GB 5K43 (CRN 20514) Seminar in Theology: Narrative Ecclesiology
Summer 2015
June 12-13; July 17, 18 (Fridays 5-9 pm; Saturdays 8-5 pm)
Ezell 207
Pre-course work required for admittance to first meeting (see below)

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Course Description:
Many agree that the Christian church in the West is struggling. Some believe it is dying. Meanwhile, there is a tremendous growth being experienced through new conversations in churches located in the global south. Why such disparity?

This seminar in theology is designed to consider one possible starting point in understanding this question – narrative theology. This study will explore the possibilities of forming a narrative ecclesiology that provides the potential for new life in the Western church. What would the church look like if ecclesiology was seen not as establishing a pattern for being the right church through doing the right acts, but instead provides a story that leads to a concrete understanding of the church in its ministry and mission in today’s world? Such an understanding would then provide a basis for an often mentioned concept, “form follows function.” Is the church of today functioning in such a way that it produces its intended result?

This study will be seeking to establish the biblical story line of the church. Once that biblical narrative is explored and digested, pertinent questions will be asked concerning the identity, purpose, and ultimate direction of the church.

This will be done through a brief review of the biblical story, then by exploring the past history of traditional mainline Protestantism in the United States (via Peterson’s book) and the unique history of the American Restoration Movement. It will then consider the significant encounter of post-liberal and post-conservative scholars in the consideration of “narrative theology.” This sets the historical stage for new exploration – the possibility of constructing a narrative ecclesiology.

It must be emphasized that this seminar is exploratory by nature. It is intended to be an open search for a way of renewing the Western church. Each student will be encouraged to develop a functional ecclesiology based on the biblical narrative.
**Required Reading:**

**Required books:**


You are required to read and review (see review section below) the Peterson book *before* the first class meeting on June 12. Also, of the articles listed below – those noted with an asterisk (*) must be read and reviewed before the first class meeting. The remainder of the books and articles must be read and reviewed before the 2nd class meeting. You should have all articles copied and in hand for the 1st class meeting.

**Reading Packet:** NOTE: All of these articles, with the exception Mutch and Sam’s are available through ATLA’s search engine (you can download the full .pdf file from Lipscomb Library online). The Drew Sam “articles” (they are very short e-books) are available for free through several e-book websites. You should have received an e-mail with the Sam books attached in .docx format as well as the Mutch article in .pdf format.

Dinkler, Michal Beth. “*Telling Transformation: How We Redeem Narratives and Narratives Redeem Us.*” Word and World, Vol 31, no 3; Summer 2011, p. 287-296.

Fields, Leslie Leland. “*The gospel is more than a story: story is all the rage: everyone pants to tell their personal narrative or to give the Bible a simpler and more relevant plot: maybe all this isn’t such a good idea.*” Christianity Today, 56 no 7 Jl-Ag 2012, p 38-43

Gilmour, Peter. “*Narrative Theology as Revelation.*” Religious Education, 103 no 3 My-Je 2008, p 290-292


Course Requirements:

Attendance: Because this class only meets two weekends, full attendance is required without exception.

Class preparation and participation: Students are required to be prepared for each class meeting. Because this is a seminar designed class, full participation in the activities and discussion of the class is required.

Reviews: Each book and article should be briefly summarized (one or two paragraphs) followed by a concise response by the student (1 or 2 pages max for each review). Those articles marked by an asterisk should be handed to the professor the first meeting of class, along with a review of Peterson’s work. The purpose of these reviews is to incentivize the required reading to the benefit of the study.

Final Exam: A take home final exam will be given after the second class meeting. It will be due July 25th.

Final Paper: A final paper of no less than 2,500 words (approx. 8 pages, double-spaced) and no more than 3,000 words is to be turned in on or before July 31. The paper is to be a fully functional ecclesiology based on the biblical story. It will be fully explained before the end of the first weekend of class.
**Grading:**
Participation and preparedness: 25%
Reviews: 25%
Final Exam: 20%
Final Paper: 30%

**Grading Scale:**
93-100, A; 84-92 B; 70-83, C.