

HIS/PT5/714 Leadership in the Ancient and Contemporary Church

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Thursdays 2:00-5:00, Room 205

“Leadership” is a topic much in discussion in today’s church. This course aims to explore this topic theologically, with vantages from the ancient and contemporary churches as well as secular sources. The goal is to help future church leaders discern their strengths and weaknesses and learn to lead from each. As Parker Palmer says, a leader is someone who can cast their light—*and* their shadow—especially far. It is important that we know each. We will discuss the ways teams work well together and the ways they do not. We will discuss the crucial role of Christian institutions in enabling and disabling leadership. Students should also emerge with theological skills that will allow them to critique the coldly corporate and consumerist literature that often sells under the banner “leadership.” We’ll return to several sets of questions: why study leadership? What difference does the adjective make in “Christian leadership”? Who are we personally as leaders? And how can we have Christlike influence within and beyond our organizations?

Goals of class:

- 1) to introduce some of the key concepts around leadership, institutions, power, social entrepreneurship, administration and management as used in secular settings.
- 2) to see how those concepts refract through the history of Christian thought and practice.
- 3) to begin to see precisely what sort of leader we are and may yet be in the church.

Course Objectives

- 1) To describe what makes for fruitful leadership in a way that integrates both ancient and contemporary sources of wisdom
- 2) To analyze both one’s light and one’s shadow, and both for the sake of the institution(s) one is called to serve
- 3) To ask wise and probing and open questions of a local leader or accessible national or international one about what she or he has learned in the course of their career about their work. The goal here is to imagine what the student’s analogous course of learning will be like (or will be sure to avoid!).
- 4) To describe a vision for one’s future hopes for leadership in the church or other organization to which one is called.

Assignments

- 1) Regular engagement with reading material both in conversation in class and via Adobe Connect and also on the forum on Moodle

- 2) A project on an institution of one's choosing that will involve at least 2 interviews and a site visit to a location where ministry is taking place. The goal is to describe well what one sees in leadership on the way to imagining how one would lead in comparable ways (or diagnose appropriately ways one wouldn't want to lead).
- 3) A review of a book about leadership from a non-religious vantage (see examples below from the world of the restaurant industry, the military, education, politics, etc—but don't be limited to these, just run whatever possibility of interest by the instructor). What sense do we make of these "lesser lights," in Karl Barth's language, as we attend to how God wants us to do our work?
- 4) A theology of leadership. Write a 10-15 page paper on leadership, drawing on ancient and contemporary wisdom, and also on assignments 2 & 3, to imagine how you will lead in institutions in response to your calling.

Required reading

Books

Christopher Beeley, *Leading God's People: Wisdom from the Early Church for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

Jim Collins *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don't* (New York: Collins, 2001).

Edwin Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (Seabury, 2007).

Hugh Hecl, *On Thinking Institutionally* (Boulder, Co.: Paradigm, 2008).

Ron Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1994).