Together, Chapter 9: Embracing the Other, and Chapter 10: The Challenge of Systems Thinking and Organizational Change, 147-194

May 10: In-class review workshop on research methods

May 17: Project presentations

Final papers due:
For graduating seniors – Tuesday, May 23 by 9:30 am
For all others – Tuesday, May 30 by 11:59 pm