

Creating a Culture of Biblical Mercy

4MS623

Spring, 2012

Dr. William (Bill) Murray

Course Description:

This course is designed to assess Evangelical Christianity's response to the marginalized in contemporary American society in the light of Biblical revelation and to identify alternative models of proactive engagement. Students will be challenged to develop a prophetic message to the church, develop strategies for engaging in Biblical mercy, and alter their own posture towards the poor and oppressed.

Course Objectives:

- To develop a working definition of Biblical Mercy based on biblical teachings and principles.
- To examine historical involvement in Biblical Mercy by the Evangelical church in the U.S.
- To research sources of resistance/apathy/hostility toward Biblical Mercy by the contemporary Evangelical church in the U.S.
- To develop models of Biblical Mercy engagement by the Evangelical church.
- To evaluate current, local models of Biblical Mercy practiced by Evangelical Christians.
- To stimulate student participation in Biblical Mercy.

Required Textbooks:

Haugen, Gary, A., *Good News About Injustice, Tenth Anniversary Edition: A Witness of Courage In A Hurting World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 9780830837106

Keller, Timothy, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just* (New York: Dutton, 2010), 9780340995099

Perkins, John, *Restoring At-Risk Communities: Doing It Together and Doing It Right* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 9780801054631

Course Requirements:

1. **Regular attendance.** Excessive absences may require grade adjustment.
2. **Class participation.** It is expected that all students will participate in class discussions.
3. **Written Assignments.** Much of the learning by students will be expressed in written form. All written assignments must be submitted in **14pt. Times New Roman** font. Papers may be submitted via email.
4. **Reading.** A written reading report of each text book will be required from all students. The student is free to agree or disagree with the authors, but the report must not misrepresent the author's intended meaning. The format of the report must follow the template below:
 - a. Your name and date
 - b. Title of Book
 - c. Answers to the following questions:
 - 1) What is the thesis of this book? (One-sentence summary of what the author wants his readers to understand)
 - 2) What is the unique message of each chapter? (One-paragraph summary; prose, not outline)
 - 3) What five lessons did I learn about justice from this book? (One short paragraph per lesson)
 - 4) What do I think about this book and its message about justice? (One-page response)
5. **Journal.** Each student will submit a journal, containing entries from the following experiences:
 - a. Reflections on the **3 main lecture topics:** Theology, Anthropology, Sociology (see chart below)
 - b. Reflections from each **Guest Lecturer.**
 - c. The journal entries will conform to the following template:
 - 1) Your name and Date
 - 2) Journal Topic or name of guest lecturer.
 - 3) Answer the following questions:
 - a) What 3 things did I learn about justice from this lecture series or guest lecturer?
 - b) How is my understanding of justice changing because of what I learned?
 - c) What is God saying to me about justice?
6. **Values Paper** – Each student will research and write a paper on the topic: “The American Dream vs. The Kingdom Dream.” (Alternate topics acceptable with professor's approval)
 - a. 7-10 pages in length, using the latest edition of *Turabian*.
 - b. Compare and contrast the cultural values that drive “The American Dream” with the biblical values that drive “The Kingdom Dream” (as described by Jesus in His references to the “Kingdom of God” and/or the “Kingdom of Heaven.”)
 - c. Students must cite at least 5 secular sources on “The American Dream.”
 - d. **Due by 4/26.**
7. **Course Paper:** All students will complete a course paper as described below. This paper will be in lieu of a final exam and will be turned in by the final exam date.
 - a. **Context:** You are the pastor of a church, and the elders have asked you to develop a 12 week sermon series that teaches your local church about

concepts of biblical justice and small group curriculum that mobilizes your Community Groups to engage in biblical justice issues.

b. **Assignment:**

- 1) Develop 12 sermon “outlines,” using the following template for each:
 - a) Sermon Title
 - b) Text(s)
 - c) A one-paragraph summary of the sermon, answering the question: **What do I want my listeners to understand from this text(s)?**
 - d) A one-sentence statement answering the question: **What do I want my listeners to do, based on this text(s)?**
- 2) Using the texts and applications from each of the 12 sermons, develop a weekly action plan for the Community Groups to engage in justice ministry in their local communities. Assume the groups will be expected to review and apply the teaching they have heard from the previous Sunday’s sermon.

c. **Due by 5/11**

8. ***Extension Policy*** - All assignments and exams are to be completed by the deadlines announced in this syllabus or in class.

Extensions for assignments and exams due within the normal duration of the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. Extensions of two weeks or less beyond the date of the last deadline for the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. A grade penalty may be assessed.

Extensions of greater than two weeks but not more than six weeks beyond the last deadline for the course may be granted in extenuating circumstances (i.e. illness, family emergency). For an extension of more than two weeks the student must request an Extension Request Form from the Student Services Office. The request must be approved by the Professor and the Academic Dean. A grade penalty may be assessed. (RTS Catalog p. 42 and RTS Atlanta Student Handbook p. 14)

Any incompletes not cleared six weeks after the last published due date for course work will be converted to a failing grade. Professors may have the failing grade changed to a passing grade by request. (RTS Catalog p. 42)

9. ***Grades*** - Grades determined by RTS Grading Scale found on page 42 of the RTS Catalog.

10. This syllabus reflects the specific objectives and instructional format/content of 4MS623: Creating a Culture of Biblical Mercy. However, the instructor reserves the right to modify any portion of this syllabus for the good of the course as may appear necessary during the semester.

Schedule and Chart of Requirements:

Date	Lecture Topic	Assignments Due
2/2	Intro, Overview, Initial Lecture	
2/9	<u>Theology</u> : The Passion for Mercy Anchored in the Heart of God	
2/16	<u>Theology</u> : The Passion for Mercy Anchored in the Heart of God (cont'd)	
2/23	<u>Anthropology</u> : The Rationale for Mercy Found in the <i>imago dei</i> of man	Journal Entry on "Theology" Lectures Book Report on Haugen
2/25 (Sat)	Justice Tour 8:00 am – 5:00 pm (Optional)	
3/1	<u>Anthropology</u> : The Rationale for Mercy Found in the <i>imago dei</i> of man (cont'd)	Journal Entry on Justice Tour (Optional)
3/8	<u>Sociology</u> : The Outworking of Mercy in the Communities of Men	Journal Entry on "Anthropology" Lectures
3/15	<u>Sociology</u> : Relief Work	Book Report on Keller
3/22	Guest Lecturer	
3/29	<u>Sociology</u> : Development	Journal Entry on Guest Lecturer #1
4/5	Spring Break	
4/12	Guest Lecturer	Book Report on Perkins
4/19	<u>Sociology</u> : Social Reform	Journal Entry on Guest Lecturer #2
4/26	Guest Lecturer	Journal Entry on "Sociology" Lectures "Values" Paper Due
5/3	Your Biblical Justice Lens	Journal Entry on Guest Lecturer #3
5/11		
5/14-18	Exam Week	Course Paper

Grading System

Reading Reports	15%
Paper: American Dream vs. Kingdom Dream	15%
Journal Entries (Lecture Topics)	15%
Journal Entries (Guest Lecturers)	15%
Class Paper	40%